

Reformation and Revival Preaching 2019 – 2 Tim 3:16 – 4:5

Introduction – Research Centers tell us that 65% of Americans identify themselves as Christians. This is down from 85% in 1990, 82% in 2001, and 78% in 2012. Even though the percentages are shrinking, America still boasts the highest number of Christians of any nation, with nearly 240 million. This is nothing to boast in but is rather to our shame. The stronghold of secularism, Darwinism, egalitarianism, all anti-Christian heresies, has not only been able to resist the Christian majority; they have altogether taken over everything in the landscape. From whence comes our impotence? I believe I am standing in that very place – the American pulpit. *"The pulpit today is the central problem in the midst of that...disaster that we like to call our culture. With our indistinct mutterings, we have "preached" our way into a culture that we deserve. Because we are the problem, we cannot be the solution. "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us" (Isaiah 33:22)" – (Wilson, Mother Kirk).*

The Call of the Preacher (2 Tim 3:16-4:5) – In this letter to Timothy, Paul reminds him to stir up the gift of God which was in him (1:6), to not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord (1:8), to hold fast the pattern of sound words which were being rejected (1:13), to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2:1), to commit to other faithful men these faithful teachings (2:2), to remind them of these things, charging them to stay on message (2:14). He warns Timothy of the perilous times which will soon come (3:1ff) and this all leads up to his climactic charge: Preach the Word (4:2).

We are generally familiar with 2 Tim 3:16 as the verse where Paul says that all Scripture is inspired. But that is not his main point. He is addressing the "man of God", the preacher, who is assigned by God to preach the Word. And while it is true that the Word is profitable for all, his main point in vv16-17 is to declare that Word, all of it, sufficient to make Timothy complete. The preacher's is to be an overflowing life of example, equipped by the Word and Spirit to equip others. He is to avoid tickling itching ears. He is to preach when they want to hear and when they don't. He is to preach the Lord's agenda, not the felt needs of the seeker. *Keruxon*, "preach," is to herald – to declare what you have been sent to declare by an authority you are under in submission and service. He is to be an instrument of God to convince, rebuke, and exhort. Why? Back to 3:16 – because the Word is efficacious. And the main emphasis here is the Word-preached.

What is a Reformed Preacher? – Paul was urging Timothy back to the sources, back to the Word of God, for his authoritative preaching and pastoring. This is what Calvin was doing and did. This is what the Reformation was all about. Calvin was committed to exegetical preaching, staying close to the text, and he fought against preaching ideas that could not be found from the text. In addition, his style was relatively brief, warm, devotional, and with an aim at the majesty of God in all. His *"Institutes"* was originally written for the layman as from a pastor – an extended evangelical tract on the gospel. At the same time, his message was dangerous, threatening civil and ecclesiastical authorities even to the point of putting his own life at risk. He was a shepherd and no hireling – and shepherds get into fights because there are wolves and wolves in sheep's clothing to be fought.

Today's Preacher - 20 years ago in his book, *The Church Impotent*, Leon Podles wrote, *"The Protestant clergy will be a characteristically female occupation within a generation,"* and he gives a history and theology/philosophy of the church and clergy to back it up. American evangelicalism still does not know what hit it in the 19th century. Romantic sentimentalism, emotional pietism, wild-eyed revivalism, brought forth not only a number of cults (JWs, Mormons, etc.), it also began to strip the church of any masculinity, especially in the pulpit. Charles Spurgeon complained that *"there has got abroad a notion, somehow, that if you become a Christian you must sink your manliness and turn milk-sop."* Add to that a church that embraced higher criticism, rejected the creation account, the miracles of Christ, the virgin birth and resurrection, most of which happened because of the challenge of the scientist/humanist/atheist movements, and the church traded in the strength of truth in order to be liked. And that defines the pulpit today. Women (or soft, effeminate men) who have traded in the truth in order to be liked, to be seeker-friendly, to stay away from mean words in order to "be like Jesus." And if that is the kind of preaching we want today, of course we want women to preach, along with the soft men who led the way (because men always lead in some way). Throw into all of this the strangling, pessimistic view that the church should never impose God's laws on the world nor ever expect that Christ's reign from heaven should have anything to do with culture at large, and you can see why the devil has us up against the ropes. *(And now a plug for our conference: Christ Over Politics)*

What the Man of God Must Preach Today – Our culture is gender-bending because our pulpits are gender-bending. Our culture is fatherless, because our pulpits do not have ecclesial fathers, hard on the truth, hard on protecting their flock. We murder children before they are born because our pulpits don't have cultural-fathers in them telling the world to stop it. The church is losing the children they didn't abort because we don't have preachers warning their people that the man-stealing machine (aka the government school system) *"will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables"* (1 Tim 4:4). Now if we let them teach our children, for generations, that they are a glob of matter formed by random chance, why would we be shocked when they don't value an embryo? And why are we further shocked when they hate their bodies, mangle, tatt, cut, and mutilate them, including their genitalia, and call it freedom to choose? With the Industrial Revolution, the "Pill," and no-fault divorce, women are told they can't find fulfillment in being *"into husbands, children, and homemaking"* (Titus 2:4, personal translation). The institution of marriage and family is failing, swallowed up by the nanny-state (which encourages and funds sex without covenant, sex without fruit, and gender without meaning), because the church refuses to acknowledge and submit to Gen 1:27, 1 Tim 2:8-15, Exod 20:14, Matt 5:27-32, Deut 22:5, Eph 5:22-33 from the pulpit. Is it any wonder that wives hate to be told to submit to their husbands by men who refuse to submit to the Lord and His Word?

What are We to Do? – Returning to where we began, we cannot do anything. Even to repent will be a gift of God (Acts 5:31, 11:18). One of the great errors of the Second Great Awakening was the belief that we could bring forth reformations and revivals by following certain methods. And so, the first thing we must repent of is believing in ourselves (and that certainly will take an act of God). Is all of this happening to the church so that we might learn what it really means to repent of trusting in ourselves? God must bring forth the man of God who has been fully equipped with all of Scripture and then turns and heralds/proclaims the Word. Like the prophets of old, he will be at war with the world but he will also be at war with the powers-that-be in the church. And remember what happened to John the Baptist when he got involved in politics. The man of God must proclaim that Almighty God is supreme in His omnipotence and absolute sovereignty, that He sent His Son in time and space, born of a virgin, to live faithfully before the Father, to die on a cross as a substitutionary atonement for the sins of His people, to be raised from the dead in total vindication and crowned President of presidents, Lawmaker of all lawmakers, and Judge of all judges, and that every knee must bow, will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. He must preach that this Jesus is drawing all nations to Himself for He has purchased them, and that His Spirit has been poured out on all flesh. He must preach that all men everywhere must repent and believe in the world-changing mercy of God – and nothing else. We must plead to that Father in the name of that Jesus in the power of that Spirit. Amen.

Dave Hatcher – Reformation Sunday, October 27, 2019

Notes for Little Saints