

Preaching the Gospel

A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.

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Working While Preaching

Paul wrote: “*You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.*” (Acts 20:34) At Corinth “*He came to them, (Aquila and Priscilla) and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tentmakers.*” (Acts 18:3) Yet he happily gave up his tent making when Timothy and Silas came from Macedonia, “*devoting himself completely to the word.*” (Acts 18:5) It seems that Timothy and Silas brought the contributions of the churches of Macedonia (2 Cor. 11:9) so that Paul no longer had to work with his hands.

But Paul only worked with his hands so he could do the work he was called to do—preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. When he wrote to Timothy he said, “*Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. . . . Meditate upon these things; **give thyself wholly to them**; that thy profiting may appear to all.*” (2 Tim. 4:13,15) Neither he nor Timothy engaged in business “on the side” to make themselves more comfortable.

Many preachers have worked to support themselves. When I was preaching in Alliance, Ohio a new congregation was formed and I had to take a cut in salary. I asked the brethren if I could sell Knapp shoes directly for one day a week. They gave me permission, and that income filled up what I had lost. Some preachers have driven school buses in order to have an income sufficient to support themselves and their families.

But as pointed out to me many years ago, there is a difference between a farmer who preaches and a preacher who farms. The gospel preacher may farm in order to have enough to support himself and his family, and many did in years past, but their main aim in life is to preach the gospel and save souls. Farming (business) may be a necessary activity in order to fulfill his obligations, but the man is basically a preacher. That is his life. He will preach with or without support, whether he has to support himself or whether brethren support him.

It is a different matter when a preacher gets caught up in business affairs, especially when he is getting adequate support from brethren. I was preaching a gospel meeting for a church when one of the elders told me that the preacher was pressuring brethren to sell products for him in a Multi-Level Marketing company. It was causing problems. I begged the preacher to stop, but he would not. He soon left that congregation.

The desire to become a success (get rich) can infect preachers like everyone else. One preacher got a telephone call from another preacher quite a distance away. The one calling said, “I have a great business proposition for you.” The question was asked “Is it Amway?” The calling preacher said, “Amway! What’s Amway?” After driving a long distance to find out about the

“business proposition”, the one called found out that it WAS Amway! The desire for riches had caused a preacher to stretch the truth to the point of misrepresenting. What a shame.

Another preacher told me that he supplemented his income by selling rather expensive, special Bibles. One Sunday he noticed that during the invitation song he was looking among the brethren to see which ones would be good prospects for Bibles! He quit selling those Bibles right then!

So, a preacher is a preacher whether he gets support from brethren or not. Homer Hailey said that young fellows would come to him and say, “Can you get me a place to preach for the summer?” Bro. Hailey would tell them, “There are plenty of places. Go to a town and preach on the courthouse steps.” That is not the answer they wanted.

We preachers, and those preparing to preach, must constantly answer the question, “What is FIRST in my life.” Keep Christ first. Keep the work of preaching the gospel ahead of everything else. Work if you must, but only so you can keep on preaching the unfathomable riches of Christ.

More Doctrine, Please!

When was the last time you preached a series of lessons, or even one sermon, on *Why the Missionary Society, the Sponsoring Church, and Church-Supported Orphan Homes and Schools are Sinful*? Have you preached a sermon showing the sinfulness of instrumental music in worship within the last two years? Or—the fact that spiritual gifts have been done away, the evidences that Jesus was raised from the dead, why denominationalism is wrong, why the church of Christ is not a denomination, salvation by faith only, premillennialism, or evolution?

Yes, all those lessons on Christian living, overcoming sin in our lives, loving our enemies, taking the gospel to the lost, and having good marriages are important. But without concentrating on what we usually call “doctrine”, we are failing to preach the whole counsel of God.

Do people get “bored” and “turned off” by doctrinal sermons? Let me make two observations. First, what we preach must not be decided by the preferences of the audience. We have to preach what they NEED, not just what they want. Second, we can preach doctrine in such a way as to make it vital and interesting. Use illustrations. Make up-to-date applications. Prepare your lesson fresh—from scratch—instead of taking an old outline and preaching it the way you always do.

Are you a beginning preacher? If you are like most, you are preaching lessons on Christian living, dedication, etc. Get into doctrine! You may find those lessons harder to prepare. They take plenty of study. And you have to work to make them “live”. But unless you tackle those lessons, you are shirking your duty!

Without plenty of doctrinal sermons, congregations drift into ignorance of important subjects, and individuals and congregations become softer and softer until they are easy targets for Satan’s lies. Be vigilant! Work hard! Preach everything which will profit.

Three Men Present the Word

Bill Hall, Athens, AL

How positive and certain should one be in his presentation of the word? We have observed three types of men in relation to this question.

The first is the mealy-mouthed type who rarely says anything with certainty. Every statement is prefaced with "possibly," "it could be," "some of the commentaries say," or "I think." Even Revelation 21:8: "*But the cowardly, unbelieving ... and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone ...*" is quoted in soft, suave tones (and that requires real skill!) that will convince no one.

The second voices everything in a positive, self-assured way, especially those proclamations about which he knows absolutely nothing. He can be wrong in the most positive kind of way. He is the true dogmatist, living by the philosophy, "Yell here; point's weak"; or possibly he is self-deceived, failing to recognize his limitations.

The third studies very closely the word of the Lord, and consequently speaks with certainty those conclusions which he can defend from the scriptures. When he speaks, the listener is impressed that "this man really believes what he is saying." He is not afraid of being questioned on any conviction, for he is "*always ... ready to give a defense to everyone who asks [him] a reason for the hope that is in [him], with meekness and fear*" (1 Peter 3:15). At the same time, he is not hesitant to say, "I don't know," when questioned about a matter of which he is not certain.

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Of these three types, the second is the most unacceptable and the most dangerous. We marvel at the brazenness of such men, but marvel even more at the gullibility of congregations who will allow them to dominate their classes, pulpits, and business meetings. On the other hand, the person who allows his repulsion to the second type drive him to an acceptance of the wishy-washy, "never be certain of anything" type, makes a sad mistake. Truth has its own peculiar ring, and that ring is the ring of certainty. One hears it unmistakably in the teaching of the apostles: "*I know whom I have believed ...*" (2 Timothy 1:12); "*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables ...*" (2 Peter 1:16); "*We also believe and therefore speak, knowing ...*" (2 Corinthians 4:13-14). And one will hear it in faithful teaching today.

Truth is the deciding factor. When one can support his teaching with a proper application of scripture, he can—no, he should—speak with boldness, clarity, and certainty. Such teaching is not dogmatism; it is contending "*earnestly for the faith.*" It should not be criticized; it should be appreciated and encouraged. Let no one then be intimidated, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord ...*" (2 Timothy 1:7-8).

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Emphasizing Some Things About Outlining a Sermon

1. **Study**, and gather a lot of material on the general subject. Make notes. Do this with prayer. I suggest that you review the articles by Kenneth Williams in Vol. 1 Nos. 5-9. You will find them at the web page www.knowyourbible.co.za
2. **Form a purpose statement** to guide you in shaping your sermon.
3. Divide your lesson into **MAIN POINTS**. These should be
 - a. Arranged so as to be the logical steps to accomplishing your purpose; (Be careful not to make two alike, and work hard so that the logic of their order is clear.)
 - b. Approximately equal in importance;
 - c. Stated in clear sentences, in the words you will use when preaching.
4. Arrange your **material under the main points**.
 - a. Outline the material under each main point the same as you did the main points.
5. **Discard** anything which does not directly contribute to accomplishing your purpose.
6. **Insert illustrations** and applications—and write them out. Put a great deal of thought and effort into finding useful illustrations. And apply your points to your audience. Make your lesson practical.
7. **Write a conclusion**, usually writing out several sentences.
 - a. It is good to review the main points.
 - b. You may read your text again.
 - c. You may introduce a new illustration.
 - d. Make sure your conclusion fulfills the purpose stated in your purpose statement.
8. **Write an introduction**.
 - a. You will usually have a text, and you will explain it and how you intend to use it.
 - b. Try to make the purpose of your sermon important to your audience.
 - c. You may use an illustration.
 - d. It is usually good to read your main points at the close of the introduction.

May God bless your efforts to prepare scriptural, useful, vital sermons.

--Paul K. Williams