

Preaching the Gospel

Pastor Steven Scibelli is a graduate of Stevens School of the Bible. In 1988 he led a team that included his wife, Linda; their two children, Lysa and Peter; and twelve others to Ghana, West Africa. Today, Greater Grace World Outreach in Ghana has expanded to 18 churches that have sent missionaries to Nigeria, Togo, and Liberia.

Staying true to the vision to spread the Gospel and to make disciples of men in the uttermost parts of the world, Pastor Scibelli has ministered in more than 20 African countries and 50 other countries over the last 20 years.

In between church planting and his bimonthly trips to Africa, the Scibellis live in Baltimore where he teaches at Maryland Bible College and Seminary and serves in the Missions and Outreach departments at GGWO.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

Copyright © 2001

Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Chapter 1 7

THE PREEMINENCE OF PREACHING

Chapter 2 11

PROCLAIMERS NEEDED

Chapter 3 15

MAKING DARKNESS TREMBLE

CONCLUSION 18

*In joy or sorrow, health or pain,
Our course be onward still;
We sow on Burma's barren plain,
We reap on Zion's hill!*

—Adoniram Judson
(America's first overseas missionary.)

INTRODUCTION

A story is told about an evangelist in the 1800s and what happened on the day he got married. As they were traveling in their carriage, on the way to their honeymoon, he and his wife made a stop at a store. The man started to evangelize, and the people there sensed the power of God.

One man received Christ as his personal Savior right away. Then, he said to the evangelist, "Can you come with me? My brother is working in a factory nearby. You must tell him this message!"

"Oh, I don't think I can do that," the evangelist said, and then explained that he was on his honeymoon.

Still, the man followed him to the carriage, begging him to speak to his brother.

The evangelist's new bride agreed (knowing her husband's heart for the lost) and said, "Let's just stop by the factory for ten minutes."

They arrived at the factory and began to evangelize the man's brother. And before they left, the whole factory was converted by his message. Everyone got saved!

Finally, he sent his wife ahead to the place where they were to stay for their honeymoon, saying, "I will join you in a few hours. I sense that God is doing something special here."

It was days before this man caught up with his wife. He just kept preaching—preaching the glorious Gospel.

Of course, that is an extreme example, but this booklet exalts the glory of preaching. Preaching is a necessity to the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our hope is that many readers would heed God's call to preach the Good News in these days.

Chapter One

THE PREEMINENCE OF PREACHING

“But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour” (Titus 1:3).

“And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you” (1 Corinthians 9:23).

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul mentioned the word “gospel” ten times. To me, it sounds as if he wanted to be married to the gospel. What an awesome marriage that would be! To be married to the Good News, the grace news: the Gospel.

Titus 1:3 says that God “manifested”—*phaneroo* in the Greek text—His Word through preaching. That is the way He makes the Word, which before was hidden or unknown, openly visible and clearly evident. God opens His Word through preaching.

Charles Spurgeon, known as the “Prince of Preachers” in his time, once said, “People have a high value of the Word but a low value of preaching.” People believe in the Word, that it is inspired, authoritative, and infallible. But the same people, for the most part, do not esteem preaching.

Put Preaching First

In much of Christianity today, programs are the emphasis—not preaching. It is education, and not preaching. It is business—not preaching. It is music—not preaching. It is miracles—not preaching. It is money—not preaching. It is everything but preaching. This is most evidenced by the fact that only ten percent of all American missionaries go to the foreign field to do preaching. Most of what they do is educational or agricultural, which are of great benefit to the people they reach.

I thank God that we have a ministry full of preachers today. All over the world, we have people who are proclaimers of the Gospel, messengers of the Gospel, preachers of the Gospel. We have developed farms in Africa, built bridges in the war-torn Central Asia, and raised up medical clinics and orphanages in many

countries. These are valuable and worthwhile endeavors we believe in. But they are never to be done at the expense of preaching.

Overcoming the Enemy

John Wesley, a great man of God from England, faced tremendous odds as a preacher in his own country. Seen as a heretic, he was under attack from the religious authorities who wielded political clout. Wesley was not allowed to preach in any public meeting places because of his message. They were attacking him everywhere he went, but he found a good place to preach—atop his father's tombstone! He got up on his daddy's tombstone and started preaching. The crowd around that tombstone grew into hundreds of people and eventually three thousand people were coming to the tombstone for his messages. Every week he was on the tombstone preaching.

One day while he was preaching, an enemy of the Gospel came on horseback. He threw a lasso around John Wesley and physically dragged him away. This man hated the Gospel, so of course he didn't like to hear it preached. After dragging the preacher for half of a mile, he told Wesley he was going to kill him.

Wesley asked, "Could you do me one favor before you kill me?"

"What's that?" the man said.

"Let me go back and finish my message. Then you can do whatever you want."

The man was overwhelmed, and he ended up getting saved.

Preaching did it. Don't you love it? Preaching the Gospel!

Chapter Two

PROCLAIMERS NEEDED

“For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

“Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

“For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

“That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness,

which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel” (Philippians 1:5-12).

The apostle Paul himself said that he had received a ministry. He did not consider his own life dear, therefore he could finish his course with joy and testify of the gospel of grace. Paul’s life was devoted to preaching, testifying of the gospel of grace.

I once found myself in a discussion about tokens and rewards. We can go to heaven and receive a few tokens of grace, or we can get there and enjoy a mountain of rewards because of affiliation with a ministry that promotes preaching. Every thing I do in every direction as a Spirit-filled believer—in my home, in my family, in my business—all of it will result in a great benefit to me as a partaker of the rewards of a Gospel ministry. That is so awesome to think about.

Rather than receiving initiations from the kingdom of darkness, from the world system, or from the analysis of my flesh, I thank God for the place He has put me. I am sitting under

preaching, being taught the Word of God. I hear the Scriptures presented line upon line, precept upon precept. It is an awesome thing.

The Prize and the Crown

I can count about ninety problems that Paul addressed in his letters to the Corinthians. Yet, he continually edified the Corinthians, encouraging them to keep going with the Gospel. He emphasized that there is a prize and a crown for those who preach.

Paul was in prison. But rather than let himself be consumed with everything that was going on—his lack of provisions, problems with the church at Philippi, divisions among members in the Church, things going on with Epaphroditus, people preaching from the wrong motive—Paul simply stayed married to the Gospel. He kept talking about the fellowship of the Gospel (Philippians 1:5); he wrote of the defense and confirmation of the Gospel; he emphasized the furtherance of the Gospel (Philippians 1:12). He understood the incredible opportunities he had and the impact he and others would make on a dying world.

Preaching Brings the Cure

Marital problems in Christianity? I think they would all just go away if people were married to Jesus Christ experientially, living in the Body of Christ, and hearing preaching. Preaching is the answer. God wants to raise up preachers.

There are a lot of things people can do. No matter what we do for work, as Christians we must realize that God has called us to be proclaimers. As a preacher of the Gospel, I will never be unemployed. There is always plenty of work to do. There are lots of lost people everywhere, waiting to hear preaching.

God has called us to proclaim the message of grace. It is a privilege to go out to the lost today. It is an awesome privilege to be with the Body of Christ. As we are growing, we make an impact through just preaching the Word of God. We see people's lives transformed. We see people coming on the bus to church. People come from the docks, invited through the port ministry. People are personally inviting others. It is all happening because of preaching. God manifests His Word and reveals His Divine purpose for our lives through preaching.

Chapter Three

MAKING DARKNESS TREMBLE

“Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:31).

“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

“Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” (2 Timothy 4:16-17).

To this day, preaching causes the darkness to tremble. That is why difficult situations are brought into people’s lives. There is no question as to why these things are happening. Preachers have an effect in cities and the world. Suffering is perfect evidence of being in the plan of God and living in His purpose.

A group surrounded a certain man while he preached the Gospel. Arrows were being shot into him. He just kept pulling the arrows out, snapping them, and throwing them to the ground. It took sixty arrows to kill him as he kept on preaching.

“What is going on with this guy?” they were thinking. So afraid of this man were they that after he was dead, they cut his body into twelve parts and buried each one in different parts of the country. They were afraid that something would happen with him after he was dead.

True to the End

Paul was preaching in prison. Toward the end of his life, Paul would not allow his mouth to be shut. When he said that he was delivered from the mouth of the lion, I believe Paul was speaking of satanic forces, evil, and demons trying to shut his mouth. Still, by Paul, “preaching was made fully known.” What was he showing? That preaching shuts the devil’s mouth.

I think that even as the Roman soldiers were leading Paul to execution, he was still preaching. I can see it. He is just about to be beheaded and he tells the guy with the ax, “Do you know Jesus loves you? Wait a minute! Before you do what

you have to do, I want you to know that Jesus loves you. You can be saved. You can be born again and enter the Kingdom of heaven.”

He was probably still preaching as the ax fell on his neck. The objective of the enemy is to shut down the Gospel any way he can.

The Unstoppable Gospel

Yes, Paul did end up dying for his testimony. The kingdom of darkness knew what kind of threat Paul was, and it tried to rub him out. Yet, others were raised up by God to preach. Satan can stop one mouth, but he has never been able to stop the proclamation of the Gospel.

Let us never get familiar in any way with preaching. We must proclaim God’s message in creativity and power. Think of the Moroccos, the Chinas, the New Yorks, the Washingtons—all places of incredible opportunities. What do they need? Preaching. They need the Word of God proclaimed beyond illustrations and stories.

We must herald the message. Proclaim it. We are messengers in our homes, our neighborhoods, our cities. We have the Good News that a lost and dying world must hear. Let us preach it.

CONCLUSION

Preaching! It is a privilege to be trained under a great preacher. Our conversation is the Gospel. Wherever we are—on the street corners, in a house—we are preaching, we are proclaiming the Good News. In cities, in states, in countries, in the whole world, we are preaching the glorious Gospel. It is an awesome privilege we have today.

Oh, if Christianity could only see it. So many people are involved in so many things besides preaching. Those things seem to be good. But God says this: "Preach the Gospel. Proclaim the grace news. Proclaim glad tidings. Proclaim the Person and the Work of Jesus Christ wherever you go."

God will open the doors for us.

The Gospel is fearless.

The Gospel is simple.

The Gospel is perfectly true.

Father, thank You today for the provision of

preaching. We thank You for the Word of God and for the message of grace and for the fellowship of the Gospel. We thank You for the defense of the Gospel, for the confirmation of the Gospel, for the furtherance of the Gospel, for the conversation of the Gospel, for the faith of the Gospel.

Give us open hearts and open doors wherever we go today. Thank You for manifesting Your Word through preaching. God, anoint us and give us Your power. In Jesus' name, Amen.