

Message from the President: The Way I See It

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The late Scottish preacher, Dr. Ian Pitt-Watson, has provided keen insight into preaching in his volume *Preaching: A Kind of Folly*. The book title is taken from 1 Corinthians 1:21 (KJV) which describes the folly of the gospel as “the foolishness of preaching.” While this text is a less than a clear use of wording, this passage should not be an excuse to foster incompetence. He does admit, and I agree, that preaching is simply hard to figure out. What is preaching’s logic? Its goal? Is it even viable communication in a post-Christian world? Or appropriate in those areas hostile to Christianity?

Pitt-Watson’s affirmation of preaching’s being central to the church’s life and the heart of Christian theology, begins with the perspective that the preacher first believe preaching is critical to ministry done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Acquiring preaching skills matters little, and is unlikely to persuade anyone, if the preacher doesn’t believe in the priority and efficacy of preaching. How the preacher is involved as a bridge between what God has spoken and the application of that message to a contemporary context is filled with awe and mystery. Yet, regardless of one’s particular faith tradition, preaching has been affirmed as central to the church.

My guess is that Dr. Pitt-Watson is right. Preaching is not a dated strategy.

However, preaching does need to regain a foothold in the perception of countless church leaders who seem to think that gospel proclamation is merely a strategy that rises and falls in relevance depending on cultural context. The Word of the Lord rightly interpreted and confidently proclaimed has long usage and affirmation both in the Bible and Christian history. While the challenges of the twenty-first century are unique, they are not sufficient to neutralize the mandate Paul gave to Timothy: “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:1-2, NASB).