



ETB: Romans 10:5-15

The Priority *of* PREACHING

By Steve W. Lemke



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Left: At Philippi, steps leading up to the bishop's stand at Basilica A. The steps would have

lead to a raised circular pulpit from which the bishop would address the congrega-

tion. Built with the traditional 3 aisles, the church was constructed at the end of the 5th cent.

WHY DOES THE BIBLE SAY preaching is so important? The apostle Paul answers this question quite clearly in Romans 10:5-15. Preaching plays a crucial role in God's plan for bringing sinners to repentance and salvation.

The word translated, "proclaim" or "preach" in Romans 10:8 is based on the Greek word *kerysso*, used over fifty times in the New Testament. Writers of the New Testament used other words to describe various aspects of preaching, but *kerysso* is among the most prominent terms they used. Three important interrelated concepts flow from this word *kerysso*. First, a preacher or herald plays the role of a *keryx*, similar to a town crier who brings significant news. The preacher serves as an agent of someone in higher authority, communicating important news to the people of an area. Second, the activity of the herald is *kerysso*, to proclaim a significant message. For example, one usage of this word was to herald good news such as the victory of a king returning from battle. Likewise, the Christian preacher proclaims the victory King Jesus won over sin and death. Indeed, Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the good news of the coming kingdom of God (Mark 3:14; Luke 9:1-2). Third, the preacher's primary message is the *kerygma*. For Christians, the *kerygma* is the gospel—the good news of Jesus' sinless life, atoning crucifixion, death, and victorious resurrection and ascension. If the *keryx* does not proclaim the *kerygma*, the herald has gone "off message."

Paul described this gospel message as both believing that God resurrected Jesus and confessing Jesus Christ as Lord (vv. 9-10). He likewise told the Corinthian church that "we preach Christ crucified"¹ (1 Cor. 1:23; see 2:2). The apostle elaborated this gospel message in greater detail in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8—Jesus was crucified for our sins, buried, resurrected on the third day, and appeared in His resurrected body to many people in multiple settings, including Paul



Right: A raised pulpit known as an ambo; this was used in the Byzantine church of St. Theodoros at Beit Sila, which was on the road between Lydda and Jerusalem. The church was in use from the 5th until the 7th centuries.

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himself. These events were foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. In one of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, He commanded that the message should be proclaimed to all nations concerning His crucifixion, death, and resurrection, to which the proper response was repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:44-49). Preachers in the New Testament focused their message on the *kerygma* of Jesus Christ.² All preaching should be gospel-focused on the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Paul's main point in Romans 9-11 is that righteousness and salvation come not by our good works, but by the righteousness we have through faith in Jesus Christ. Attaining righteousness by good works would be as impossible as climbing up to heaven (Rom. 10:5-6; see Deut. 30:12-13). True salvation comes only by placing one's faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10).



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Above: Mars Hill is an outcropping of stone that overlooks the forum at Athens. Philosophers gathered here to debate and discuss ideas and schools of thought. Brought here by Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, Paul declared the gospel of Christ; some believed, and others rejected his message and ridiculed him.

Right: Egyptian figure of a royal herald named

Neni; wooden; dated to about 2250 BC. In Egyptian culture, the royal herald was responsible for assisting with palace administration and for maintaining palace protocol and etiquette. Additionally, he would oversee the formal ceremonies of the Egyptian court and palace and also serve as the royal reporter or royal "repeater" of news that the pharaoh either received or announced.

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/BRENT BRUCE/ ORIENTAL MUSEUM OF CHICAGO (70/9272)



Paul affirmed that the great value of gospel-centered preaching is that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (v. 11-15). "Whoever" means that everyone is potentially savable. Preaching should therefore be addressed to everyone who will hear the gospel. For people to be saved, however, they must first hear the "message of faith" preached (v. 8). The hearers cannot call upon Him in whom they have not believed; they cannot believe unless they hear the gospel preached; and they cannot hear without a preacher being sent to share the gospel with them (vv. 14-15).

Preaching or proclamation is more than a mere announcement of good news. The Greeks used the word *kerysso* to imply making an appeal for a decision. They used this word for trying to persuade someone to purchase a property or to encourage persons to agree to become colonists. Romans 10:14 uses *kerysso* in this sense—sharing the gospel with a view to persuading or convincing the hearers.

Appealing to and exhorting hearers to respond is a crucial element of biblical preaching. The description of Peter's sermon at Pentecost states that he "strongly urged" his hearers to respond to the gospel and be saved, which many of them did (Acts 2:40-41). Likewise, in describing his own preaching, the apostle Paul said, "we try to persuade people" (2 Cor. 5:11). The contemporary master preacher John Stott made a similar point:

It is not enough to expound a thoroughly orthodox doctrine of reconciliation if we never beg people to come to Christ. Nor is it right for a sermon to consist of an interminable appeal that has not been preceded by an exposition of the gospel. The rule should be "no appeal without a proclamation, and no proclamation without an appeal."³

The best preaching does not draw attention to the speaker's oratorical skills. Paul insisted to the Corinthian church that he did not preach to them with cleverness of words or brilliance of speech (1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1). Instead, the apostle preached the simple gospel message of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:23; 2:2). The message of God may be enhanced with effective speaking skills, but not if the oratory overwhelms the message. The sermon should bring attention to the message, not the messenger. The message of the gospel must always be the focus of Christ-centered preaching.

Most pastors both preach and teach. Indeed, Paul told Timothy that a pastor should be an "able teacher" (1 Tim. 3:2, HCSB). What is the distinction between preaching and teaching? These two important functions of a Christian minister overlap somewhat, but the two also differ in at least four ways at times. First, sometimes the *location* will be different. Teaching is usually done in the synagogue, church, someone's home, or a gathering place within the community (Acts 17:2; 19:9; 20:20; 1 Cor. 4:17). Preaching is also done in church, of course, but can be also in more public places like streets or public buildings. Peter's sermon at Pentecost was in the streets of Jerusalem (Acts 2:5-41), and Paul's sermon on Mars Hill was outside on the Areopagus of Rome (17:16-34). The second difference is the *audience*. Teaching is intended primarily for people who have already been exposed to the gospel message; preaching is intended primarily for unbelieving sinners. The third difference concerns the *content* of the message. Teaching involves sharing information such as an exposition of Scripture, explaining a key doctrine or belief. The primary content of preaching is the gospel of Christ. Fourth, the *purpose* of teaching is to edify and inform believers and those who have already

Below: Located between the colosseum and Palatine Hill in Rome, the Triumphal Arch honors Constantine's victory over the Roman tyrant Maxentius at the Battle of Milvian Bridge in AD 312. Standing about 69 feet tall, 84 feet wide, and 23 feet deep, both sides of the structure highlight Constantine's political, military, and personal accomplishments.



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Above: In the center-right of the photo are the southern steps, which were part of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem. Rabbis

regularly instructed their students in this area before leading them through the doors (which have been sealed) to the tem-

ple platform. Some have surmised that Peter preached his Pentecost sermon to those gathered at the southern steps.

heard the gospel, to increase their knowledge of God. The purpose of preaching is to share the gospel with unbelievers, to which the appropriate response is repentance and faith.

Both preaching and teaching should be based on the written Word of God, not on our own ideas. Romans 9–11 contains many references to Old Testament Scriptures. For example, 10:5–10 echoes the language of Deuteronomy 30:12–14; and Paul alluded to Leviticus 18:5 in 10:5. Later, verse 13 clearly references Joel 2:32. Bible-based preaching or teaching gives the message greater authority because of the divine inspiration of Scripture. Since Scripture consistently affirms Jesus as our Savior, biblical preaching is always Christ-centered.

When preachers proclaim the Word of God faithfully, the result is life transformation. The power of preaching is not in the preacher's words, but in the Spirit of God driving those words home in the hearts of hearers. True proclamation involves heralding important, life-changing news.

Each generation has at least one event that is always cemented in their minds. We can all remember exactly where we were and how we felt when we first heard of tragic events like the attack on Pearl Harbor, the President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. assassinations, the Challenger explosion, or the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Or we may remember good news such as our favorite sports team winning, our candidate winning an important election, or getting good news from a doctor. Even news at this level of significance changes our lives. We become different after we hear that news. It spurs our emotions and causes us to want to respond in various ways. So is the effective preaching of the gospel. Spirit-empowered gospel preaching ignites like a stick of dynamite in the hearers' souls, changing their lives forever. Gospel preaching sounds strange to unbelievers (1 Cor. 1:18,20–21,23); but it brings light and life to those who hear and believe (Rom. 10:8–10; 2 Cor. 4:6). 🔥

1. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

2. Acts 2:12–41; 3:12–20; 4:10–12,31; 5:42; 6:4,7; 7:51–52; 10:34–43; 11:36–43; 13:23–39; 17:2–4,10–13,22–24; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:17,23–24; 1 Tim. 2:7.

3. John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 198.

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