

PREACHING MUST BE MORE THAN WORDS: POWER

Posted by Bob Young

Micah is only one example of an Old Testament prophet claiming to speak by the power of the Spirit. *“But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord...”* (Micah 3:8).

In the New Testament, Paul gives a classic description of true preaching, God’s testimony (1 Cor. 2:1-5): *And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

Paul says that his preaching depended on God’s power, knowing Jesus, and Spirit power made visible.

Powerful preaching does not depend on eloquent words. Powerful preaching that changes lives requires spiritual testimony about Jesus Christ accompanied by the demonstration of spiritual power. Is our preaching merely words? Is it possible to preach with power? How?

Preaching (and teaching) is more than delivering biblical knowledge. Preaching has been described as “an act of sacred fire — a moment when heaven touches earth.” John Wesley believed that the Word should be preached with accuracy and power. Wesley emphasized the necessity of the preacher being “a man of [only] one book,” aware that the Holy Spirit is involved in bringing the Word alive in the hearts of listeners. For Wesley, preaching without the Spirit was like trying to light a fire with wet wood. Indeed, to preach with power is to dwell in God’s presence, to dwell in God’s word, to preach from a place of intimacy so that the voice becomes bold in God-confidence.

Church leaders. If you long to see lives transformed by your words, your classes and your preaching, soak in God’s word, praying that God will make that word a fire in your bones capable of setting others ablaze as well. I still like the comment of the little boy whose friend asked him why he went to church every Sunday. His reply? “Daddy says that God has spent the whole week setting the preacher on fire, and we go to watch him burn!”