Preaching with Authority

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Matthew 7:28-29
When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Titus 2:15
These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

I. The Importance of Preaching with Authority

A. The Rebellion of the Age

“Seldom if ever in its long history has the world witnessed such a self-conscious revolt against authority. Not that the phenomenon of protest and rebellion is new. Ever since the fall of man human nature has been rebellious, ‘hostile to God’ and unwilling, even unable, to ‘submit to God’s law’ (Rom. 8:7). And this basic fact about the human condition has had a thousand ugly manifestations. What seems new today, however, is both the world-wide scale of the revolt and the philosophical arguments with which it is sometimes buttressed” (Stott, Between Two Worlds, p. 51).

“And now, lastly, why should we at this particular age be decided and bold? We should be so because this age is a doubting age. It swarms with doubters as Egypt of old with frogs. You rub against them everywhere. Everybody is doubting everything, not merely in religion, but in politics and social economics, in everything indeed” (Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, p. 228).

“Thus, minds cannot be organized and thoughts cannot be forced on people. No institution, however venerable, has the right to impose an idea upon us by the weight of its own authority. Nor even can any idea impose itself upon us all. For there is no such thing as a truth which is absolute and therefore universal. On the contrary, everything is relative and subjective. Before I can believe any idea, it has to authenticate itself to me personally; and before you can be expected to believe it, it must become self-authenticating to you. Until this happens, we neither should nor can believe” (Stott, Between Two Worlds, pp. 55-56).
B. The Retreat of the Modern Ministry Mindset

“Words like ‘ought,’ ‘should,’ and ‘must’ punctuated the older style in which the preacher told the audience what to do. The new style explains the issues, presents the alternatives, and then seeks to persuade—but clearly leaves the decision up to the listener. Modern Americans don’t want their politicians, doctors, or pastors telling them what to do. They want to be well informed and decide for themselves” (Anderson, A Church for the 21st Century, p. 209).

“Speaching is not defined by the style of the presentation but by the relationship of the presenter to both the listeners and the content: the pastor uses a lecture-like format, often standing while the listeners are sitting. The speaker decides the content ahead of time, usually in a removed setting, and then offers it in such a way that the speaker is in control of the content, speed, and conclusion of the presentation” (Pagitt, Preaching Re-Imagined, p. 22).

“Speaching stands in contrast to what I call progressional dialogue, where the content of the presentation is established in the context of a healthy relationship between the presenter and the listeners, and substantive changes in the content are then created as a result of this relationship.

It works like this: I say something that causes another person to think something she hadn’t thought before. In response she says something that causes a third person to make a comment he wouldn’t normally have made without the benefit of the second person’s statement. In turn I think something I wouldn’t have thought without hearing the comments made by the other two. So now we’ve all ended up in a place we couldn’t have come to without the input we received from each other. In a real way the conversation has progressed” (Pagitt, Preaching Re-Imagined, pp. 23-24).

C. The Ramifications for True Gospel Ministry

1. The Gospel Message Calls for Decisiveness about Its Content and Importance

2. The Health of the Church Calls for Conviction regarding God’s Truth

II. The Foundations of Preaching with Authority

A. A Biblical View of Truth

B. A Biblical View of Knowledge

C. A Biblical View of Ministerial Stewardship


III. The Character of Preaching with Authority

A. Clarity

1. About the Text

“If a preacher knows his subject well, if he has mastered it, if he has become an authority on it, then he will speak confidently about it, even passionately. But if he is unsure of his subject or his field, he will speak hesitantly, perhaps reluctantly, and certainly not very authoritatively. There are times when we may bluff our way through a subject, but sooner or later the people will find out that we are simply a well-articulated windbag, with no real substance” (Montoya, *Preaching with Passion*, p. 83).

2. In the Sermon

B. Conviction

1. In the Preacher

“You cannot speak passionately or authoritatively about what you do no personally and wholeheartedly believe. Every truth found in Scripture needs to be filtered through our being until it takes root and yields faith” (Montoya, *Preaching with Passion*, p. 78).

2. In the Hearers

C. Confrontation

“The preacher should never be apologetic, he should never give the impression that he is speaking by their leave as it were; he should not be tentatively putting forward certain suggestions and ideas. That is not to be his attitude at all. He is a man, who is there to ‘declare’ certain things; he is a man under commission and under authority. He is an ambassador, and he should be aware of his authority. He is an ambassador, and he should be aware of his authority. He should always know that he comes to the congregation as a sent messenger. Obviously, this is not a matter of self-confidence; that is always deplorable in a preacher…. You have no self-confidence, but you are a man under authority, and you have authority; and this should be evident and obvious” (Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, p. 83).
IV. The Cultivation of Preaching with Authority

A. We Must Be Convinced of the Truth

“It is part of wisdom, as well as of modesty, to give no small weight to the opinions of men whose abilities, learning, and piety have made them illustrious; but if a man is not accustomed to come for himself to the Bible, and form his own judgment of its meaning, his teachings, whatever else they may possess, will have little of living power to sway men’s souls” (Broadus, *Matthew*, p. 172).

B. We Must Be Conformed to the Truth

“We must show our decision for the truth by the sacrifices we are ready to make. This is, indeed, the most efficient as well as the most trying method. We must be ready to give up anything and everything for the sake of the principles which we have espoused, and must be ready to offend our best supporters, to alienate our warmest friends, sooner than belie our consciences. We must be ready to be beggars in purse, and offscourings in reputation, rather than act treacherously. We can die, but we cannot deny the truth” (Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, p. 226).

C. We Must Be Competent with the Truth

1. Explanation
   a. Helping them see it in the text.
   b. Helping them understand the text.

2. Argumentation
   a. Anticipating the points of objection.
   b. Attacking the points of resistance.