

Purposes of Teaching and Preaching

the Scriptures

by Elder Bob Allgood

Before I go too far into this subject, lest someone misunderstands what I am saying, let me discuss briefly two things teaching and preaching the scriptures WILL NOT accomplish.

First, those who understand the true doctrine of God's Grace in the matter of eternal life or eternal salvation realize that teaching and preaching the scriptures does NOT result in a dead sinner being born of God. Teaching and preaching does NOT result in one receiving eternal life. Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). The scriptures are the record that "Eternal life is IN the Son of God". John wrote, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:11-12).

As I understand it, when one has been quickened or born of God, God sends his Spirit into his heart to testify that the sinner is a child of God, thereby crying Abba, Father. No man can teach a sinner to believe IN God. Those whom God chose in Christ and CALLS are taught of God that he is God. This is what Jesus taught when he said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). This same truth was taught by the apostle John when he said, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 John 2:27).

We are told that God puts his laws in the heart of his people and writes them in their minds. "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"

(Heb 10). I am of the opinion that the LAW which is put in the heart and mind at the time of being quickened is the LAW of Love. Paul said, “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:9). But does this mean we are taught everything we are to believe by God. I don’t think so, for Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29). If we know everything there is to believe, why are we instructed to “learn of Christ”?

Let’s go one step further. In Romans 8 and 9 Paul lays out the doctrine of election and predestination. SO we know that only those whom God has chosen in Christ are foreknown, predestinated, called, justified and glorified. We know that this is by Grace and not by works. When we come to Romans 10:8-10 where Paul says “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Paul gives two things man must do to be SAVED. (1) Confess with the mouth, and (2) Believe in the heart. By this we know the “salvation under consideration is NOT eternal salvation, for that is already taken care of by God. We know the salvation under consideration is “gospel salvation” – confess and believe – hear, believe and confess.

Paul goes on to say in verses 14-15 “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” One cannot call on Christ in whom they have not believed, and one cannot believe in Christ unless they have heard about him! Therefore one who has been born of God does not KNOW everything he is to believe. He must be taught. Cornelius and the Ethiopian Eunuch are prime examples of this truth. This is one of the purposes of teaching and preaching the scriptures.

Second, those who understand the true doctrine of Grace realize that ONLY God (the Godhead) can open the heart of mankind and give him spiritual understanding of the Truth. When Jesus walked on the road to Emmaus and talked with the two disciples about himself from ALL of the Old Testament Scriptures we are told, “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, --“ (Luke 24:45). Man can teach and preach the scriptures all day until the cows come home, but IF God does not give “understanding” of them it will come to nought.

Therefore it should be realized that ONLY God can quicken a dead sinner and cause one to be born of his spirit, and ONLY God can open one’s heart and give him/her understanding of the scriptures in the matter of conversion to the Truth. These are basic truths that we should not have to revisit every time we discuss the scriptures, but it seems that so many of God’s people lack the spiritual maturity to move beyond these basic principles unless they are

first restated. Paul faced this problem in his ministry and wrote “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit” (Hebrews 5:12-6:3).

As I began to consider this subject I soon realized it is bigger than I had first thought. I have found there are several distinct reasons or PURPOSES for teaching and preaching the Scriptures. Perhaps they can all be seen in a nut-shell in this statement by Paul, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” It seems to me that since ALL scripture is profitable for (1) Doctrine, (2) Reproof, (3) Correction, and (4) Instruction in righteousness, then this too must be the purposes for teaching and preaching the scriptures. These four reasons may be summed up in the one word “edification” which is “the act of one who helps promote another’s growth in Christian wisdom, piety, happiness, holiness”. Paul said the teaching and preaching “gifts” were given to the church “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: --“.

In order to examine the TRUE purposes of teaching and preaching the scriptures one must rely on the scriptures themselves as a guide. Men, in their failure to do this, have added man-made purposes such as their own deceptive invention of “gospel regeneration” and have omitted the primary purpose, which is “gospel salvation” or timely deliverance through obedience to the word of God. Gospel Salvation, which includes such things as hearing, believing, repenting and works of righteousness, can only follow after being quickened or born of God. The spiritually dead cannot do these things, for they must first be given spiritual discernment of the Truth (I Cor. 2:14).

The scriptures make it clear to me that there are several God ordained purposes for the teaching and preaching of God’s word. II Timothy 3:16 sets forth at least four: (1) For doctrine, (2) for reproof, (3) for correction, and (4) for instruction in righteousness. These four things may be summed up under the one subject of “edification” but it appears from other passages they are all included in “preaching the word”. Paul went on to tell Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

By the term “scriptures” we mean ALL of the inspired word of God – both Old and New Testaments. When Paul said “ALL scripture IS given by inspiration of God” he was not talking JUST about the New Testament only.

He, like Peter and the other apostles, realized that the Law and the Prophets were the inspired Scriptures or The Word of God. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). In fact when Christ and the New Testament writers referred to the “Scriptures” I believe they were primarily referring to the Old Testament scriptures, which was what they had to teach and preach from. Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthian Church was written about 57 AD. Most of the “Gospel Books” and other N.T. epistles had not yet been written. So when Paul said, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures – “, he was talking about “according to” the Old Testament Scriptures or “The Law, The Prophets and The Psalms”. The second epistle to Timothy was the LAST epistle Paul wrote before having his head severed from his body in Rome in May or June of 68 AD. ALL of the books and epistles of the New Testament had not yet been completed or canonized as scripture by the church fathers, which they did in the 4th century AD.

When we begin to talk about the purposes of teaching and preaching the Old Testament scriptures it seems to me there are several things we ought to consider. First we must realize that until about 1533 BC, when Moses led the natural nation of Israel out of Egypt and began to write “The Law of Moses” (Dan. 9:13, Luke 2:22) or “The Book of Moses” (Neh. 13:1, Mark 12:26), which consist of the first five books of the Old Testament, there was NO written scriptures for man to read, teach or preach. For about the first 2,600 years of man’s history many righteous souls lived and died without ever reading a single word of written scripture. Some have said that prior to “The Law” men lived according to their conscience, but that is another subject far too complex to visit here at this time.

This does not mean that God did not speak to his people during those 2,600 years before Moses wrote “The Law”, for we are told in Hebrews 1:1 “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, ---“. We know that God spoke directly to Adam and Eve, who no doubt taught Righteous Abel the purpose of offering “the firstling of the flock” as a sacrifice to the Lord. We know the Lord talked and walked with Enoch. We know the Lord spoke directly with Noah who was a “preacher of righteousness”. We know the Lord spoke directly with Abraham and called him out of the Ur of the Chaldees into the land of Canaan. In fact Paul said, “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed“, (Gal 3:8). Since there was NO written scripture at that time, the scripture must have been “The Word” of God”. We could go on and give more examples of God speaking directly with his people, such as Jacob and Joseph, long before Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, but these should suffice to prove the point.

Second we need to realize that “The Law” was given as a schoolmaster to lead spiritual Israel to Christ. Paul said, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal 3:24). The elect Gentiles, among whom were Righteous Abel, Enoch and Noah, having not the law, did by nature (a good conscience) the things

contained in the law. Paul wrote in Romans 2:14, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:--“.

Third we ought to realize that every thing that happened to the natural nation of Israel in the Old Testament serves as an example to us in the New Testament church today. In writing to the Corinthian Church Paul said of the Old Testament events, “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Thus we can conclude that one of the purposes of teaching and preaching of the Old and New Testament scriptures serves as a guide for God’s people on how to live holy and righteous lives in this present world. Before God ever wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone, and before he gave “The Law” he told Moses to tell the people of Israel, “Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. -- These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD” (Exodus 19:5-8).

Shortly thereafter, while Moses was on the mountain receiving the tablets with the commandments of God, these same people who had said “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do” had Aaron make a “golden calf”, and he said to them “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” Brethren, this shows the weakness of our flesh and the need for us to be re-minded time and again to abstain from idolatry, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”