

PART I

Chapter 1: DEFINITIONS

I. HOMILETICS

The word "homiletics" is derived from the Greek word *homilia* and signifies either a mutual talk and conversation or a set discourse. The preachers in the early Church were in the habit of calling their public discourses "talks", thus making it proper to speak of what is in the present day in some quarters called a "gospel talk".

From the word *homilia* has come the English word "homiletics" which has reference to that science or art—or indeed both—which deals with the structure of Christian discourse, embracing all that pertains to the preparation and delivery of sermons and Bible addresses. It shows us how to prepare a sermon or Gospel address and how to deliver it effectually. Homiletics, then, is the art and science of preaching.

II. WHAT IS PREACHING?[*]

Preaching is the proclamation of the Good News of salvation through man to men. Its two constituent elements are a man and a message—*personality* and *truth*. The Gospel proclaimed by means of the written page or the printed book is not preaching. There is no such thing as seeing "sermons in stones." Again, the proclamation of any kind of message other than the gospel message, which is the truth of God as revealed in the Bible and especially in Jesus Christ, is not preaching. Much of what is heard from so-called Christian pulpits of today is not real preaching. The discussion of politics, popular authors, current topics, and kindred themes may rightfully be called addresses, and may result in the emulation of the orator, but such efforts can in no sense of the word be called preaching; and such men have absolutely no right, so long as they continue to deliver such addresses from the pulpit, to the honored name of preachers of the Gospel. The message of the very truth of God through man to men—that is preaching.

III. WHAT IS A PREACHER?

The preacher is separated by God for the specific work of preaching the Gospel and is a man who from one side of his nature takes in the truth from God and from the other side gives out that truth to men. He deals with God in behalf of men; he deals with men in behalf of God.

This truth must not be mechanically expressed. It must not be merely truth through the mouth, over the lips, in the intellect, or by means of the pen, but truth through his

character and personality. Every fiber of the man's moral and spiritual nature must be controlled by the truth. The force of a blow is measured not by the arm only, but also by the weight of the body behind the arm. And just here is the difference men instinctively feel between one preacher and another. The hearer is persuaded that the truth which is being proclaimed from the pulpit has come over one preacher, whereas it has come through the other. Consequently, the preaching of the one is tame and uninteresting, while that of the other is strong, fascinating, and convincing.

The preacher must not be a mere machine, an automaton; he must be a real man—a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. The effect of such a life and such preaching will be that, many people will be added to the Lord (Acts-11:24).

The personality of the preacher has very much to do with the effectiveness of his message. An artist may be a profligate and yet produce a picture or a statue which will call forth the admiration of the people; an author may be dissolute in morals and yet produce a book that will set the world aflame with his popularity. These are works of art and can be considered apart from the man himself. But not so with the preacher and his sermon; it is a part of himself; indeed, it must be the expression of his very life and experience. If such is not the case, then what is called preaching will be nothing but "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Personality counts in preaching. Is this not one of the reasons why many sermons do not usually make good reading? The personality of the preacher is absent. Of course, there are some very splendid exceptions to this fact, but often—alas, very often—the sermon is but an echo of the man. Have we not wondered more than once at the dryness of a sermon we were reading when at the time we heard it we were moved to the very depths of our being? What was lacking? The personality of the preacher, that is all—but how much is wrapped up in that personality!

The experience of the truth must be in the preacher himself before he can proclaim it with convicting force in and through the sermon. Given a man who is a born artist, you have only to supply the palette and brush, or chisel and mallet with mere technical skill, and you have a statue or a picture. And if you have your preacher—a man with the experience of the truth in him—you will find that very little else is needed to set free the sermon in him.

From this it is clearly evident that true preparation for the Gospel ministry does not consist in mere tricks in sermon-making or delivery, but in the development of true personality. Such a man in the pulpit will surely prove to be a preacher who will reach the masses.

We hear complaints on every hand to the effect that people do not want Gospel preaching today. This is a mistake. There never was a day when people wanted it more than now. What they do object to is a Gospel read or declaimed and not preached. In other words, they ask for a consecrated personality in the pulpit. Look abroad today, and what do you see? Wherever the Gospel is preached by a consecrated personality, there are found men and women to hear it.