

Gospel Gleaner

SPRING 2022

The Preacher as a Servant of God

Ronald Bryant

The proclamation of the gospel of Christ is a holy task. Christ commissioned that the gospel be preached to the whole world (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). In two letters, the apostle Paul directed Timothy, a young Christian, to function as a minister, a teacher, an evangelist, but in all things as a servant of God. He was charged to be an example for believers (1 Timothy 4:12). He was also instructed to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season. He was reminded to teach that which he had been taught. He was directed to be a faithful servant (cf. 2 Timothy 2:23ff; 2:1-2).

Every child of God is a servant of God. The preacher of the gospel of Christ is first and foremost a servant of God. Ability, scholarship, age, and experience may enable him to serve, but such can never be substitutes for service.

The standard for leadership in the church is extremely high. This is evident in the qualifications for elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). They are worthy of respect, and they are respected by the Lord (Hebrews 13:7). The standard is not lowered for the members of the church (cf. Matthew 5:48). Christians are saved sinners, and each one is set apart in Christ to noble service. They are individually set apart, and they are transformed by the Lord Himself. They exist to exalt Him.

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What Is Biblical Preaching?

Andy Erwin

Many years ago, the venerable Cled E. Wallace wrote the following:

“Much is being said about the right kind of preaching and writing. Charges of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ are being bandied back and forth. With as plain a book as the New Testament in hand and with its abundant supply of examples of the very best preaching and writing, it ought not to be a difficult thing to determine the kind of both that should be done. A direct appeal to the New Testament, its preachers, and its writers, ought to settle any question that arises in such a connection. Men who say the most about ‘the right method of approach,’ ‘constructive articles,’ etc., betray the fact that a lot of their ideas come from modern psychology, materialistic philosophy, and sectarian sources rather than from Jesus and the apostles. It is futile to do a lot of talking about the method of approach, when you never approach. It would improve some preachers and writers if they could forget about the method and go ahead and approach. The main idea is getting there anyhow” (Cled E.

Wallace, *Bible Banner*, vol. 1, num. 11, June 1939).

Examples of Biblical Preaching

As you can see, this article was written in June of 1939, and it is as timely as ever. In fact, quite a few brethren continue to rely upon “modern psychology, materialistic philosophy, and sectarian sources rather than from Jesus and the apostles” when it comes to their method of preaching. They hide behind their false conception of Paul’s charge to “speak the truth in love” while disregarding the divinely recorded sermons he preached. If one desires to know what Paul meant when he told us to speak the truth in love, go to the examples of his sermons and see how he did it. Moreover, go and learn from the sermons preached by the apostles, Stephen, and our Lord Himself.

What Is Biblical Preaching?

In words of encouragement to Timothy, Paul defines the subject of biblical preaching: “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all

longsuffering and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2; NKJV).

- Biblical preaching demands preaching the word – whether it is popular or not.
- Biblical preaching requires preaching doctrine or “teaching” in a way that will “convince, rebuke, and exhort” the hearer.
- Biblical preaching appeals to the spiritual as well as the intellectual nature of man. It requires the whole of God’s word being imparted to the whole of man.

Through biblical preaching, we address the intellect, awaken the spirit, and appeal to the will of the listener. We encourage those listening to be “doers of the word and not hearers only” (James 1:22). While we expect them to respond faithfully to the message, we should avoid gauging our success based on their response. Preachers must “preach the word” regardless of how God’s divine truth may be received by our fellow man. The people must know that their

preacher loves them; but they must also know that he loves God *more*.

Biblical preaching is not just a matter of style, taste, or preference. Whether or not one preaches the word of God is a matter of authority. That which distinguishes the message of the gospel preacher from the message of the world is the authority by which the message is spoken. Biblical preaching is a message authorized by God (cf. Titus 2:15). It is the only message authorized by God, as it is the word of God. When preachers preach the word with authority, their preaching will

distinguish them from those who do not (see Matthew 7:28-29).

We Need Biblical Preachers

Biblical preaching is intended to save man from his sins, but it will not always be pleasing to man. For this reason, preachers of the gospel and their families must be more concerned with the salvation of souls than job security. Preachers who are more concerned with job security than the salvation of souls need to repent or get out of the way.

If a man is ministering only to his personal self-interests and job security,

he is doing nothing more than “peddling the word” (2 Corinthians 2:17), will be found “exploiting with deceptive words” (2 Peter 2:3), so that he might receive “wages of unrighteousness” (2 Peter 2:13).

A gospel preacher should never be concerned with being the most popular speaker in town or speaking only that with which the majority agrees. Anyone can do that. But it takes a gospel preacher to preach the word – in season and out of season – to return our communities, our churches, and our families to God.

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Will you consider laboring with us, and with Andy Erwin (editor of the Gospel Gleaner) as we train, motivate, and mentor preachers around the world? Because of the value of souls, and the current condition of our world, there has never been a greater need for faithful gospel preachers.

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The Preacher as a Man of the Book

Kevin Rhodes



A preacher learns from the beginning of his work the importance of building his library. Depending on his influences, educational background, and interests, he will likely acquire a variety of brotherhood works, scholarly works, commentaries, language resources, doctrinal treatises, debates, journals, and reference works. Preachers value books. In fact, some seem to judge themselves and others by the books in their library. However, regardless of how many books he has in his library, their quality, or their character, a preacher must focus on being a man of God's book—not a man of everyone else's books.

Most, if not all, preachers acknowledge this simple truth but fail to appreciate it in application. Rather than analyzing, synthesizing, and meditating upon the genius of inspiration, many spend their time reading, studying, listening, and watching what others say about the Bible instead of really getting into the Bible. The old preacher's adage "Eat the meat, spit out the bones" appears wise on the

surface, but it assumes a man can tell the difference in the first place. As a result, men often seek peer approval for their thoughts because they are unprepared to determine divine approval. Such a process does not and cannot produce men of the book.

A man of the book studies the book.

As mentioned above, this is very different from reading others' ideas, but it also differs from simply adopting other favorite preachers' positions. Reading personal assumptions and tradition into the text offers no high ground above the avid reader. Both approaches fail because they lack objective evaluation according to the standard of truth and instead measure their validity according to "modern scholarship" or "tradition," a combination that practically ensures division as preachers compete over which men deserve greater respect (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Jesus rejected both (Matt. 7:29; 15:9), as should we. God's people need preachers willing to do the hard work themselves rather than simply reporting the opinions they have adopted from

elsewhere. Diligent study, therefore, will include serious thought and deliberate reasoning to evaluate the Bible in its context instead of based upon a source serving as a pretext. God needs men who think on His words and consume His words (Jas. 1:18-21) enough to evaluate what is and is not consistent with those words (John 12:48). Only when a man has studied sufficiently to know what the Bible had to mean when it was written is he prepared to tell people its significance today.

A man of the book preaches the book (2 Tim. 4:2-4). This means far more than having a biblical passage as a text. It means far more than quoting a string of verses together for everyone's amazement. It demands making God's message our message to the greatest extent we possibly can (John 7:16-18). It demands starting with God's word, explaining God's word, and applying God's word (Neh. 8:8). It demands establishing the context of God's word, explaining the meaning from the context of God's word, and

making the relevant application within the context of God's word (Luke 4:9-12). The Bible does not exist as a sourcebook for the preacher's opinions. Nor does it exist to provide a launching pad for the rant of the day. The Bible exists to provide guidance not only for how the hearer should live but also for how the preacher should preach. A man who preaches the book lets the Bible lead his sermons—not the other way around. God's points, God's reasons, God's explanations, and God's heart fill godly sermons. More than this, the focus of the inspired text should determine the preacher's focus more than the controversy of the day. Godly men let God set the agenda—not Satan, making sure that God's people learn what God expects them to believe and do rather than just what not to believe or do. God's men preach God's message from God's book. They promote neither themselves nor their personal

issues because they are too busy glorifying God.

A man of the book lives the book.

When the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy in his work, he focused as much or more on Timothy's life as he did on Timothy's preaching (1 Tim. 4:12-16). God wants His word to reach not only the tips of our tongues but also the depth of our souls. Before proclaiming God's truth to others, the preacher must proclaim it to himself—with even more focus, fervor, and application than he musters in the pulpit. The life and character of a preacher give greater context to his sermons and serve as a living illustration of their application and significance. Preachers, therefore, should develop themselves personally before they begin to think about developing themselves professionally. Hypocrisy recognized either in the moment or after public exposure can undermine years of work in a congregation—and not just by that

particular preacher. A preacher's poor conduct gives the world a reason to ignore Jesus when his life should instead make Jesus impossible to ignore (Acts 4:12-13). Therefore, a man unwilling to live up to the highest standards of the gospel should step out of the pulpit before he brings it down with him.

Christians sometimes seem to believe that preaching is just about talking, just about words to fill a time slot. Sadly, some preachers live down to those low expectations. And they make it harder on godly men everywhere. However, rather than allowing failures to distract, God's men should give even more diligence to be men of the book—in their study, in their preaching, and in their lives. A gospel preacher's commitment lies not only in preaching the truth but also in growing spiritually and living righteously, and this commitment he makes not simply to a congregation but to God first (2 Tim. 1:12).



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The Preacher and the Church

Tom McLemore

What makes for a successful ministry in the local church? I submit the following for your consideration. These are things that I think are most important, and my experience in serving local churches has led me to view them as vital.

A preacher in the local congregation must strive to be a trustworthy and good steward. According to Paul, “It is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy” (1 Corinthians 4:2). Peter also urged, “As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:10-11). Every preacher has the responsibility to guard what has been entrusted to him, namely, the truth (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:14). Someday, every preacher will hear the words, “Turn in the account of your stewardship” (Luke 16:2).

A preacher in the local church must take heed to himself and to his teaching and hold to that, for by so doing he will save both himself and those who

hear him (1 Timothy 4:16). Taking heed to one’s self means that he occupies himself with divine training (or stewardship) that is in faith (1 Timothy 1:4). He will train himself in godliness (1 Timothy 4:7, 8). He will be nourished on the words of faith and of the good doctrine which he has followed (1 Timothy 4:6). In this way, he will be able to set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

The preacher’s aim must be love that issues out from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5). As Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25-33), the preacher must love the church. He must be genuinely anxious for the welfare of his fellow Christians while looking after the interests of Jesus Christ and His people, rather than his own (Philippians 2:4, 21). He will do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility, he will count others better than himself (Philippians 2:3). He will most gladly spend and be spent for the souls of the members of the local church (2 Corinthians 12:15). Thus, he may view the congregation with whom he works as “holy ground”

rather than constantly looking for “greener grass” to benefit his own interests. The preacher does not come to be served but to serve (cf. Matthew 20:28).

The preacher must therefore be patient and kind. He will not be jealous, boastful, arrogant, or rude. He will not insist on his own way or be irritable or resentful. He will not rejoice in the wrong but rejoice in the right. He will bear all things, hope all things, and endure all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). He will love his brethren, not just when they do what he wishes they would do but even when they do not. He will love them unconditionally, even when he has loved them more and they love him less (2 Corinthians 12:15).

Learning to love and to work side by side with those whom he may consider difficult to love, or with those who do not care for him, provides a preacher with one of his most valuable attainments. The preacher, with all lowliness, meekness, and patience, will forebear others in love (Ephesians 4:2). A good step toward loving the members unconditionally is to make mention of every one of them by name

each day in prayer (cf. Philippians 1:3).

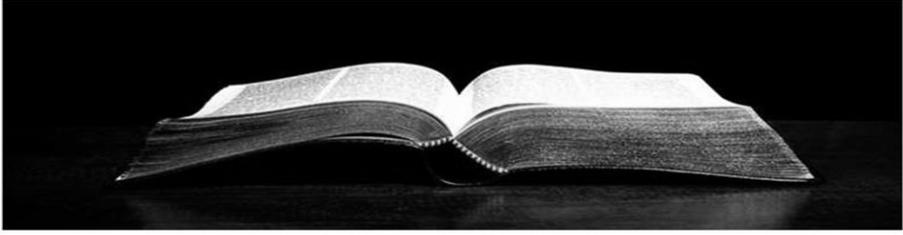
This same characteristic of the preacher is fundamental and essential to relations with those who are his leaders. The preacher in the local church must respect those who labor with him, who are over him, and who admonish him. He will esteem them very highly in love because of their work (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13). The preacher will join hands with the elders and the teachers to equip the local church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12).

The primary goal of the preacher in the local church must be to satisfy the one who enlisted him as a soldier in the service of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:4; compare verse 15). He may not be able to suit or satisfy the likings of those who will not endure sound teaching and who have itching ears (2 Timothy 4:2). Yet, he will not shrink from declaring anything that is profitable or from declaring the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 27). He will have the confidence and satisfaction that comes from aspiring to please God and Christ.



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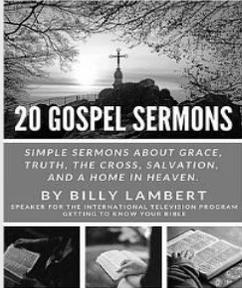
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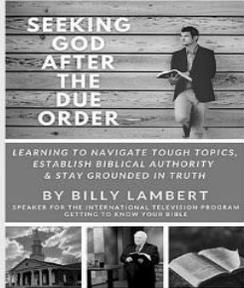
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The Preacher as a Soul Winner

Demar Elam

Jesus was the most incredible soul winner the world has ever known. The Son of God left heaven and came and dwelt among men to save souls! Jesus was the fulfillment of the seed promise: “‘And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:21-23). The Scriptures teach that Jesus’ mission was to save the lost. Luke 19:10 reads, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Preachers today need to walk in the footsteps of the Savior and endeavor to be what He was—that would be soul winners. Jesus came to seek and save the lost of this world.

The scribes and Pharisees once questioned Jesus about eating with sinners: “And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not



come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Luke 5:30-32). Why did Jesus come to this world? He came to call sinners to repentance. Gospel preachers today need to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. They need to be soul winners. They don’t need to contact the righteous but call sinners to repentance. Preachers will do well to emulate the Master! Jesus was indeed the most remarkable soul winner the world has ever known!

Jesus, when calling His disciples, said: “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Why did Jesus tell His disciples that He would make them fishers of men? You see, God’s followers, and especially preachers of His Gospel, are to be soul winners, and this is the mission given to the children of God. The last thing Jesus told His disciples when departing this world and being received up into Heaven to sit down at the right hand of God was:

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to

the end of the age. Amen’” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Mark 16:15-16 reads, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’”

These texts have been referred to as the “Great Commission.” Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel to every creature. Preachers today need to realize that this is their work because Jesus commanded it.

Jesus plainly stated that His mission, His purpose, His work, and motivation for coming and taking on the form of man was so He could call sinners to repentance, seek and save the lost, preach to the lost, and rescue the perishing. Shouldn’t God’s men today be what He was and walk as He walked and teach as He taught?

Gospel proclamation is essential in today’s world. Preaching has fallen into capsule acceptability—the gospel of Christ can only be acceptable in tiny, capsule doses. Many say that a 30-to-45-minute gospel sermon is more than people can digest and process. Yet, isn’t it strange that the same people can digest and process a 3- or

4-hour sports event sitting in a cold pouring rain, a 2- or 3-hour rock concert, or an hour and a half movie. I think you get my point. Some elders of the Lord's church have limited or reduced the time for gospel proclamation, assuming that folks won't accept lessons that are more than 15 or 20 minutes in duration. We need more proclamation of the Word of God, not less. "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). Through the foolishness of the gospel proclamation, sinners can be saved. We need more proclamation of the unique message of redemption, not less!

Preachers should have beautiful feet. "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'" (Romans 10:15) Luke tells us that Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read these words: "And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled

in your hearing.' So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?'" (Luke 4:17-22) Take note that this text states that Jesus preached and proclaimed. Why did Jesus preach and proclaim? He was a soul winner! Preachers need to preach and proclaim the gospel just as Jesus did. Preachers are soul winners!

Jesus was on a mission of proclamation. Preachers today need to declare to the church the following: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Be soul winners. Preach as Jesus did. Acts 13:38-39 states, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." Jesus preached to the people the forgiveness of sins, and preachers today need to busy themselves doing the same.

Preachers need to make known to the people that "without controversy great is

the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). Preachers that love lost souls need to be like Jesus, soul winners! Being a soul winner is who he is as a preacher. Preachers, soul winning isn't something you do; it's who you are! Preaching, proclamation, soul winning is that fire in the bones of the genuine preacher. He can't do anything but follow Jesus, preaching and proclaiming forgiveness of sins to lost sinners through Christ the risen Lord!

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The Work of an Evangelist

John L. Kachelman Jr.



Inspiration commanded “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5). This term describes the action of the Lord’s people rather than an authority level in the church (Ephesians 4:11). This simple function has been twisted to tempt man, so he uses this term to arrogate selfish authority. “Evangelistic authority” is used for unscriptural domination in a congregation. It is claimed the evangelist has God’s approval to control the congregation. They wrest scripture to justify the denominational “pastoral” position.

Inspiration addresses the evangelist in Titus 2:15. In this verse we are given an outline of the work of the evangelist. It is needful that we pay attention to this verse and its message.

The text tells us *what* the evangelist is to do.

First, *speaking*—The Greek term is generic and is common in the New Testament. It refers to speaking and teaching in an absolute sense either publicly or privately (Titus 2:1; Luke 1:22).

Second, *these things*—The speech focuses upon the “things” discussed in Titus 1 and 2. The evangelist is not to remain silent on unpopular topics—church government; morality; gender roles; salvation; and the exclusiveness

of God’s church. The godly evangelist is not hesitant to discuss these matters with others (Titus 2:1-10).

Often evangelists do not “speak these things.” Their silence results in evil’s presence dominating and godliness being overcome. He **MUST** “speak these things!” The evangelist’s speech is to be distinctive and bold; it is to uphold the principles of godliness and not cower from the critics and taunts of the ungodly.

The story is told that a recently graduated preacher was preaching on salvation. Everything went well until the man reached the invitation. He said, “If you will not believe in Jesus Christ, if you refuse to obey Him as you Lord, *you will suffer grave eschatological ramifications.*” An older preacher asked, “Did you mean that those who refuse to obey the gospel message would go to hell?” “Well, yes! Yes that is what I meant.” The old preacher replied, “Then say that!” The evangelist must be distinctively clear and boldly assertive in speaking! The verb is in the present imperative tense and commands that we speak with alarm and insistence.

Third, *exhort*—Inspiration has previously used this term (Titus 1:9; 2:6,

9). “Exhort” is stronger than “speak.” It also is in the present imperative tense, indicating speaking with alarm and insistence—one is on the verge of great danger and action must be taken before catastrophe occurs that brings about irrecoverable ruin. Literally it is “to entreat, encourage, urge one to pursue a certain course of conduct.”

The evangelist provides biblical encouragement to fellow members to accept and fulfill Christian duties. This requires him to study and communicate how inspired truths apply to everyday living. There is urgency for sound preaching from God’s word. He is to express alarm and urgency in pressing these truths.

Fourth, *reprove*—This describes confronting and convicting one of wrongdoing. The man of God *must* do this *if* he serves God faithfully! Many evangelists in the Lord’s church today shirk this duty! The practice of “reproving” or “rebuking” is often met with unkindness. Wisdom must be exercised in reproof (Ecclesiastes 7:21).

The sobering question asks—have I spoken, exhorted, and rebuked “these things” so that others know,

understand, and comply with God’s message?

The text tells us *why* the evangelist is to maintain a proper balance.

It is a divine command! Failure to obey is equal to failure to obey God (1 Kings 20:35, 36; 2 Timothy 4:1, 2).

It is by divine authority! The “authority” of the evangelist is limited to the word of God.

The text tells us *what* the greatest danger is facing the evangelist.

Being “despised” by those to whom he preaches threatens the evangelist. His lessons are “looked down upon, lightly regarded, paid little or no attention.”

Inspiration’s exhortation, “Let no one despise you,” is probably understood by our minds as “*Let no one wear you down!*” There is an emotional impact made by those depreciating the teaching of godliness.

One’s determination to preach the principles of godliness will weaken under constant attack; conflict wears down determination, and boldness is sacrificed; silence and timidity begins to dominate (2 Timothy 1:7-9).

This is the greatest threat to evangelists today. Many spend hours developing a lesson, but when it is presented, the majority pays little attention. In the words of Titus 2:15, these lessons are “disregarded.” No one has the right to scorn, to intimidate, or to undermine his sound teaching.

When the evangelist is doing his work, people should listen and heed. They should do this not because of the person saying it, but because of *what* the person is saying! Speaking, exhorting, and rebuking are in the *present imperative active* tense and command that these are constant actions.

The evangelist’s duties are to speak, exhort, and reprove. The church’s duties to the evangelist are to provide adequate support, give proper attention, and “hold up his hands” in the work.¹



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The Preacher and His Message

Andy Robison

Negatively observed, when a man dies, a library dies with him. He has spent years developing knowledge in any number of different fields; he likely did not have time to write down, or even verbally pass on, most of it. Knowledge in the world remains, but his unique perspective, experiences, and insights are gone. This ought to keep man, though the crown of God's creation, humble.

Conversely, the positive is that the young may purposely gain all sorts of knowledge. Those trained in the word of God will also someday pass away (unless the Lord returns first), and their unique libraries will be gone as well. However, (1) the word of God will remain and be constant (cf. Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:22-25), and (2) those having preached the treasure from their earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7) will have left behind a trail of light in this dark world (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6). Engineers and carpenters will leave buildings, bridges, and roads, but preachers will leave people prepared for eternity (2 Cor. 3:1-3). (It should be hastily added that those in any career who are faithful Christians also impact the world



for such good [Matt. 5:16; 2 Tim. 2:2]).

As the maturing preacher imbibes the message, it must first change him. He must be an example to the brethren (1 Tim. 4:12) as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3). He must fight the good spiritual fight (1 Tim. 6:12) to save himself and those who hear (1 Tim. 4:16). He is required to totally give himself to the message (1 Tim. 4:15), instructing brethren in it (1 Tim. 4:6), so that they can pass it on to others (2 Tim. 2:2). He must “wage a good warfare” with “faith and a good conscience” (1 Tim. 1:18-19). This sacred message he must learn, live, and teach, much like the Old Testament priest Ezra, who “prepared his heart to seek of the Law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10).

The pressure is on the preacher. This is not a clock-in, clock-out job. It requires self-discipline in time, self-control in behavior, self-motivation in

labor. The preacher lives for the purpose of saving souls!

Oh, there are other responsibilities along the way. If a husband, he has his marital duties, as taught in the word (Eph. 5:25-28). If a father, he must make a living (1 Tim. 5:8) and nurture his children toward spiritual growth (Eph. 6:4). As an employee, he must give his best (Eph. 6:5-8). He will not be able to give every minute toward learning, quoting, or teaching a Bible verse or principle, but that is his overall aim. It all comes back to living as an example for people to follow and opening his mouth at every opportunity to share the good news. If he does not live like this, he greatly damages the effectiveness of the message.

The message is powerful enough to help him (Eph. 6:10). He is given charges of great magnitude and will need supernatural (providential, not miraculous) help.

His message is the unpopular one that all are amenable to Christ (not

their chosen gods [1 Thess. 1:9]) and must repent (Acts 17:30-31). He is to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), but the truth is that most will reject the loving message (Matt. 7:13-14). He must stand against and expose falsehoods (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 4:1-5), while avoiding foolish, time-wasting, trifling matters (1 Tim. 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:16; Titus 3:9). The gospel preacher must—although not necessarily in the specific ways charged Titus—“set in order the things that are lacking” (Titus 1:5) by teaching the “pattern of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13) and rejecting the divisive (Titus 3:10-11). He is to remind brethren of things they already know (2 Tim. 2:14; Titus 3:1) and to patiently, without quarreling, teach the lost, hoping they can be loosed from the devil’s mind-snare (2

Tim. 2:24-26). Even through all the difficulties (2 Tim. 3:12), he ought to be thankful, as was Paul, for the opportunity to so live and work (1 Tim. 1:12-17).

The power to accomplish these monumental tasks is, in turn, within the very message he preaches. It is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). It “effectively works in [those] who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13). It is the greatest force for good in the world, at all places and all times, wherever it is introduced. It pierces men’s hearts (Acts 2:37) and changes the will (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

The word of God will never die (Isa. 40:6-8), but it will always need men in each

generation to learn it in its depth and teach it to the next. Should a dearth of such individuals plague any particular age, a parallel drought of the word will likewise curse that location (Amos 8:11-12; 2 Thess. 2:11-12).

The message is more precious than gold (Psalm 19:10). Those who have known it and preached it faithfully will depart to their reward, but their internal library of style and application will die with them. Young earthen vessels need to step up, say, “Here am I!” (Isa. 6:8), learn by hard study the precious truths, live them with great discipline, and proclaim them to the dark world that so desperately needs even a glimmer of light. Young men, learn, grow, and shine on!

The Preacher and Discouragement

Mike Greene



The familiar Frank Capra Christmas movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” begins with an imagined conversation between the Lord and Clarence Odbody, George Bailey’s guardian angel.

“A man down on earth needs our help,” the Lord says.

“Splendid! Is he sick?” asks Clarence.

“No. Worse. He’s discouraged...(He is) thinking seriously of throwing away God’s greatest gift.”

“His life!” responds Clarence.

In that brief, imaginary conversation, Capra captures the power of discouragement. Not many preachers are driven as far as George Bailey by discouragement, but as every preacher’s friend Dale Jenkins often says, “Any preacher can be hired away on Monday morning.” Why? Because that is when discouragement often hits. What is it that can move a preacher to that level of discouragement?

There is the feeling that his preaching just isn’t connecting with the congregation. He feels he has become irrelevant. He feels unappreciated. He feels as if he is spinning his wheels or that nobody is really listening anymore. This may be aggravated by decreasing numbers, unmet goals, or an unfavorable comparison to other congregations and preachers.

He may even be disappointed in himself. He knows his prayer life and his time in the word has been compromised for whatever reason; he

acknowledges to himself, if not to others, that his spiritual life, and therefore his preaching, has suffered. Maybe he has set for himself some very lofty goals that have not been achieved. Such as earning an advanced degree, doing more in terms of mission work, or getting more invitations to preach on lectureships, gospel meetings, VBS, and special occasions at sister congregations.

It may be a deteriorating relationship between him and the leadership. Expectations are not being met, or they have changed, and communication seems to have broken down. He is at a loss as to how to restore a healthy level of communication.

It could be an ongoing controversy in the congregation between himself and a member, an elder, or some group in the congregation that seems to have no resolution.

Family problems can also discourage a preacher in his work. Believe it or not, sometimes a preacher and his wife have “family fights” that can wear on their relationship, especially if these are recurring and unresolved. The prospect of a child rejecting the faith and choosing a life in defiance of God and his parents can drive a preacher to discouragement.

Financial problems can also be very real for the preacher. He and his family have the same or similar monetary issues as any other family. Their food, gasoline, electric bill, and housing costs go up every year as do those of every other family in the congregation. As his family grows, can he keep them fed and clothed? What about college? Then as time passes, he, too, faces the question of retirement and maybe even

declining health that can bring on staggering medical bills. There may be the pressure of aging parents to be cared for. On and on such a list could go.

But the discouraged modern-day preacher is not a new phenomenon. One can go all the way back to Elijah and find a discouraged preacher. The confrontation between Elijah and King Ahab continued to fester. Ahab and the prophets of Baal were seeking the life of Elijah. They labeled him as “the troubler of Israel.” The time came to settle the matter in that classic confrontation between the 400 prophets of Baal and Elijah, the lone prophet of God. That confrontation is described in dramatic language in 1 Kings 18 as Elijah, with the power of God, dispatched the 400 prophets of Baal with the executioner’s sword. Did that satisfy Ahab and Jezebel? No, they still wanted Elijah’s life. In his discouragement, Elijah traveled a day’s journey into the wilderness, sat down under a juniper tree with the plea, “Lord, take my life...I alone am left, and they seek my life,” on his lips (2 Kings 19:1-10).

Even the apostle Paul, the preacher whose success all wish to emulate, became discouraged. While at Corinth, his efforts were met by opposition from the Jews to the point that he left the synagogue and went into the house of Crispus. In spite of the success he was having in converting the lost, he became discouraged. The Lord appeared to him in the night with the following encouraging words: “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:9-11).

What should today’s preacher do when he becomes discouraged? We cannot in this short article give even a passing answer to the above list of things that discourage. But there are some things to remember. You don’t have to quit. Problems and issues have answers. Jesus promised that the one who seeks will find. Find a listening and encouraging confidant who will hear you and encourage you. You are not in this thing alone. If he is honest, every preacher who has engaged in this high calling has become discouraged. Remember neither Elijah nor Paul quit. Monday morning is not the time to quit. The Lord told Elijah to eat and rest, and he gained strength to continue the battle. Every discouraged preacher should carefully read the account of Elijah, Jezebel, and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 17-19 before deciding to quit on Monday morning or any other time.

Remember that God is on your side and His promises stand. Be reminded of the last words Paul penned: “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!” (2 Tim 4:17-18)



The Preacher and His Library

Mike Kiser

“The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments” (2 Timothy 4:13).

The old gospel preacher, Paul, is in prison once again in Rome. Times have changed in that short time since his last incarceration there. It is now a crime to be a Christian in Rome since Nero has laid on them the charge of setting fire to the city. He misses his friends. It is dangerous for them to come and see him. He misses something else, his books! He had left his books with the good brother in Troas the last time that he was in the east before going to Macedonia. He probably expected to come back by Troas and pick them up; but, instead he goes as a prisoner to Rome.

At first glance one might find these words unworthy of such a great mind. Why would Paul bother to speak of such common things? But, on the other hand, these words certainly show the human side of the noble apostle! These few words paint for us a picture of this eminent man as he faces the last days of his life on earth. It touches the heart with its simple suggestion of human needs, both bodily and mental.

It was later in the sixteenth century that a similar request was made by the great Englishman, William Tyndale. In 1535 he was imprisoned in Belgium. Not long before his fiery martyrdom, he wrote a letter to the Marquis of Bergen, governor of the castle, requesting, “I entreat your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I must remain here for the winter you would beg the Commissary to be so kind as to send me, from the things of mine which he has, a warmer cap; I feel the cold painfully in my head. Also a warmer cloak,

for the cloak I have is very thin. He has a woolen shirt of mine, if he will send it; but most of all, my Hebrew Bible, Grammar, and Vocabulary, that I may spend my time in that pursuit.”

One might wonder if Timothy got there before winter or even before Paul’s martyrdom. Did the grand old man ever get to warm himself with his old familiar cloak and to bend over his books again?

What do we know about Paul’s books and parchments? We know Paul was a literary man. He was from Tarsus, a university city, and was schooled in Jerusalem in the famous seminary established by Hillel, a liberal Pharisee. His teacher was Hillel’s grandson, the celebrated doctor Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He gives evidence of his familiarity with the Greek poets such as Epimenides, Menander, Pindar, Aristophanes, Euripides, and other great Greek writers (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). As a philosopher, he certainly held his own in Athens and Corinth. Paul was the busiest evangelist that ever lived; but one thing is certain, he did not neglect his intellectual life.

If I knew I was walking out of my study to go on a long trip and would not see my old friends for a long time, or ever again, which fifty pounds of books would I pull off the shelf to carry with me as my intellectual companions? Here is my factual answer:

- ✓ *My old Thompson’s Chain Reference Bible*
- ✓ *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*
- ✓ *The Complete Word Study New Testament*
- ✓ *Studies in The Life of Christ* by R. C. Foster

- ✓ *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* by Conybeare and Howson
- ✓ *God’s Prophetic Word; Bulwarks of The Faith; and The Gospel for Today* by Foy E. Wallace Jr.
- ✓ *A Guide to The Psalms* by W. Graham Scroggie
- ✓ *Knowing The Scriptures; and Godly Self Control* by A. T. Pierson
- ✓ *Sermons on Salvation; Shall We Know One Another in Heaven; and The Second Coming* by Guy N. Woods
- ✓ *The Philosophy of Christianity, A System of General Ethics, A System of Natural Theism; and A System of Christian Evidence* by Leander S. Keyser
- ✓ *The Scheme of Redemption; and Hebrews* by Robert Milligan
- ✓ *The Fourfold Gospel; Original Commentary on Acts; and Commentary on Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, Romans* by J. W. McGarvey
- ✓ *Prophecy* by Alexander Keith
- ✓ *Holy Living and Dying* by Jeremy Taylor
- ✓ *The Saint’s Everlasting Rest* by Richard Baxter
- ✓ *The History of Apostasies* by John F. Rowe
- ✓ *Foundation Facts and Primary Principles* by G. C. Brewer.

There you have it. Some are in print. Some are out of print. Some are by my brethren. Some are by denominational authors. They weigh fifty pounds all together. I know! I just weighed them on a postal scale. I still have twenty pounds for all else I would ever need. Hopefully the airline would not lose my seventy-pound suitcase along the way!

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The gospel is not of man. It is God's power wielded by man. The role and the work of the preacher is not of man but is of God. It is not in one's personality nor in his talent. It is in one's character and conduct that one yields to Christ and lives as His servant.

Integrity, respect, humility, courage, and faithfulness are essential for all who would proclaim Christ. The preacher of the gospel

is charged with the responsibility of living an exemplary life. The Lord Jesus Christ is the truest, purest, noblest example and guide for His servants. He is the very foundation upon which godly servants depend. He went about doing good. Those who serve Him engage in the same conduct.

Passion for Christ works to create passion for truth and passion for the souls of men. Zeal for the truth

stirs and stabilizes the life of the servant of God. Zeal for souls motivates evangelism. Passion and compassion are fueled by godly desire, leading one to serve with great love and respect. The faithful preacher of the gospel is not a celebrity. The focus of his life is upon Christ, not himself. He loses himself in serving Christ, in the proclamation of the gospel, and in bringing eternal souls to God.

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