

Broomfield



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 4 Issue 34

August 21, 2005

Honoring God

The Attributes of a Prophetic Call, Part 5

Tickled Ears

By now you are familiar with 2 Timothy 4:3.

2 Timothy 4:3, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.”

From this and other passages we have seen that the last days will be characterized by a pulpit given over to the tickling of people's ears and that exists to please man. In contrast we read in 2 Timothy 2:15.

2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to shew thyself approved¹ unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The word *approved* is an interesting term. From the Greek we discover that it means to test, discover, and approve. It references a test that establishes the quality of someone or something. Thus by this verse Paul is calling Timothy to demonstrate the quality of his character by handling God's word accurately. In other words, it is in contrast to the pulpit that tickles ears, Timothy's pulpit must honor God.

It is from these two passages that we get the picture that throughout church history there has and will continue to be two types of pulpits. There will be those which are dedicated to pleasing man. And then there will be those which are dedicated to honoring God.

This raises the question: What does the pulpit look like which is dedicated to the honor and glory of God?

Our text answers this question by way of example. While our text contains the message given to Samuel

¹ δοκιμος dokimos In the ancient world there was no banking system as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into moulds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was necessary to smooth off the uneven edges. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation. But some money changers were men of integrity, who would accept no counterfeit money. They were men of honour who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were called “dokimos” or “approved”. (Donald Barnhouse)

roughly 3000 years ago, nevertheless it serves as a didactic tool for all preaching. For what we see here is not just one message, given at one time, to one person but a pattern after which ALL Biblical sermons comport in Scripture.

What we have here is a description of what constitutes a faithful pulpit. A Biblical pulpit is salvifically shocking.² By this we mean that it confronts God's people with the truth of God and His word resulting in conviction and a longing for God's grace and His service.

Secondly, it must be consistent with the rest of Scripture.³ Nothing new comes from a Biblical pulpit. The same doctrines that have been learned and loved throughout the ages are what is preached.

Reveals Sin

The third characteristic of the faithful pulpit is that it will reveal sin.

1 Samuel 3:13, "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile⁴, and he restrained them not⁵."

We've discussed the contents of this in relation to the judgment first announced against Eli in 1 Samuel 2:29. Indeed while we know that Eli wasn't guilty of the gross sins of his sons; i.e., defiling the holy women who served at the sanctuary,⁶ ignoring the things of the Lord,⁷ and robbing from God.⁸ We do know that Eli benefited from his sons' take.⁹

And thus as we read this text we are not surprised at the announcement of God's judgment against Eli. What is a surprise is the stated reason: It is not on account of what he did but on account of what he failed to do. He failed to speak up when few dared. He failed to protect the worship of God. He failed to care about the honor of God. And this really is the issue. Eli is indicted NOT because of his bad parenting, BUT because he sat back while God was being dishonored.

Now all of this serves as the background to our text. As a newly called prophet of the Lord, Samuel here is being commissioned as one who was to proclaim the word of God. And his message was to contain the message of judgment on account of sin!

From this we learn a third component of Biblical preaching: It will reveal sin. It will include the element of judgment for a specific transgression. Now, this doesn't mean that the purpose of the pulpit is to confront individuals in the manner of Matthew 18. For example it is not the purpose of the pulpit to harangue Mary for her stealing, or Kermit for his sin. Rather, it means that the purpose of the pulpit is to bring God's word to bear upon a specific sin of the people of God.

² 1 Samuel 3:11

³ 1 Samuel 3:12

⁴ קָלַל qalal The original clearly was "...because his sons blasphemed God..." as indicated in the LXX. Many scholars believe that the MT reading surfaced because scribes couldn't bear to write those awful words, "blasphemed God"- so terrible was the thought!

⁵ כָּהַח kahah The word for "rebuke" is another form of the same verb, "to grow weak" which was used of Eli's eyes in v. 2. Eli's failing eyesight is a metaphor of his spiritual weakness!

⁶ Compare 1 Samuel 2:22

⁷ Compare 1 Samuel 2:12-13

⁸ Compare 1 Samuel 2:15-16

⁹ Compare 1 Samuel 2:29

Day of Pentecost

Acts 2 gives us greater insight into this purpose. In my estimation, a great example of faithful preaching is Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. Notice with me the elements of Peter's sermon. First it was salvifically shocking. The passage tells us that the people were pierced to the heart.¹⁰ It was also based upon God's word. It was consistent with the rest of Scripture.¹¹ Thirdly it was Christ centered.¹² And yet, it also dealt with the sin which is the focus of all pulpits:

Acts 2:23, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:"

Now brothers and sisters I dare say that a majority of those pilgrims gathered on Pentecost were not present on the Passover in which Christ was crucified. Recall that most Jews lived in the diaspora- far away from Jerusalem. Thus a trek to Jerusalem for Passover was a privilege and not something that all Jews participated in on a regular basis. Indeed for some, the trek would occur once every other year, every five years, ten years or just one in a life-time.

Thus to think that this crowd was the same as that which assembled in Jerusalem fifty days prior is ludicrous — most Jews were not that wealthy so as to enjoy back-to-back trips to the holy city.

How then could Peter indict them for crucifying Christ?

He could indict them by virtue of their sin!

Truly, if you have sinned you are guilty of crucifying Christ. Paul, speaking of our sin as a certificate of debt proclaimed that Christ "took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14). And because you have sinned Christ's blood lies on your hands!

Thus the focus of the pulpit at Pentecost was NOT the individual sin of the people present BUT the corporate/common sin of the people of God through which they had fallen short of God's standards and incurred the wrath and curse of God. Thus, necessitating the cross of Christ. That is the sin which a faithful pulpit attacks!

Paul's Example

We see this also in Romans 3. The epistle to the Romans was written by Paul in order to introduce the apostle to the Romans that they might help Paul on his way to Spain.¹³ As such, this epistle represents a synopsis of Paul's preaching/teaching ministry. Notice that before he taught on ethics¹⁴ that he first preached an important message:

Romans 3:23-24, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

At first glance it is not at all apparent how verse 24 fits in with verse 23. In fact, it could appear

¹⁰ Compare Acts 2:37

¹¹ Compare Acts 2:17-21, 25-28, and 34-35

¹² Compare Acts 2:24, 33

¹³ Compare Romans 15:24

¹⁴ Compare Romans 12-16

disjointed. But then you discover that verse 24 is a participial phrase modifying the “all” of verse 23 and it all makes perfect sense.

Let me read to you a modified translation with verse 24 placed closer to its antecedent. “For all being justified... have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23-24 modified).

This is teaching that those who know forgiveness of sin are those who know they have fallen short of God's standard!

From this we see the focus of a faithful pulpit does not simply indict people for this or that particular sin. Rather — as Paul and Peter give example — it indicts people for falling short of God's standard and so crucifying Christ!

Nathan the Prophet

After David's sin with Bathsheba, Nathan was called to preach the word. The focus and thus the end of Nathan's preaching wasn't just David's sin, but again his falling short of God's standard and thus David's need for grace.

2 Samuel 12:5, “And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die>“

2 Samuel 12:7a, “And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.”

2 Samuel 12:13, “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.”

The focus of Nathan’s pulpit was not simply David’s sin with Bathsheba, but ultimately David's violation of God such that the king stood condemned having but one plea- — Jesus Christ!

Now lest there be any question, listen to what David wrote following this altercation.

Psalm 32:1-2, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

The end of the faithful pulpit will be one and the same, Paul wrote this:

Galatians 3:22, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

From all of this, notice it is not that Biblical preaching doesn't address specific sin — truly it does. Eli's over-inflated view of himself which brought about a callousness when it came to the Lord centered around his children. Thus, the message that God gave Samuel dealt with a very specific sin.

1 Samuel 3:13, “For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.”

However don't miss the point — this was a means to an end. The focus of the first four chapters of Samuel is NOT Eli's poor parenting BUT clearly the revelation of his arrogance, refusal to rely upon

Christ, falling short of God's glory, and rebellion from a childlike trust in God. This truly was Eli's problem and the cause of his undoing.

1 Samuel 2:29, "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?"

In fact, listen to the climax of this section as it relates to Eli.

1 Samuel 4:18, "And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years."

The Hebrew here is not telling us but showing us Eli's downfall. Throughout the opening chapters of 1 Samuel the question is raised, "Who will receive the glory/weight?" And thus we see here that Eli's ultimate downfall was not his bad parenting, failure to protect the worship of God, and negligence when it came to the things of the Lord (as bad as all these things are), BUT his arrogance whereby he gave glory to self and not God and refused to trust and follow God. This ultimately was his sin. This ultimately is the object of every pulpit!

And so we see a third characteristic of a faithful pulpit: The Revelation of Man's Sin against God!

Oh how our generation needs to hear this.

See, thousands of pulpits abound with the declaration that men are sinners and that men have violated this standard or that. Many declare that our world is evil, and we must beware. Yet, again I hope you see that this is not what we are after in the pulpit.

The goal of Biblical preaching is the revelation that in our individual sinning we ultimately have fallen short of God's standard! Paul gave this description of the focus of his ministry:

2 Corinthians 10:5, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Where this is absent, so also is grace, humility, love, and the fruits of the Spirit. The most judgmental of churches/Christians are quick to propound the sinfulness of man and the evils of our world. The problem is that they are propounding the sinfulness and evils not of themselves but of those outside of their assembly. Thus, rather than being a congregation that knows that they are sinners and have fallen short of God's glory and need grace they become a congregation that says:

Luke 18:11-12, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

In contrast a faithful pulpit in the hands of the Spirit of God has a different focus altogether. Yes it points at sin. But it does so to illumine the fact that though we are saved, nevertheless individually we continue to fall, we continue to merit the wrath of God, we have done nothing to impress God that He might save us, and our righteousness is filthy rags.¹⁵

¹⁵ Compare Isaiah 64:6

But we don't like this preaching: it's offensive for it places us on the same level as the “scum” of our world. It looks at the drunk lying in the gutter — dirty, filthy, with puke in his hair — and says “You Christian are no different: while he is addicted to alcohol, you are addicted to the praises of men.” It looks at the prostitute — vile and disgusting with needle-tracks down her arm — and says “You brother are no different: she has sold her body for a drug, you have sold your soul for a career.” It looks at specific sins like adultery or murder and says, “If you have looked with lust in your heart upon a woman... if you have been angry with your brother... you are just as guilty as the adulterer or murderer!”¹⁶

But listen brothers and sisters, while we hate this preaching, we must embrace it and demand it. For it is only when we see our sin that we see the Savior! It is only when we don't just say but truly believe that we are the scum of the earth that we are lifted out of the muck and mire and placed in the bosom of our Lord! W. S. Plumer put it this way:

“We never see sin aright until we see it as against God... All sin is against God in this sense: that it is His law that is broken, His authority that is despised, His government that is set at naught... Pharaoh and Balaam, Saul and Judas each said, 'I have sinned'; but the returning prodigal said, 'I have sinned against heaven and before thee'; and David said, 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned.’”¹⁷

It is this kind of preaching that constitutes a Faithful Pulpit!

Man's Inability

Fourth, the Biblical pulpit will highlight the inability of man.

1 Samuel 3:14, “And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.”¹⁸

At first glance, this seems rather shocking. Eli was beyond forgiveness? His sin was so bad that even God could not pardon?

No! That is not what is being taught here. Listen, in the Old Testament sacrificial system which was in operation at the time of the writing of this text, there were two types of sin. There were sins that could be atoned for, and sin that could not. Sin that was forgivable via the sacrificial system, and sins that were “high handed” — committed deliberately, defiantly, and carelessly.¹⁹ For these “high-handed” sins there was no sacrifice available in the sacrificial system of Judaism. These simply warranted the death penalty.

Now I know that this is rather shocking since you and I both know that God established the sacrificial system in the Old Testament for the purpose of dealing with sin. And yet here and other places we read that in the case of some sin, no sacrifice was available²⁰.

¹⁶ Compare Matthew 5:22, 28

¹⁷ Quoted in “The Pursuit of Holiness,” pp. 20-21.

¹⁸ There is an incredible twist here. Eli and his children looked lightly upon the sacrificial system and so abandoned it. Now that they are in trouble, that same system will abandon them.

¹⁹ Compare Numbers 15:30-31

²⁰ Again we are speaking about “high-handed” sins here which more defined were any sin that deliberately transgressed (again cf. Num. 15:30-31) any of the Ten Commandments. For this there was no sacrifice, just the death penalty. So for example we read of a “High-handed” sin in relation to the

And yet before you and I get too frightened in view of our sins and the possibility that there is no sacrifice for them, don't miss it, the sacrificial system of the Old Testament ultimately was a picture of Christ.²¹

Behold the beauty and wisdom behind it. By its establishment, God instructed His people as to the concept of vicarious atonement — the sinless/spotless dying in the place of the sinner.²² And yet, by its inability²³ God instructed His people that they must not look to the system or their offering to save them, BUT the Lamb of God behind the system!

John shed light upon this: “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

In other words, high-handed sins were not atoneable in the sacrificial system as set up and functioning in the Old Testament. With these sins, there was nothing the offender could do but look only to Christ, the Messiah, and His grace, mercy and forgiveness!

Thus in many of the known cases in the Old Testament where a high-handed sin was committed the offender was not executed; rather upon appealing to Christ, he received mercy!

We see it in David. After David committed the high-handed sins of adultery and murder²⁴ he received pardon and forgiveness, and so wrote this:

Psalm 51:16-17, “For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

By this confession, David essentially saying that there was nothing he could do to make it right with God. And thus when we come here in our passage and read this declaration on the part of God to Eli, “the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever” (1 Samuel 3:14b) we do not conclude that Eli’s sin placed him outside of grace because he had committed the unforgivable sin. Rather, we conclude that he is guilty of high-handed sin, AND THUS THERE WAS NOTHING HE

-
1. Second Commandment:
 - a. Idolatry, Leviticus 20:2; Deuteronomy 13:6; 17:2-7.
 - b. Witchcraft and false prophesying, Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 13:5; 18:20; 1 Samuel 28:9.
 2. The Third Commandment- Blasphemy, Leviticus 24:14, 16, 23; 1 Kings 21:10.
 3. The Fourth Commandment- Violation of the Sabbath, Exodus 31:14; 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36.
 4. The Fifth Commandment- Striking or reviling a parent, Exodus 21:15, 17.
 5. The Sixth Commandment
 - a. Murder, Leviticus 24:17, 21
 - b. Kidnapping, Exodus 21:16
 6. The Seventh Commandment
 - a. Adultery, Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22.
 - b. Incestuous and unnatural sexual relations, Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 18:29; 20:11, 14.
 - c. Unchastity, Leviticus 21:9, Deuteronomy 22:21, 23.
 - d. Rape, Deuteronomy 22:25
 7. The Ninth Commandment — False Witnesses, Deuteronomy 19:16, 19

For all these transgression, the sacrificial system of the Old Testament fell short. It was not designed for these atrocities. With all these sins, justice demanded death!

²¹ Compare John 5:39

²² Compare Leviticus 17:11

²³ Compare Hebrews 10:1-10

²⁴ Compare 2 Samuel 11:4-17

COULD DO TO MAKE IT RIGHT! He only could appeal to grace.

This illustrates the fourth and final characteristic of a Biblical Pulpit: It Highlights The Inability Of Man!

There was nothing David could do to atone for his sin — he only could rely upon grace.

This was the case with Eli. As Samuel was commissioned unto the prophetic ministry this therefore was to comprise his message: The Inability of Man!

Once again we see that this is such an important message for our day. Again there are many pulpits which preach against sin. But many of these same pulpits preach the ability of man to make it right. Just do these four things. Recommit yourself to these seven promises. When will we learn that as great as may be our intention, we lack the ability in ourselves to carry it out?

Romans 7:18, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”

Galatians 5:17, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

John 2:24-25, “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”

In and of ourselves we only can sin! We have no ability to do otherwise! And this is where the true crises of the modern pulpit is seen. It looks out over a congregation of Eli's and rather than saying, “There is nothing you can do to make it right., there is no sacrifice that you can give, there is no offering that you can provide, there are no magical words to recite, there are no promises you can make — as was Samuel's message! It instead says, “Peace! Safety! All is O.K. Just do these five things. Stop sinning. And start these spiritual disciplines!” All this has the net effect that the Christian ceases looking to Christ.

What is the message that Eli needed to hear?

Your only hope and plea is Christ!

Romans 7:24b-25a, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

From this we conclude that a mark of good preaching is that it disappears such that you do not leave a sermon saying., “What a great preacher! What an experience! .I'm charged and ready for the week!” Rather, you leave the sermon saying, “Who is God that He should love a sinner like me! Thank you Lord Jesus for your forgiveness!”

And while there are practical things that this text tells me that I can and should do in my service in the

Kingdom, I know I only can do it by the grace of God!

May the Lord grant us today many pulpits and congregations that would settle for nothing less!

Subscription Information

A subscription to the *Broomfield Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is on a free basis. To subscribe or unsubscribe send a post card to *Broomfield Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word*®, Post Office Box 691, Windsor, Colorado 80550. Or you may send your request by email to [Nels Nelson](mailto:Nels.Nelson@broomfieldopc.com). *The Broomfield Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is published regularly.

VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO

Feel free to visit Broomfield Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Broomfield Presbyterian Church is located at Kohl Elementary School, 10th Street and Kohl, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Broomfield Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. There recording for this sermon can be found at [The Faithful Minister's Message Part 2](#) . The web address for all sermons at Broomfield can be found out as follows: <http://broomfieldopc.sermonaudio.com>

About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on August 21, 2005. Greg is the Preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.