

An Introduction

Preaching on the Cross

Here are some suggestions from Hodge for the preacher concerning the cross. These will produce personal growth plus the study and preaching of the cross.

1. Read the New Testament through with the cross as the focus or thrust. Notice the priority, attention, and space devoted to the cross. Jesus on the cross is our everything. Brethren pray for preachers: "Help our preacher to hide himself behind the cross." Take notes as you read. Let the cross consume you.
2. Preach a series on the cross. Hodge gives every evening sermon in January and February yearly to something "special." One year was given to the cross. Attention was the best; attendance increased; the attitude of the entire congregation changed. Hodge changed.
3. Take inventory. How many sermons do you really have on the cross? Not merely titles! How often do you center on the cross? When was the last time you really preached a "pure" cross sermon?
4. Read books and listen to tapes on the cross. They are few, mediocre, and juvenile. Really "load up" on cross material. When you think of the church of Christ do you automatically think of cross sermons? Is this our forte? Is this your reputation? Is the cross central in your heart?
5. Preach a gospel meeting totally on the cross. Is this wrong? Will you be criticized? One elder lambasted my January-February series as "wasted time." In a fit of anger he said sectarians could preach those sermons. He said the time could be more wisely spent on "distinctive doctrines of the church of Christ." This totally shocked me! But it was an audible of our hearts! This must be changed! Since that series, meetings have been given to notice the cross. This eliminates the sensational and the gimmicks, but it restores the brethren. Try it—you will like it. The gospel is still God's power to save! We announce sermons on the cross and preach a little of everything else. Everything God does is done on a cross! Preach it!
6. Put the cross back into evangelism and personal work. There is a time and place for charts, filmstrips, and prepared cottage meetings. But do we begin at the cross? Is this our thrust? Do we confront or smite sinners with the cross as Paul did? Or do we go to sell conditions? Conditions are valid—after the cross, but not before! Does this explain our losing so many converts? Were they ever converted at the cross to the cross? Is our job to "straighten sinners out" or preach the gospel? Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly. This was needed for Apollos. But this is not the same as preaching the gospel to lost or ignorant sinners. This is our job! Don't argue sinners into the baptistry; convert them with the cross. Don't manipulate sinners into the church; obedience to Christ results in the church. God's power to save is at the cross. This should eliminate our idolatry of methods and faith in men. The power is in the seed; the seed is the cross. Plant it—sow it—water it. God will bring the increase! Believe in the cross; it will get the job done.
7. Analyze your own convictions. Are you really interested in the cross? Does this motivate you? Or have you reduced Bible study to a word study? Are you more interested in a technicality or the cross? We must be honest with ourselves.
8. For the cross series, an elder built a rough wooden cross. It stood in the pulpit during the entire series. Criticism came. Why? Are visual aids wrong? Are object lessons wrong? Idolatry is wrong. PERIOD! But we have pictures in the baptistry? The Lord's table has on it, "This do in remembrance of me." Is this wrong? Has anyone worshipped the baptistry or the table? During the 1950s, a Texas preacher fought inscriptions on the table. He went to buildings "turning the

- tables around where the inscription could not be read.” It was kind of amusing yet revealing. Are we adverse to the cross? Does the cross excite our brethren? Do we wish to be entertained?
9. What is wrong with the church? What is wrong with us? Why aren’t we converting more? The answer lies at and with the cross. It must be wanted, known, and preached. Our problems come because we neglect the cross; problems are solved only when solved at the cross. Every minute you spend studying and learning the cross will multiply itself. “Kneel at the cross; Jesus will meet you there.”

—Charles B. Hodge, Jr.

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