

THEY SPOKE THE WORD OF GOD

The secret of the success of the early Church was the fact that they had a real living Word from God and they spoke that Word. What the devil hates more than anything, even more than personal ministry, is to see the people of God coming to a level where they speak the Word of God. Everything else begins to come down when the Word of the Lord begins to flow. In the early Church, it was the Word of God that prevailed.

The book of Acts contains some unique phraseology. We read in Acts 4:31 that they spoke the Word of the Lord. They had a great deal of confidence in it. Christians have always emphasized the fact that the written Word of God was inspired by the Holy Spirit. They have been more concerned about defending the inspiration of the written Scriptures than about contending for the inspiration in the spoken words. Only in more recent times, in this generation, have men become concerned about the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon their preaching and about expounding the Word with a real anointing of the Spirit.

Preaching, as we have known it, was an innovation of the Reformation and a part of the restoration. It is still not the full declaring of the Word of the Lord that we read of in the book of Acts. The men of the early Church were not expounders; they were oracles and proclaimers of the Word. We must contend for the level of the word to rise until there is a great awareness that we are speaking the Word of the Lord—not merely quoting it, nor expounding and explaining it and teaching about it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but actually speaking it.

The New Testament Christians did not try to defend certain teachings doctrinally, as believers have been doing in the past generation. Those early Christians did not go around trying to defend the inspiration of the Scriptures. They spoke the Word of the Lord and things happened. They did not try to prove that divine healing is scriptural; they just healed people. They did not try to prove that being filled with the Holy Spirit is a sound scriptural experience. They believed; consequently, the Holy Spirit either fell on the people or hands were laid on them to receive the Holy Spirit.

We must get away from the feeling that we should entertain people intellectually with doctrines. Instead, we must see the actual proclaiming of the Word come forth. What good are a thousand sermons that preach about prophecy, trying to show that God is speaking a Word today? If we just speak the Word, the understanding will take care of itself. There is no need to talk about it or explain it or defend it. Just do it! There is no need to defend the ministry that is given by God. Just do it, and let God take care of it. God's people must do the thing He called them to do and be the instruments He called them to be. No one has to defend the restored New Testament church; we just have to be one, complete in the pattern and the order as recorded in the Word of God and in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. When we speak the Word of the Lord, we must not be on the defensive. We must always be very much on the aggressive.

The fourth chapter of Acts tells of Peter and John being arrested and brought to the council, who threatened them and finally let them go. The two apostles went back to pray with the people, saying, *“And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, while Thou dost extend Thy*

hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:29–31.

This was a greater miracle than the events which occurred on the day of Pentecost. After the threatening, they gathered together with one accord and lifted up their voices simultaneously in prayer (Acts 4:24). As they all began to pray that prophetic prayer in unity, the place wherein they were gathered was shaken, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. Everyone became an oracle of God, proclaiming the Word of God.

People said of the Lord, “Never a man spake as this man speaks” (John 7:46). It will be said of the end-time remnant, “Never have a people spoken as these people speak.” The level of the Word is continually rising. We must strive for that high plane of prophetic utterance, which is the true restoration of the ministry that God outlined in the book of Acts.

We are not called to be sermonizers; we are called to speak the Word of God. Oh, that we would grasp this truth in our hearts, that we would become completely addicted to this one thing, and cry day and night unto the Lord to become channels who speak the Word of God.

The twelfth chapter of Acts tells of a tragedy. James, the brother of John, was killed by King Herod. The killing so pleased the Jews that King Herod became arrogant and imprisoned Peter also. However, the believers prayed continually for Peter, and the angel of the Lord loosed him from the prison. Herod was killed, smitten down by God in

judgment. The story concludes beautifully: *But the word of God grew and multiplied.* Acts 12:24. The people of God themselves were a depository of a living and vital Word, and that Word was growing and expanding within them. No wonder Paul referred to the believers as living epistles read and known of all men (II Corinthians 3:2). No wonder he spoke of that wonderful ministry of writing upon the fleshly tablets of their hearts with the Spirit of the living God. This was the ministry of the early Church: they spoke a Word from the Lord.

There is a quality of impartation in the Word that is coming. It is creative. People are moved and changed. The Word works on a person, creating a hunger in their heart. There will be no great effectiveness until the spoken Word is perfected. That is why we must contend for it, pray for it, and believe for it with all of our hearts.

And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia; and thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God.... Acts 14:25–26. This concluded the first missionary journey. They spoke the Word of God, and then they went on their way. That was all they were required to do. They were not too much concerned about the effect it would have. They knew that they might be persecuted, but their main concern was speaking God's Word to the people. This they did, and they left the consequences in the hands of the Lord. *But Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch* (this was after the first missionary journey and after the council at Jerusalem concerning the Gentile Christians), *teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. And after some days Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they fare.* Acts 15:35–36. They had spoken a Word, and they wanted to

see the effect of that Word on the people. The key to the apostolic company is not a matter of human ability, but of a divine proclaiming of the Word of the Lord through many members of the Body of Christ who are coming forth in purity.

The sixteenth chapter of Acts relates the famous story about the apostles being put in jail at Philippi and the earthquake which released them. When they got out of jail, they led the jailer to the Lord. *And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately.* Acts 16:32–33. Imagine that experience. Some time between midnight and morning, they spoke the Word of the Lord to the jailer and his family, and then they all trooped down to the river to be baptized. A Word came from God and a church was born. That is the way a church should be born—by the Word that comes from God—not by human maneuvering or desire. By God’s Word all things come forth into being.

Chapter 17 brings to us the account of another missionary journey of Paul and his company. *Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed of Paul at Beroea also, they came thither likewise, stirring up and troubling the multitudes.* Acts 17:11, 13.

There was persecution because they had spoken a Word from God. God’s people are experiencing the same thing today. The persecutions will inevitably come, but so will the creative Word that

brings forth the remnant of God, and completes the restoration in this end time.

Acts 19 tells about Paul going to Ephesus to minister. *And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out.* Acts 19:10–12. There were great miracles and signs and wonders, but most important was the fact that they were speaking the Word of God.

Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds. And not a few of them that practised magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed. Acts 19:18–20. When the early disciples spoke the Word of the Lord, it turned something loose. It is still the Word of the Lord that prevails over the enemy. In the city of Ephesus the people had practiced the occult so much that psychically and in the development of their souls, they had come up to a level that was very difficult to surpass. Only one thing could exceed it: a man who had no psychic ability to deal with witchcraft, but one who could speak a Word from God. The Word of God could prevail over the psychic force.

The Word of God represents authority; and in the realm of spirit it is the only thing that gets anything done. Christ has all authority in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18). The devil has no authority, though he does have a great deal of power. His activities and his force

are tremendous. The varied activities of the satanic realm are so extensive that it is difficult for a person to understand them. The only way you can cope with this satanic power is with authority.

In Ephesus the Word of the Lord came with authority, and that Word began to bind. In this day, it is again the Word of the Lord that will overcome witchcraft and every satanic force. The people of God will rise and proclaim the Word of the Lord, and God will judge the forces of Satan. The believer will not only pray; he will speak the Word of the Lord and turn loose a great deal more than all the force and power that Satan could ever muster. It is authority that counts, and the Word of God comes with authority.

The authority of Christ in the utterance and in the proclamation has to be the goal of the Church; otherwise the remnant of God will become victims of all the different satanic manifestations that come forth in the end time. Only by coming up to the highest level of prophetic utterance and speaking the Word of the Lord are we going to prevail and be the people God wants us to be.

We will continue to have warfare until the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against it. Only a Word from God will stop the devil powers in their tracks. We must get out of this realm where we are constantly being assaulted and come into the place where we proclaim the Word of the Lord.

By the Word of God will come the immunities and the defenses for God's people in the last days. By the Word of God will come that which assaults the stronghold of the enemy and brings him down. The feeblest saint of God can come to a level where he is filled with the Spirit of the Lord; and as he speaks the Word of God, fantastic things

will happen. This will be the key to our prevailing in every situation in the days to come.

In the New Testament times, a world was changed by the people who spoke the Word of God. Civilization altered its course. Customs, seasons, times, and economies crumbled and toppled. Religious systems and traditions were utterly defeated. No one could cope with those ignorant and unlearned men who spoke a Word from God. Nothing could stop the Word they spoke.

For a generation, people have been emphasizing the Holy Spirit, saying that as soon as they receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues, everything will be changed. Millions of people have been baptized with the Holy Spirit in the modern era, but that has not changed things very much. This is not minimizing the infilling of the Spirit, but remember—it is not enough to have a gun; you had better have a bullet for that gun. The Word of God is the bullet.

When Ephesians 6:17 refers to the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit, it is not speaking of cold print on a Book that is collecting dust on the shelf, for then it is not the Word of God to anyone. Hide it in your heart and let the Spirit bring it forth in a living prophetic flow. Then it will come out of your mouth as the Word of God.