

About the

Length of Sermons

By Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

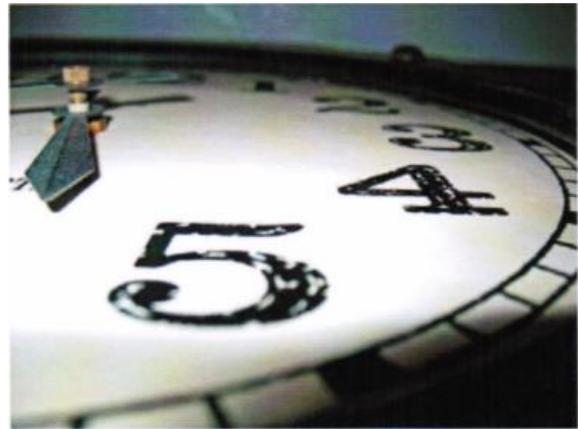
The importance of preaching

An element of worship that a person unfamiliar with our church services most often notices is the length of our sermons. Our services are approximately an hour and a half long, and most of that time is spent listening to the preaching. A person accustomed to a shorter sermon will after about 15 minutes begin to wonder why the preacher is not finishing up. Then, as the sermon continues, the pew starts getting harder and the question comes to mind, why so long? The question is understandable!

We believe that the preaching is the chief means God uses to strengthen and encourage a person in his faith. In fact, not only does the preaching of the gospel confirm a person's faith, but at times it even works faith in the hearts of people. The apostle Paul emphasizes in I Corinthians 1:21 that, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Romans 10:13-15 teaches the same truth concerning the preaching. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

For that reason the sermon occupies a central position in our worship services. We believe it is the most important element

around which the rest of our service revolves. All the other parts of the worship service must be subservient to and support the preaching.



*"... it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."
(1 Corinthians 1.21)*

Why the length of the sermon?

It has been said, "If the preacher cannot say what he needs to say in 15 minutes, then it is not worth listening to." I wonder if we would say that about our favorite football team? "If my team cannot win the game in 15 minutes, it is not worth watching!" Consider once the amount of time per week we spend in God's house compared to all the daily activities with which we consume our time, especially the recreational activities. Is 15 minutes of God's Word (once, maybe

twice on a Sunday) really enough to strengthen a believer spiritually for an entire week? Is it long enough to call the unbeliever to faith and repentance and then lead him to the cross of Jesus Christ? We need spiritual food in order to keep us spiritually healthy. If we do not receive enough spiritual food, we will become weak in our faith and unable to withstand the powerful foe of the church, Satan.

Another reason our sermons are longer is in order to do justice to the explanation of a passage of God's Word. It is true that some passages require less time to explain and apply than other passages, but enough time must be allowed to give a passage its due. If this is not done, the Word of God can be given a rather superficial treatment. For this reason we allow plenty of time for the

minister both to explain carefully the meaning of a passage, and also to apply it to the lives of those listening.

We realize that for some it takes time to become accustomed to sitting and concentrating for a longer period of time. But the more you do it, the easier it becomes! This is especially true when the Spirit is working, because it does not take long for the preaching to work in our hearts interest and even conviction in the Word of God. We hope this is true of you too!

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