

WHEN IS A SERMON SUCCESSFUL?

Text: Acts 17:17-18, 32-34

INTRO: A few years ago Mr. Clyde Reed wrote a book in which he leveled 7 accusations against preachers and preaching: (1) They tend to use complex outdated language which the average person does not understand. (2) Most sermons today are dull, boring & uninteresting. (3) Preaching today is irrelevant. (4) Preaching today is not courageous. (5) Preaching does not communicate. (6) Preaching does not lead to change in persons. (7) Preaching has been over-emphasized.

Tho Mr. Reed was writing about the sermonizing in most denominational churches, many of these same criticisms have been on the lips of some members of Christ's church as well.

So we ask a question. "When is a sermon successful?" And let us seek a proper Biblical answer to that question.

I. A SERMON IS SUCCESSFUL IF IT IS TRUE TO THE WORD.

2 Tim 4:1-4 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

II. A SERMON IS SUCCESSFUL WHEN IT MEETS A NEED.

- A. There may be those who *need* to hear first principles.
- B. There may be those who *need* to be instructed on morals.
- C. There may be those who *need* doctrinal enlightenment.
- D. As long as there are those in the assembly whose needs are being met, all of us should be thankful that is the case. God is pleased & we should be.

Mark 6:18 For John had said to Herod, "It is not

lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

III. A SCRIPTURAL SERMON IS SUCCESSFUL WHEN IT IS SPOKEN SO THAT ALL CAN UNDERSTAND.

1 Cor 14:6, 9. 19 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?.. So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air... In the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Acts 26:26-28 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe." Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

NOTE: The sermon was a success. The audience was a failure.

IV. A SERMON IS SUCCESSFUL IF IT GLORIFIES GOD AND CHRIST.

1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

CONCLUSION: A successful sermon is not determined by how many people come down the aisle, nor by the preacher's rhetorical ability, by its entertainment value, or by how many compliments it receives. When the truth is spoken in love, when it meets the needs of the audience, when it is spoken so that those who need it can understand it, God is glorified, and the sermon has been successful. Let us pray for more successful sermons -- and more successful audiences.

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, May 6, 2001