

# **“What is the chaff to the wheat?” (Jer 23:29) – Reformation and Revival Preaching**

**Introduction** – It is time for another message. How are we to receive the Word of God preached to us?

**The Call of the Preacher** (2 Tim 3:16-4:5) – 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. His is to be a life of example, equipped by the Word 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. 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.

**The Call of the Prophet** (Jer 23:16-29) – The prophet, like the preacher, was to bring forth the Word of God. Faithfully done, there was great promise. Unfaithfully done, there was great calamity.

**Soft Words** (vv 16-17) – Soft words from prophets came to tickle ears and say there was ‘peace’ when there was no peace. “*They make you worthless,*” the Lord warned. Soft words produce hard hearts.

**You Cannot Know** (vv 18-20) – False teaching led to an attitude where everyone followed ‘*the dictates of his own heart*’, for ‘*no evil shall come upon you*’. But no one knows the future decreed in God’s counsel. In the case of Israel, contrary to all the opinion polls, economic, international, and religious experts, she was about to fall and fall hard. Tickling her ears was not going to change anything.

**If They Had Obeyed** (vv 21-27) – When God had brought the Word to the prophets, if they had obeyed and brought that Word to the people, God would have used it to turn the heart of the nation. Notice the power of the Word of God and the importance of the office of one who is to declare the Word of God (James 3:1). But these who call themselves messengers of God are self-deceived prophets (v 26), leading people farther and farther away from the God of the Scriptures.

**The Word Faithfully Proclaimed** (vv 28-29) – Jeremiah comes to the climax of this section, taunting the dreams of the false-prophets in Mt. Carmel-like fashion. God’s Word (and the context is God’s Word proclaimed, preached) is like fire, efficacious in melting, refining, or consuming, depending upon the matter. This faithfully preached Word is like a hammer breaking down a rock wall, the wall of unbelief: hard words, producing soft hearts. “*What is the chaff to the wheat?*”

**The Preacher’s Relationship to the Word** – Back in 2 Tim 3:16ff we see that the ‘man of God’ is to trust only in the Word of God as sufficient to instruct his flock in all righteousness. It brings life and sustains life (1 Pet 1:23, Deut 32:46-47). But this is not simply the Word read – it is the Word preached. In God’s economy, He intends to use fallible men preaching fallible messages from His infallible Word to perfectly accomplish His purposes.

**The Hearer’s Relationship to the Word** (Rom 10:14-16) – Hearing is not passive, for this hearing produces faith. And that hearing comes from the Word of God preached by Christ’s ambassadors. In fact, these verses are not saying that we must hear *about* Christ, but that we must hear Christ Himself. This is what Jesus Himself taught (John 5:24-25, 10:2-3, 16, 27, 18:37).

**The Gift of Preaching to the People of God** – The Word is a gift of God to His people. So is the preaching of that Word. Through it, Christ speaks to the people He dearly loves. He gives them His Word like milk to a child (1 Pet 2:2-3). All of Psalm 119 is a reflection of one who loves the Word. And it is at Mt. Zion, the corporate gathering of the saints, where we ‘hear’ the voice of the Word given directly to us – “*See that you do not refuse Him who speaks...*” (Heb 12:25).

**Preparing For the Word** – So we must prepare ourselves for such a time.

**Come Prepared** – Spiritually, relationally, physically, the Lord’s Day worship service should come as no surprise. It is the beginning, the source, of all of the rest of your service of worship through the week.

**Come Well-Rehearsed** – From your own personal and family Bible Study (and the lack of existence of this is admitted by many of you), practice submitting to the study. Fundamentally, it is not about you getting a handle on the Word. It’s about the Word getting a handle on you.

**Come Expectantly** (Heb 4:11-13) – The Holy Spirit’s instrument, the preached Word of Christ, is used to open up your soul and mine and lay it all bare before the Lord for His work of cleansing and sanctifying. Did it sound as if the preacher was speaking directly to you?

**Applying the Word** – And we must be prepared to faithfully take that which is given to us

**The Danger’s of Hearing Only** (James 1:22) – Doctrine unapplied is like manna left until tomorrow.

**Come to the Table** – There should be a natural connection to hearing Christ and coming to the Table to partake of Christ. One man has said the Word is to the Sacrament as cooking is to eating.

**Receive it Organically, not Mechanically** – Do not receive the Word preached so much as a lecture given as much as food to be eaten, digested, nourishing the soul.

**Practice and Wisdom** (Heb 5:14) – There are always levels of understanding God's Word, and the solid food belongs to those who are exercising the understanding they have been given.

**What is the Chaff to the Wheat?** – We long for reformation and revival for the church. It will not come with sweet soft words to make us feel good. It will come with words that will have their way with us (not just 'them'). Always with grace, seasoned with salt, the Word is nonetheless to be thundered as a hammer upon stone. But if the declaration is hard, it is still sweet – to those with faith. And that faith comes by hearing. And that hearing by the Word of God. Jesus Christ speaks to you, His beloved, and to each of His sheep, by His Word applied by His Spirit. Never give up the wheat for the chaff. It is your life.

*Dave Hatcher – September 21, 2003*