

POWER TO OPEN AND TO SHUT THE KINGDOM: PREACHING

Intro: - The kingdom of heaven is opened and shut by the public proclamation of God's gospel.

- But it must be God's gospel, that is, the gospel that is true according to Scripture, the pure preaching of the Word.

- Even while many today are forsaking the preaching of the gospel, we need to know that God commands the church to do it!

I. THE MESSAGE OF THE PREACHING:**A. Preaching the message of the gospel.**

1. Many names given to it: Christ's gospel, the gospel of God, Paul calls it 'his gospel', the gospel of salvation, of peace.

2. The word gospel means "good news".

3. It is the good news to those in darkness, misery, and death that there is deliverance.

4. It is good news because of the unspeakably great riches of the inheritance that is promised.

B. Preaching the particular content of the gospel

1. The content of the preaching is the promise/promises of Christ Jesus.

2. Of this promise, the OT saints died in faith, not having received the promises, but saw from afar & embraced them.

3. In Gal. 3, we see that Christ the Seed is the fulfillment of the promise and the recipient of the promise.

4. If we are Christ's, we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. The promise comes to the elect (Acts 2:39).

5. In short, the promise is Christ and all his riches of salvation and blessing. This includes:

6. The promise is unconditional and the promise is as faithful and true as God is unchangeable. He will realize his promise.

C. The preaching of the promise of the gospel.

1. When we speak of the key-power, we are not speaking of the promise of God as such, but the preaching of the promise.

2. "According to the command of Christ it is declared and publicly testified to...."

3. God proclaims the promise, but he does it through the agency of men. Therefore it is authoritative.

4. God commands the church to preach the gospel. Therefore it is an official work and message.

5. Because it pleases Christ to speak his own Word, the preaching becomes effective as a key-power.

D. How Christ exercises this power? Positively and negatively:

1. Christ opens the kingdom through the pure preaching. It is declared that believing in Jesus Christ one is saved!

2. By faith the child of God is conscious that all his sins are really forgiven for the sake of Christ's merits.

3. By this same preaching, it is declared to all unbelievers & unrepentant that they stand exposed to the wrath of God.

4. God will judge them both in this life and in the life to come. Many do not like this negative element! **Closed!**

II. THE PARTICULAR OBJECTS OF THE PREACHING:**A. The preaching is to be promiscuous.**

1. God gives to the church an open door to preach. Paul speaks of that door in our passage (vs.12). Other passages:

2. The truth is that God directs his church where and to whom she brings the glorious gospel.

3. We scatter the seed promiscuously, not knowing who the elect are. (See Belgic Conf. II art 5.)

4. Nor does this mean that we have nothing to say to the unconverted who are among the hearers.

5. Always we say, "Thus saith the Lord."

6. The Word preached is a declaration, a testimony from God, not an offer. Then salvation would be a work of man accepting

B. The gospel we preach is particular. It is not good news to everyone!

1. While the preaching of the promise is promiscuous, the promise itself is particular.

2. In our own history as churches there was the error of those who taught that the promise was general, to all who hear.

3. That made the promise conditional upon the response of the individual to believe.

4. The Catechism emphatically says that we declare and testify to all & every believer, receiving the promise by true faith...

5. The promise is made to believers, those in whom the Spirit works faith, those who are the elect of God.

6. The preaching of the gospel and the covenant of God are governed by God's election.

C. The warning that comes to the unbelieving and unrepentant.

1. It is likewise declared & testified to all unbelievers and those who do not sincerely repent that they stand exposed to wrath.

2. God uses such warnings and threatening to call his elect people from the heathen and call back backsliding saints.

3. But God also uses these warnings to leave the wicked without excuse. They heard the Word and rejected it.

4. The kingdom is shut to those who remain unconverted and unrepentant!

D. The preaching is always a sweet savor to God.

1. Paul rejoices because God causes his gospel to triumph, spreading abroad the fragrance of Christ.

2. The goal of Paul's ministry was that Christ should be known. God diffuses that knowledge everywhere.

3. The preaching is well-pleasing to God whatever the effect the preaching produces. It is never neutral!

4. The gospel preached is a savor of life unto life! Christ is a cornerstone that saves.

5. To the wicked, the gospel preached is a savor of death unto death. Christ is a stone of offense and destroys.

III. THE ETERNAL VALIDITY OF PREACHING AS KEY POWER:**A. What the church binds on earth is bound in heaven.**

1. '**To bind**' is a rabbinical term meaning to forbid (beliefs and conduct) and excluding those who continue in it.

2. Does any hear in the preaching, "you are excluded?" That testimony is valid and true.

3. God's Word is valid now on earth and in the church, and is valid into eternity. Shut out, excluded from the kingdom.

4. In love for souls the church preaches it, and in love may who hear the Word repent of their sins and believe!

B. What the church looses on earth is loosed in heaven.

1. '**To loose**' is a term that means to loose from judgment and condemnation and the admitting into church membership.

2. Do you hear by faith in the preaching, "your sins are forgiven", entrance is given to you. Valid today and into eternity!