

Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. *Preaching and Preachers*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971. 325 pp. \$22.00.

Introduction

Lloyd-Jones was born in 1899 in Wales and died in 1981. He grew up in Welsh Calvinistic Methodism and was trained as a medical doctor, then served as pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for thirty years. He wrote in the present book, "I would start with my own personal experience. For many years I thought I was a Christian when in fact I was not. It was only later that I came to see that I had never been a Christian and became one. But I was a member of a church and attended my church . . . regularly. So anybody assuming, as most preachers did, that I was a Christian was making a false assumption. It was not a true assessment of my condition. What I needed was preaching that would convict me of sin and make me see my need, and bring me to true repentance and tell me . . . about regeneration. But I never heard that. The preaching we had was always based on the assumption that we were all Christians, that we would not have been there in the congregation unless we were Christians. This, I think, has been one of the cardinal errors of the Church especially in this present century" (146).

Summary

From the Preface it is clear that Lloyd-Jones' purpose is to give preachers a practical, personal guide that might be used of God to prepare "many mighty preachers to proclaim 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.'" The author's thesis is that preaching is the primary task of all preachers (9), that prayer-laced preaching is the cardinal, primal, principal, paramount thing

(170-171), and that preaching is a task for which one must be well prepared (165), and not a task to which all Christians are called (102).

Having quoted *Preaching and Preachers*, David L. Larsen of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School said of Lloyd-Jones that he silences "those who claim that the preaching of historic orthodoxy under the unction of the Spirit makes no impact in postmodern times. The current panic to market-driven preaching and abandonment of text-driven preaching needs to come to terms with how God used Lloyd-Jones."¹

By way of a summary of the main points covered in *Preaching and Preachers*, we must strive for the primacy of preaching over against modern emphases on singing, entertainment (17), politics and social reform (34), among other things. Preaching should leave a person "never the same again" (53). Preachers must be "always preparing" (165), with discipline as a "first great rule" (166), and "above all—and this I regard as most important of all—always respond to every impulse to pray." But, with regard to prayer, Lloyd-Jones is not content to leave it at that: "I would make an absolute law of this—always obey such an impulse. Where does it come from? It is the work of the Holy Spirit . . ." (170-171). Then again on the primacy of preaching, the author states, "I desire to emphasize what I regard as the chiefest thing of all—preaching. I cannot emphasize this too much; preaching controls everything and determines the character of everything else" (186). Lloyd-Jones counsels, "watch your strength whatever it may be. . . . Do not make a display of it. The sum total of all this is that the greatest of all the temptations that assail a preacher is pride" (256).

Regarding what the author terms "the romance of preaching" (297), part of that romance is, "What one had never thought of , or even imagined, suddenly happens in the pulpit

while one is actually preaching, and one is left with a sense of amazement, gratitude and unspeakable joy. There is nothing like it" (299). And then the author speaks powerfully on the need for the Holy Spirit's power on the preachers and preaching: "Do you always look for and seek this unction, this anointing before preaching? Has this been your greatest concern? There is no more thorough and revealing test to apply to a preacher. What is this? It is the Holy Spirit falling upon the preacher in a special manner. It is an access of power" (305).

Critical Evaluation

The author speaks against "this tendency to thrust people out in to preaching. . . . On what grounds are we critical of this attitude to preaching? I suggest that it is due to a failure to understand the difference between saying that every Christian should be ready, as Peter puts it in I Peter 3:15, ' . . . to give . . . a reason of the hope that is in (him),' and saying that every Christian should preach the Gospel. That is the distinction. Every Christian should be able to give an account of why he is a Christian; but that does not mean that every Christian is meant to preach" (102). He goes on to explain the situation in Acts 8 in which there was persecution and the believers, except the apostles, were scattered. Acts 8:4-5 reads, "Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ" (ESV). Lloyd-Jones points out the words for "preaching" and "proclaimed" in the original are different words. He says, "as someone has suggested it might be translated, 'to gossip' the Word, to talk about it in conversation. Philip on the other hand did something different; he was 'heralding' the Gospel. This is, strictly speaking, what is meant by preaching in the sense that I have been using it. It is not accidental that such a distinction should be drawn there in the actual text" (102).

I agree with the author that we should not "thrust" just any Christian into preaching. However, the proof he uses from Acts 8:4-5 is weak. In Acts 8:4 those who were scattered "went about preaching the word." The word used is εὐαγγελιζόμενοι. According to *Strong's Concordance* online (Strong's hereafter) this word means, "I bring good news, *preach* good tidings" (2097). According to Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker (Bauer hereafter) the same word means, "the divine message of salvation, the Messianic proclamation, the gospel . . . proclaim, *preach*. . . ."2 Both sources indicate that this isn't mere gossip, as Lloyd-Jones suggests; both use the word "preach" (εὐαγγελιζόμενοι) to describe it.

Lloyd-Jones argues that, by contrast, Philip was "'heralding' the Gospel" in Acts 8:5. The word there is ἐκήρυσσεν. According to Strong's the meaning is, "I proclaim, herald, *preach*" (2784). And Bauer defines the same word as, "announce, make known by a herald . . . proclaim aloud . . . speak of, mention public . . . spread the story widely."³

Having thus compared the definitions for the word "preaching" in Acts 8:4 (εὐαγγελιζόμενοι) with the definitions of the word "proclaimed" in Acts 8:5 (ἐκήρυσσεν), we see that while there are differences, there is also overlap in the meanings of the two words. As defined above, both words can mean "preach." It can be argued that what the scattered lay people did in Acts 8:4 was not very much different—if different at all—from what Philip did in Acts 8:5.

My point is strengthened by observing that in Acts 8:6, when Philip addressed the crowd, the wording is that he "said" (λεγομενοις) something to them. Then in Acts 8:12 "he preached good news (εὐαγγελιζομενω) about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." Again in Acts 8:35, during Philip's conversation with the Ethiopian eunuch we read,

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news (εὐηγγελισατο) about Jesus." Thus we see that in Acts 8:12 and 8:35 the same word is used of Philip's oral gospel ministry as was used of the scattered lay preachers of 8:5. It may be fair to say that if they weren't preaching, then neither was Philip.

Several other points need to be made in this regard. We see that the very words that Lloyd-Jones set against each other as describing the ministry of the scattered lay people *versus* the ministry of Philip (102) are joined *together* by Luke to describe Jesus' ministry: "Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming (κηρύσσων) and bringing the good news (εὐαγγελιζόμενος) of the kingdom of God . . ." (Luke 8:1, ESV). The words are also found together in the same phrase, describing the ministry of Paul: ". . . the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) that I proclaim (κηρύσσω) . . ." (Galatians 2:2, ESV).

Two passages of scripture inform our understanding in this matter. The first passage is written to a church as a whole, not just to its preaching and teaching leadership:

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. . . . Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets (First Corinthians 14:26, 29-32, ESV).

Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.' And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, 'My lord Moses, stop them.' But Moses said to him, 'Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!' And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp (Numbers 11:26-30 ESV).

Finally, it is notable that, in the original language, no fewer than three words are used of Philip's orations in Acts 8. It seems that there is considerable overlap between the words. Thus, a case against lay preachers can perhaps be made, but not from Acts 8. At least not as the author presents the case.

I also want to interact with the author's statement that, while there are dangers in giving too much attention to imagination in preaching, yet "imagination has a real place in preaching the Truth, because what it does is to make the Truth lively and living." I hope my complaint is not trifling: imagination (or any other human effort) does not make the truth come alive. God's Word is, by its very nature, alive. All by itself it is living and active (Hebrews 4:12; Deuteronomy 32:47).

The author indulges in occasional overstatement. An example of this is seen when he writes, "'Know thyself' was the advice given by the Greek philosophers of old; and there is still no more important injunction for preachers" (184).

The author also seems harsh at times. He speaks disparagingly of a young, professional man who was called upon to address a group of mostly unchurched ladies: "He gave an address on 'the Trinity' to those old ladies! I tell this story in order to ridicule such a procedure. Here was a man, an intelligent trained professional man (author's lack of punctuation) whom you would have thought would have some idea of addressing people; but he clearly had not given even a thought to that and probably had been reading . . . on the Trinity recently. But, of course, what he did was utterly useless. You do not give 'strong meat to babes,' you give them milk . . ." (145). In what sense was the young man's address "useless"?—the women attending might have been blessed by it. And his desire to serve should merit some praise from the author.

Regarding the relationship of this book to the work of others in the field, the matter that comes to mind first is that of prayer. I quoted the author earlier in this review regarding his views on prayer as it relates to preaching. It bears repeating: "Above all—and this I regard as most important of all—always respond to every impulse to pray. . . . I would make an absolute law of this—always obey such an impulse. Where does it come from? It is the work of the Holy Spirit . . ." (170-171).

Many books on preaching do not mention prayer at all. Others barely touch the subject. A few who write about preaching give prayer the emphasis it deserves. Lloyd-Jones comes closer to this goal than most. His words on prayer are important, and affirmed by David Dockery who writes, "The sermonic process begins with prayer. God's direction and enablement must be sought at each step."⁴ Stuart Briscoe speaks of "prayerful meditation" in sermon preparation as well as "prayer designed to help people in their individual responses" to the sermon.⁵ Stephen Brown writes, "Ask God to make you sensitive to what is going on around you. Ask Him to make you an observer of what people say, think, and do."⁶ Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote of his prayer prior to preaching: "Somewhere in this congregation is one person who desperately needs what I am going to say. O God, help me to get at him."⁷

Conclusion

Martyn Lloyd-Jones' reputation precedes him. I was not disappointed. It is notable that, unlike most books (on preaching), *Preaching and Preachers* contains no notes nor bibliography. Lloyd-Jones draws mostly from his own experience. In this way, perhaps, he has made good on his desire expressed in the Preface to be personal and practical, not theoretical nor abstract.

This book was, for me, a lot like John R. W. Stott's book *Between Two Worlds*. The content is similar, and both of these Christ-like, proven preachers encouraged, trained, and preached to me. I hope to keep in touch with Lloyd-Jones through his excellent book itself and through the very review I have written.

¹David L. Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers: A History of Biblical Preaching from the Old Testament to the Modern Era* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 775.

²Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 317.

³*ibid.*, 431.

⁴Michael Duduit, ed. *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 147

⁵ *ibid.*, 192, 197.

⁶*ibid.*, 201.

⁷Richard Lischer, *The Company of Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 396.