

# IN RESPONSE – PROCLAIM, PERSUADE, PLEAD

by Dennis Prutow

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We've seen true preaching is proclamation of the Word of God, the more sure Word, the Word of Christ. True preaching is also proclamation of the Word of Christ *by the power of Christ with the evident grace of Christ*. In this short series we examine three other elements of preaching. True preaching is prophetic, pastoral, and evangelistic. Preachers must proclaim, persuade, and plead. Preachers must proclaim the infallible Word of God. They must persuade their flocks as wise workmen and lead their flocks as careful shepherds. They must plead with sinners to turn away from their wicked ways and trust Christ for salvation from the awful consequences of sin.

I base this construction upon texts such as Deuteronomy 18:18. "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him." This Word of God is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter gives us the divine interpretation as he speaks to his Jewish contemporaries.

The things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you" (Acts 3:18-22).

Jesus Christ is the great Prophet predicted by Moses. He is the One to whom we must look.

This Prophet is also the great high priest of God. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4:14). This Prophet and Priest is the King of kings. Jesus Christ was "designated by

God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:10). Hebrews 7:1-2 gives this description.

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils was first of all, by the translation of his name king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

Jesus Christ was therefore a priest and king. He was and is the King of Peace, and the King of Righteousness. Melchizedek was the picture, the type. Jesus Christ is the reality, the anti-type.

Christ is also the great shepherd-king. Ezekiel predicts His coming in this fashion. "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them" (Ezekiel 37:24). The greater David, the servant of whom Ezekiel speaks is Jesus Christ. King David was a shepherd in Israel. He was the type, the picture. He points to Jesus Christ the great Shepherd-King. We will speak of this more in a subsequent lesson.

For now, it is sufficient to note that for the above reasons, the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What offices does Christ execute as our redeemer?" Answer: "Christ, as our redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exultation" (Q&A 23).

Further, Christ calls us to follow Him as an example. "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). To be sure, this text calls us to follow Christ in suffering. The broader implication is that we must follow Him in ministry. If our ministries lead to unjust suffering, we must bear up under it (1 Peter 2:19). The apostle Paul puts it this way, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). We ought to imitate and follow the example of the min-

istry of Paul as he follows the pattern set by Christ.

This means the ministry of pastors and preachers should reflect the threefold ministry of Christ. There are prophetic, evangelistic (priestly), and pastoral (kingly) aspects to both ministry and preaching. There are prophetic aspects to preaching. The minister or servant of God must *proclaim* the Word of God. There are evangelistic (priestly) aspects to preaching. The servant of God must present the sacrifice of Christ and *plead* with the sheep in his pasture. There are pastoral (kingly) elements to preaching. The servant of God must *persuade* and teach those in his portion of the vineyard.

Although there may be various emphases in preaching, one aspect of preaching must not overbear the others. The Trinity should be our example. God is one. Yet He is manifest in three Persons of equal power and glory. Ministry and preaching is one. There are differing emphases yet one ministry. Pastors who major in making pronouncements may appear haughty and arrogant. Pastors who do nothing but plead the necessity of conversion neglect teaching. Pastors who do nothing but plunge the depths of Scripture in teaching leave significant portions of a flock behind. Youngsters need evangelizing. Errant believers and sinners need to hear the prophetic pronouncements of God's law and the judgments of God against sin.

These three aspects of ministry must be present and balanced. The pastoral influence tempers the prophetic. The evangelistic peppers the pastoral. The prophetic lends urgency to the evangelistic.

In the next lessons we will explore these three aspects of the preaching ministry. First we look at the prophetic, *proclaiming*. Second we tackle the evangelistic (priestly), *pleading*. Third we examine the pastoral (kingly), *persuading* and teaching.

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# IN RESPONSE - THE PROPHETIC ELEMENT, PROCLAMTION

by Dennis Prutow

Based upon Deuteronomy 18:18 and our need to follow the example of Christ we say there is a prophetic element to preaching. Exodus 4:10-16 defines the function of the prophet.

Then Moses said to the Lord, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." The Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say." But he said, "Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will." Then the anger of the Lord burned against Moses, and He said, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do. Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him.

The pastor, fulfilling the prophetic element in preaching, takes into his mouth the Word of Christ, that is, Scripture. He speaks what Christ speaks in Scripture and only what Christ speaks in Scripture. The prophetic element means a preacher is a mouth for Christ in the congregation. He proclaims the words of Christ not adding to them nor subtracting from them. At the same time, as outlined in our lesson from I Peter 5:1-3, the pastor must make the pronouncements of Christ with the evident grace of Christ. This is one side of the prophetic element.

The prophetic element in preaching mimics Christ in His proclamations. Our Lord Jesus proclaimed and applied the Law of God. He did so in Matthew 5-7 in His Sermon on the Mount. He expounded the Ten Commandments and applied them directly and pointedly. Christ proclaimed the judgments of God against hypocrites

and those who openly flaunted their sin. "Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites . . ." (Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29). This woe is the eternal woe pronounced regarding lives swallowed by the pit of destruction.

Christ proclaimed the good news of the gospel along with the requirements of the gospel. "Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1: 14-15).

Christ proclaimed His purpose and work. "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day" (Matthew 16:21). The immediate reaction was not always positive. "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You'" (Matthew 16:22). Christ is pointed about the nature of His work in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Christ proclaimed the promises of God. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29). His Great Commission combines a command with a promise. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Pastors must proclaim the Word of Christ without compromise. They must announce the Law of Christ, the judgments of Christ, the gospel of Christ, the requirements of the gospel of Christ, and the promises of Christ. Again, they must do this with the evident grace of Christ.

Another side of the prophetic element is equally important. God said to Moses, "I will be with your mouth and his

mouth" (Exodus 4: 15). Christ Himself is operative in the preaching of His Word. We turn again to Deuteronomy 18:18, "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth." A note in the *Geneva Bible of 1599* comments on the clause, "I will put My words in his mouth" and says, "Which promise is not only made to Christ, but to all who teach in his name."<sup>1</sup>

There is then a reference to Isaiah 59:21. "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the Lord: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says the Lord, "from now and forever." Again, the *Geneva Bible* note at this place: "Because the doctrine is made profitable by the virtue of the Spirit, he joineth the one with the other, and promiseth to give them both to his church forever."<sup>2</sup> In other words, God covenants with His people to give both Word and Spirit to the church.

The prophetic element in preaching is therefore not only dependent upon the Word of Christ, it is dependent upon the Spirit of Christ. The prophetic element in preaching is empowered by the Spirit of the Great Prophet, Jesus Christ. God promises His Spirit, the prophetic Spirit, will endue the church. The prophetic element in preaching not only depends upon fidelity to the Word of Christ with the grace of Christ, as already outlined, the optimum place for affective and effective prophetic proclamation is the church. The prophetic element in preaching is not a caustic, hard, denunciation of sin with equally hard pronouncements of judgment. Prophetic preaching is rather a humble and fearful handling of the oracles of God given to the servant of God for the church and the world.

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<sup>1</sup> *The 1599 Geneva Bible* (Ozark, MO: L.L. Brown Publishing, 1995), 73.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

# IN RESPONSE – THE PASTORAL ELEMENT, PERSUASION & TEACHING

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We now move to the pastoral element in preaching. Scripture ties the pastoral element to the office of Christ as King. We see this in Psalm 23:1, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” The great shepherd of the sheep is Jesus Christ. “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

This shepherd is also Lord. The basic Christian confession makes this clear. “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

When we turn to the Lord, we return to our Shepherd. “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). When elders and pastors faithfully serve the Lord, they finally meet the Shepherd. Peter promises, “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:4).

To put it the way Psalm 23:1 does, the King or Lord, is a shepherd. He leads the flock to green pastures and feeds the sheep (Psalm 23:2). The *Geneva Bible of 1599* links the king and the task of feeding. The text in view is Genesis 14:18-19, “Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth.’” The note maintains, “In that Melchizedek fed Abram, he declared himself to represent a king, and in that he blessed him, the high priest.”<sup>1</sup>

The type of Christ, Melchizedek, is a king who feeds God’s flock. The outworking of the office of king is in the person of a shepherd. The leaders or pastors in local flocks are under-shepherds. They execute the kingly office in fulfilling their duties as shepherds.

We see this very construction in Paul’s directions to the elders at Ephesus. “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the

church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). The elders are rulers in the flock; they are bishops. How do they express this rule? They shepherd the flock. They lead the flock. In western terminology, we speak of cowboys. They drive their cattle. Modern cowboys use electrical cattle prods. Pastors and preachers are not cowboys. They should not drive the sheep. They should lead the sheep with teaching, persuasion, and their Spirit filled example.

Peter, along with the other apostles, devoted himself to teaching. “Every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42). Paul followed the same methodology. “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20).

Paul tells Timothy part of his philosophy of ministry and of preaching. “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Timothy 2:24-25). The servant of Christ must teach the Word.

In doing so, he must be kind. He must use every common courtesy when dealing with others. He must not be quarrelsome. He must be patient when wronged just as God is patient when He is wronged by our sin. The preacher must use the gentleness of a shepherd in correcting those in opposition. Paul knows there is method in God’s gentleness and patience. Romans 2:4 asks, “Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”

Paul teaches that true repentance leads to knowledge of the truth. Coming to the place of repentance and to the knowledge of the truth requires teaching and persuasion. The persuasion is formal or intellectual and spiritual.

Paul indicates salvation and the knowledge of the truth are inseparable. God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1

Timothy 2:4). Unbelievers cannot come to a saving knowledge of the truth. They are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). At the same time, Scripture indicates it is possible for unbelievers to have a formal or intellectual knowledge of truth. Hebrews 10:26 warns, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”

Paul’s method of operation therefore involved teaching with persuasion and reasoning. His ministry in Ephesus is a good example.

He entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:8-10).

Here Paul exemplifies his own teaching in 2 Timothy 2:24-25. For a period of two years he diligently teaches the Word of Christ. Regarding those who oppose him He knows, “God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.” The process requires patient instruction including the use of reason and persuasion. At the same time the process requires God’s work in granting needed repentance.

We therefore see the how pastoral element in preaching expresses the Kingship Christ. First, the Lord of glory is the chief shepherd who feeds His flock through the teaching, reasoning, and persuading of under-shepherds. Second, only Christ can actually persuade. Pastors depend upon Christ to execute His office as king. And how does Christ execute the office of a king? Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself (Westminster Shorter Catechism 26, Acts 16:14).

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<sup>1</sup> *The 1599 Geneva Bible* (Ozark, MO: L.L. Brown Publishing, 1995), 6.

# IN RESPONSE – THE EVANGELISTIC ELEMENT, PLEADING

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We connect the evangelistic element in preaching to the office of Christ as priest. How doth Christ execute the office of a priest? Answer: Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us (Westminster Shorter Catechism 25).

There is a sense in which this is the center of the gospel message. “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Paul says this is of first importance. This is the gospel in the narrow sense.

The Scriptural response to this message is also clear. “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). This is the same response Jesus outlines. “After John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel!’” (Mark 1:14-14).

Evangelism is presenting the gospel message, with the required Scriptural response, and with pleas to repent of sin and trust in Christ as the only adequate payment for sin. Again, this is evangelism in the narrow sense.

That Christ is a priest, The Priest of God, is beyond doubt. Hebrews 6:19-20 speaks of the Christian hope and Jesus Christ. “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” What does Christ do? Peter answers, “Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

Christ accomplished His work as a priest on the cross “so that He might bring us to God.” This was his purpose. The contingency is not that “we might” take the proper action and then Christ will

take us into the presence of the Father. This is *not* the import of the grammar in 1 Peter 3:18. The contingency is the work of Christ. If Christ had not died, He would not have been able to lead His people to God. He died so that He would be able to bring us to God. This is the work of the priest. He leads men, women, young people, and children to God on the basis of His work on the cross.

The next question is simple. How does Christ bring us to God? Westminster Shorter Catechism, Questions and Answers 88 and 89 offer what they call the ordinary means.

Question: What are the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption?

Answer: The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

Question: How is the word made effectual to salvation? Answer: The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.

The priestly element in preaching understands the use of means in the work of bringing men and women to God through Christ. The servant of God uses these means by proclaiming the work of Christ, calling men and women to place themselves under the hearing of God’s word, and urging the response to the requirements of the gospel, repentance and faith. At the same time, the pastor depends upon Christ to do His work.

Paul is a master evangelist. We ought to emulate him. Acts 16:14 gives us a typical scene. “A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.” Paul, speaking the truth in love, the evangelistic element in his preaching coming to the fore, speaks of Christ. In turn, Christ, on His throne in heaven, takes action upon a

woman listening to Paul. He opens her heart. Christ does this so that she would respond positively to the words of Paul. This is Paul bringing Lydia to God by depending upon the means of grace. This is Christ bringing Lydia to God using the means of grace.

Christ is the Master Evangelist. His example is the same. Christ met His disciples after the resurrection. “He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

The biblical model in evangelism includes exhortation and pleading. The exhortation and pleading of Christ, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). The exhortation and pleading of Peter, “Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away” (Acts 3:19). The exhortation and pleading of Ezekiel, “‘For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,’ declares the Lord God. ‘Therefore, repent and live!’” (Ezekiel 18:32). More poignant pleading, “Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’” (Ezekiel 33:11). These are exhortations and pleadings urging men and women to respond to the gospel with repentance and faith.

In brief, there are three key elements to preaching. The prophetic element proclaims the truth of Christ. The evangelistic element pleads the proper response. The pastoral element persuades and teaches. Each element depends upon the corresponding work of Christ. Christ the prophet declares His will by His Word and Spirit. Christ as priest brings men and women to God. Christ the King subdues sinful hearts to himself.

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