

PROFITABLE PREACHING

Hebrews 4

There is no question that organized religion today is a profitable business. On any given Sunday, in the more than 350,000 churches in America, as estimated 35 to 50 million people participate with their time and money in some form of religious activity. That's more than any other single activity, even the combined attendance of NASCAR, the NFL, M L BASEBALL and the NBA. It is so because almost all are engaged in it in some shape form or fashion at some time in their life. This does not go unnoticed by those charismatic charlatans who can "sell ice boxes to Eskimos." They, like Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8, use subtlety, deceit and ignorance to "make merchandise" of many. All of us by nature have contributed to their success. And unless God grants repentance, sinners will meet the fate of this false prophet whom God condemned in **Acts 8:20**. "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." There are many Simons in the world today who preach a salvation that can be bought by the sinner when the Scriptures reveal that God elects "are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God."

In the early church Peter and John went to the temple to pray and were asked by a lame man for alms. Peter responded in Acts 3:6 thus; "silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The early church was few in numbers and little of money but much in power. But that all changed quickly. Now there are many in numbers and much in money but little in power.

The existence of mega churches with enrolments in the thousands, in buildings costing millions with comparable budgets and worldwide influence and appeal is in stark contrast to their power to save. These mega churches, though great in persuasive power are void of saving power. But they prosper still. And it is not surprising that the offspring of these founders are called to the continuation of these ministries. Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, Pat Robinson, Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggert, Kenneth Copeland and Jon Osteen have passed their mantle to their children, perpetuating their ministry and keeping the profit in the family. We would have to say theirs is truly profitable preaching.

Here are men of renown who have successfully and profitably turned their ministries into money making enterprises.

But Jesus asked the question in **Mark 8:36**, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" In context, Jesus was teaching his hearers that honor in the church belongs only to the Lord and sitting on his right hand in glory was not his call to make, but the Father's. **Mark 8:34** "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." He told the rich young ruler, whose barns were bulging to sell all, give to the poor and take up his cross and follow Jesus.

These preachers are a dime a dozen and will leave their hearers, along with themselves without defense at the judgment. The scriptures are replete with the heresies of these preachers of öfree will, works religion. Weöve all heard their gospel; öGod will if you will.ö

There is another preacher, more subtle and dangerous than these modern day profiteering hirelings. They are preachers of profit also. These come *“in sheep’s clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”* (Matthew 7:15) They look like sheep, they sound like sheep, and they behave as sheep. They come in among the sheep, (most of them in ignorance of their own state) and *“preach another Jesus, by another gospel in another spirit.”* (2 Corinthians 11) They preach the truth some of the time. They promote the doctrines of grace. They preach the sovereignty of God in election and predestination. But they will not abide in the truth. The chief evidence of their unbelief is their failure to repent, insisting they were saved in ignorance of Righteousness imputed. Justification by an imputed righteousness is not good enough for them. We need to remember this where wolves are concerned: they have one mission in life; devour sheep. They do this by introducing *“damnable heresies”* (2 Peter 2:1) that could, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. **Read 2 Peter 2:1** *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”*

Their preaching always promotes two errors

They make the Savior to be less than he is and themselves more than they are. They make the impeccable Christ, *“who is without spot”* to be a sinner of such ignoble character that he became the sinner of all sinners, thus disqualifying the only substitute for sinners who himself would need a substitute if such were the case. Every lie they foster against Christ adds shame and reproach upon the Lord of Glory. The implication is he became the greatest hater of God. Not only do they deny the Lord of Glory, they blaspheme every attribute of God’s character as a Just God and Savior. How can He, who must be just and justifier, remain so and save anyone since his Substitute and Surety lost his qualifications to perform the duties of those offices? (So they imply) They say, without Christ becoming sinful God could not impute sin to him. This happened by some mystical transposition, not actual transgression, but that can’t be for sin is transgression of the law. But in any event that would make him a destroyer of the law, not its fulfillment. No scripture substantiates such heresy.

On the other hand these claim to be as holy in them self as they claim Christ was sinful in his person. If such were the case, they would not need a Savior and he would be no Savior. They would stand, not in need of but equal with the Ex-Savior, having an inward holiness equal to his. And that salvation would come up short, since a holy God cannot and will not receive a blemished sacrifice, even the Lord of Glory. Again, diminishing Christ and exalting the sinner. You can’t *“behold the glory of God in the face of a Christ* if he himself was a mass of sin. These are preachers for profit; making merchandise of men’s souls, who öseem to come up short of God’s promise of rest.ö

And then there are those faithful ministers in the gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ Jesus the Lord. Those appointed and sent by the Lord with a single message, the Gospel of God’s free grace in Christ. According to Romans 1:16-17, it is here and here alone that God’s

righteousness is revealed from faith to faith based solely on his righteousness imputed and received by faith. It is this message alone are we commissioned and commanded to preach to every creature. It is a promise from him who is faithful to his Word.

Read Hebrews 4: 1-3. 1 *“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”*

I have taken my title for today's message from V2. **Profitable Preaching:**

Motivates to fear. Hebrews 4:1

Mixes with faith Hebrews 4:2

Marks those of faith. Hebrews 4:3

1.Profitable preaching (that honors God) **motivates to fear. Read Hebrews 4:1-2a.** *“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them:*

Fear is something all experience, either slavish or healthy. It can be detrimental or beneficial, depending on the situation in which it is experienced and how we respond. Fear of fire can cause one to experience hypothermia or it can save life. Fear of sickness can actually induce sickness or it can motivate one to healthy lifestyles. To the guilty, the law's presence incites fear, to those in compliance, peace. The reality of death motivates some to fear. To others it motivates to acceptance and expectation with thanksgiving to God for his victory over death.

The deciding factor in dealing with fear is knowledge of the truth concerning that fear and our response to it. Adam is a case in point. **Read Genesis 3:9-10** *“And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”* Here Adam discovered himself naked before a holy God. He was exposed to the wrath of God he had heretofore not known and he was motivated by fear to hide from God. Then fear motivated him to sew fig leaf aprons to hide his exposure to God's anger. Then fear motivated him to blame the woman and ultimately God himself. *“The woman you gave me.”*

In Adam we all learned fear. Like Adam, **“we hid ourself.”** Legal fear overcame us in Adam our Federal Head and Representative. When he sinned, we sinned, when he died we died, when he feared we feared. In our Federal Head and Representative, we are, by nature at enmity with God.

Read Ephesians 2:1-3. *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”*

Paul the Apostle adequately described us all in **Romans 3:18** *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”* We achieved that rank by imputation first, then by birth (nature) and then by practice. The only fear we know by nature is legal fear.

Those who fear God with a legal fear are subject to bondage and Satan uses this fear to keep sinners in legal bondage. **Read Hebrews 2:14-15** *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* Adam experienced fear of God. So did we.

But he would experience another aspect of God he had hereto not known. What would bring about this change? What would change his legal fear of God to a reverence for God’s holy character? He was shown another side of God he had heretofore not known: God’s redemptive glory as a Just God and Savior. He would learn a godly fear; a reverence and respect for the glory of God in redemption. This would be accomplished in him and all God’s elect by means of the gospel preached. He was taught of God in the slaying of animals and coats of skin which pictured in types the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in establishing a righteousness which God freely imputed to his people.

As I stated earlier fear begins with wisdom. The writer of Proverbs wrote of this in Proverbs 9:10 *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”*

Profitable preaching accomplishes this goal in God’s people. It motivates to fear; a reverential respect for the honor of God’s glory in redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Where before regeneration and conversion the sinner is motivated by legal fear which held us in legal bondage, now he is motivated by the knowledge that God has justified his people by a satisfaction to his holy law and justice rendered by the obedience, suffering and death of our Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. This brings with it the repentance of ever thinking my salvation was conditioned on my law keeping. It causes me to rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

I am given a respect for God and Christ of which I knew nothing before profitable preaching revealed the holiness of my Savior and my own sinfulness. Now my motivation is grace and gratitude for what God has accomplished in Christ for me.

The writer of Hebrews 4:1 encourages us to fear. The scriptures repeatedly command us to “fear God.” All men fear God; either a slavish, legal fear or a reverential respect for God’s redemptive glory in salvation based on Christ’s righteousness imputed alone. What is your fear? **Read Hebrews 4:1** *“Let us therefore fear, (Let us hear, let us believe, let us trust and let us expect God, who made the promise to give us the whole inheritance of grace, up to and including final glory in heaven based only on the imputed righteousness of Christ) lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”*

1. Profitable preaching motivates to fear. Hebrews 4:2 Do you fear God?

2. Profitable preaching mixes with faith. Hebrews 4:2 *“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”*

How can I be sure my fear is a reverential respect for the honor of God’s redemptive glory?

a. Do I know him in his redemptive glory as a just God and Savior? Did I hear of a Just God and Savior under the true gospel? No one learns of God under a false gospel. No one ignorant of the true gospel has this reverence toward God, for it is therein, in the gospel alone the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. **Read Romans 1:16-17** *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.* The first ðfaithö is objective faith; that body of doctrine declaring Christ’s righteousness imputed the whole of my salvation. The second faith is subjective; that faith wrought in me by the Holy Spirit which locks me in to the truth that his righteousness imputed is all God requires of me.

b. Did the gospel profit me? There is a warning here for us all. Is it possible to have true knowledge without faith? YES IT IS. Unless this knowledge reaches the affections and the will it will profit me nothing. These (National Israel) heard the gospel. It was preached daily to them in shadows and types, but they failed to see the only way God’s holiness could be honored was by conditioning all of salvation on Christ. Am I convinced I was lost before I heard of a righteousness imputed?

c. Did God mix faith with my hearing? If I have any he did. (Romans 10:17) *“So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”* **Ephesians 2:8** *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”*

Hearing and faith are inseparable in salvation. Where God makes the sinner to hear the promise savingly, he gives faith. This is the power of the Word. It is living and powerful and sharper than a two- edged sword. It mixes with faith to the saving of God’s elect. There is no faith without hearing. Heb 11:6 *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

1. Profitable preaching motivates to fear

2. Profitable preaching mixes with faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Do you have faith? *“All men have not faith.”* (2 Thessalonians 3:2)

3. Profitable preaching marks those of faith. Hebrews 4:3

“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”

A man is known by the doctrine he holds of God and Christ. What think ye of Christ, whose son is he is a legitimate question because many anti- Christ’s are gone out into the world. How we answer the question determines our state and standing before God; either in faith or in unbelief.

Profitable preaching will expose this state and conform its hearers to Christ alone for all salvation.

God gives us three evidences that mark us in the faith.

1. God rested. **Read Genesis 2:1-3** *“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on*

the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.”

God had a work to do and when that work was finished, he rested. There was no more creating to do. It was finished from the foundation of the world.

2.Christ rested. Read Hebrews 4:10 *“For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”*

Christ had a work to do and when it was finished he rested. That work was the full, free, eternal salvation of every sinner given him by the Father in the everlasting covenant of grace. When the Father was glorified in their complete salvation based on his righteousness established and imputed to his sheep, Christ rested. When every condition for our complete justification and final glory in heaven was completed, he entered into his rest.

3.His people rest. Read Hebrews 4:3a *“For we which have believed do enter into rest.”* Man thought he had a work to do. We labored and were heavy laden, trying to find peace with a holy God. Then God said to us *“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and you shall find rest for your souls.”*

Notice: God did a work and then rested. Christ did a work and then rested. *“I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.”* Do sinners have the audacity to think they can add to a perfect, completed work? We are the only one of the equation who does nothing toward our salvation.

Profitable preaching declares a salvation already accomplished in the Lord Jesus Christ which includes our complete justification , sanctification and faith based on nothing but the imputed righteousness of Christ which is our entire salvation. How do we know God the Father was pleased with the work of his Son? He raised him and exalted him to rest in the satisfaction he made to God’s holy Law and justice.

Does the gospel mark you of this faith? If it does, profitable preaching has come your way by the sovereign will and purpose of God. It has come to you in power of the Holy Ghost. It has come to you in the Person and work of a suitable, Substitute and Savior who covenanted with the father and the Spirit to make known to the elect his grace in their salvation. This is accomplished through profitable preaching: preaching that motivates sinners to fear; preaching that mixes with faith and preaching that marks those of faith.

Will you profit from the gospel?

“Let us fear.” Let us worship our God, a just God and Savior and bless his holy name for his complete salvation in Christ.

Think about the thirty five to fifty million people today who worship they know what? They have no fear of God before their eyes.

There, but for the grace of God and profitable preaching go we. God’s elect are witnesses to, and recipients of the power of God (profitable preaching) unto salvation.

By Winston Pannell