

Eternity Daily Bible Study

(A ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

Walking In The Spirit - 63

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Topic: Ministry Of The Word – Part 2

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The ministry of the Word is at its best when it connects with the true spiritual needs of the audience and leads to spiritual outcomes such as repentance, conversion and growth in love. The ministry of the Word should have an 'edge' to it like that of a 'two-edged sword' and be able to cut to the heart and divide joints from marrow and soul from spirit. It should be like a healing scalpel of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 4:12 MKJV *For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

The final phrase here is a big clue on how to be effective in spiritual ministry. Aim to be one who discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart and who speaks to them. Once you know what people are thinking in their hearts then you can craft a biblical response:

Matthew 9:2-8 MKJV *And behold, they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic, Child, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven you. (3) And lo, some of the scribes said within themselves, This one blasphemes. (4) And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? (5) For which is easier? To say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise and walk! (6) But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, then He said to the paralytic, Arise, take up your bed and go to your house. (7) And he arose and departed to his house. (8) But when the crowds saw, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.*

Jesus a) saw faith in the hearts of the friends and offered forgiveness of sins and b) knew what the scribes were thinking in their hearts. In response to this He healed the paralytic as a demonstration that the Son of Man indeed had the power to forgive sins.

Moses and the prophets also addressed what people were thinking within themselves:

Deuteronomy 7:17-19 MKJV *(17) If you shall say in your heart, These nations are more than I; how can I throw them out? (18) You shall not be afraid of them, but shall well remember what Jehovah your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. ...*

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 MKJV *(17) and so that you might not say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth. (18) But you shall remember Jehovah your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, so*

that He may confirm His covenant which He has sworn to your fathers, as it is today.

Deuteronomy 9:4-5 MKJV *Do not speak in your heart, after Jehovah your God has cast them out from before you, saying: For my righteousness, Jehovah has brought me in to possess this land. But for the wickedness of these nations, Jehovah your God drives them out from before you. (5) Not for your righteousness, or for the uprightness of your heart, do you go to possess their land. But for the wickedness of these nations Jehovah your God drives them out from before you, so that He may perform the Word which Jehovah swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

Psalms 35:25-26 MKJV *Let them not say in their hearts, Aha! Our Soul! Let them not say, We have swallowed him up. (26) Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor together, those who magnify themselves over me.*

Isaiah 47:8-9 MKJV *Now then hear this, O pleasure seeker, who lives carelessly; who says in her heart, I am, and none else is; I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children. (9) But these two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come on you in their fullness for the multitude of your sorceries, and for the great power of your enchantments.*

Zephaniah 1:12-13 MKJV *And it shall be in that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled on their lees; who say in their heart, Jehovah will not do good, nor will He do evil. (13) And their goods shall become a prize and their houses a waste. They shall also build houses, but not live in them, and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine.*

Matthew 3:8-9 MKJV *Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance; (9) and do not think to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.*

Revelation 18:7-8 MKJV *As much as she has glorified herself and has lived in luxury, so much torment and sorrow give her. For she says in her heart, I sit as a queen, and I am not a widow; and I do not see mourning at all. (8) Therefore her plagues will come in one day, death and mourning and famine. And she will be consumed with fire, for the Lord God who judges her is strong.*

There are many other, much longer examples such as the lament over the Satanic pride of the King of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:1-14) and Nebuchadnezzar's fall in Daniel chapter 4 because of the self-exalting thoughts within his heart. Over and over again God judges people and addresses His Word to the 'thoughts and intents of the heart'.

So our words as preachers and teachers should be aimed at what people are thinking in their hearts. We should aim to speak to their fears and anxieties with words of faith and reassurance, to their doubts with evidence for the faith, to their sorrows with words of comfort, to their wicked thoughts with rebuke, to their lusts with exhortations to self-control, and to their coldness, slothfulness and apathy with words of warning about falling away.

Unless we are speaking to the heart we are totally missing the mark. And if we are to speak to the heart we must first listen to God and what He has to say. And we must listen to those whom we are ministering to so that we will know them and their situation. It is only after we have heard that we can speak.

The prophets 'stood in the counsel of the Lord' (Jeremiah 23:18) in order to get a

word to speak. They listened for a download from Heaven. It was only after much listening that they would come forth with a powerful message :

Jeremiah 23:29 MKJV *Is not My Word like a fire? says Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*

So the ministry of the Word involves:

- a) Loving the Lord and knowing His will
- b) Loving your audience and knowing the thoughts and intents hearts
- c) Speaking the truth you heard from God in ways that the audience you are speaking to can grasp clearly, so that spiritual results ensue.

Ok, you might be asking "What is the difference between the thoughts of the heart and the intents of the heart?" The thoughts of the heart are simply what you are thinking in your inner man. This can be something like Nebuchadnezzar's "Behold Babylon, that I have made...". The intents of heart are your plans, schemes and will. They are what you intend to do, either good or evil:

Psalms 10:2-3 MKJV *The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; let them be taken in the plans that they have imagined. (3) For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, and blesses the covetous whom Jehovah despises.*

Psalms 20:4-5 MKJV *May He grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your plans. (5) We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up banners; may Jehovah fulfill all your prayers.*

Good preaching and teaching aims to speak to people at their point of interior spiritual need. This is different from their felt need or their perceived need. Most people, if asked, will tell you that their felt or perceived need is something such as: finances, good health, a partner, resolution of a family conflict, success, a new car, to pay off the house or to fulfill their vision and destiny. But these acutely felt needs are seldom their true spiritual needs. God may fulfill these desires as well (for they are normal good desires) but these are not the primary needs of the human soul.

The true spiritual needs are things such as: repentance, faith, salvation, grace, peace, a better prayer life, a more loving heart, patience with others, endurance, forbearance, knowledge of God's will, self-control, wisdom, sanctification, hope and a deeper anointing in ministry. Our preaching and teaching need to be aimed at these second set of needs. If these spiritual needs are being met then the other (felt and perceived) needs will often be taken care of along the way. For instance wisdom, a more loving heart and greater patience with others will help end most family conflicts.

We need insight into the Scriptures, insight into people, and insight into God's will for those people, at this time. When those things come together in our teaching we can wield the sword of the Spirit and tear down powers and principalities that are lodged both in human hearts and in the spiritual realms.

Blessings,
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