

“Balanced” Preaching

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Balance lends grace, order, and beauty to almost anything. The work of preaching the Gospel is no exception. God’s Word contains descriptions of the balance with which God wants His preachers to preach—and men had better not tamper with it. A good example is Jeremiah’s prophetic commission: “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10). This charge typifies the work God gave to all of the Old Testament prophets. Although uninspired, today’s Gospel preachers are God’s New Testament “prophets.” Thus, the charge to Gospel preachers is very similar to that given to the prophets. It is best summarized in 2 Timothy 4:2: “Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”

When we analyze these two passages, we will see God’s idea of balanced preaching. It includes both “negative” and “positive” elements, as men often describe them. The plucking up, breaking down, destroying, and overthrowing Jeremiah and the Old Testament prophets were to do is parallel to the reprovng and rebuking Gospel preachers are to do. These terms all relate to what people generally refer to as “negative” preaching, which so many brethren (and almost all worldlings) area wont to criticize. I have grown exceedingly weary of such critics over the years. They display either an abysmal ignorance of God’s requirements of His preachers and/or their rejection of these requirements. God has been against sin and false doctrine from the beginning. He requires His people to oppose them, also. There is no way one can be a faithful child of God, whether preacher or whoever, if he or she does not reprove and rebuke the things God despises. Now, should one never do anything except reprove, rebuke, and overthrow in his preaching, he would surely be unbalanced. But I keep getting the impression that some are determined to eliminate all “negative” elements in preaching as they perceive them, except (of course), preaching negatively against “negative” preaching.

Balanced preaching requires “positive” preaching, as men generally describe it, too. Jeremiah was to build and plant, and Gospel preachers are to exhort. It is not enough for them to overthrow false doctrine. They must erect the Truth in its place. Preachers must not only rebuke and expose ungodliness; they must also exhort men to be righteous. “Positive” preaching will include the great subjects of faith, grace, hope, and love. However, by the Gospel standard, “positive” preaching is far more than some sort of approach that seeks to please men and merely make them feel good about themselves when they need to repent. Incidentally, just for the record, both of these passages mention twice as many “negatives” as “positives.”

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