

Preaching the Gospel

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

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What On Earth In Heaven's Name Is A Preacher?

Keith Storment

Introduction

In our last article (not printed in PTG Magazine) we discussed the qualifications of the man who would attempt to preach from two sides: what qualifies a man to preach according to human standards; and what are God's requirements of the would-be preacher. We drew the conclusion that human standards are founded on human wisdom, not scripture; that preachers need to place their emphasis on what God expects and not on what 'pleases men.'

Now, let's focus our attention on two issues. One, the preacher is 'on earth' but in a very special role: what is that role? Two, he is 'on earth in Heaven's name;' his work is divinely important: Why is the preacher's work so important?

What On Earth Is A Preacher?

In the very beginning note what he is not:

1. He is not 'the pastor'—someone in charge of the church. The command to 'take the oversight' of the church was given to elders, not preachers (1Peter 5:1,2) and preachers are seriously out of line when they seek to take such authority to themselves.

2. Nor is he a deacon—a servant of the church. As we shall see later, the preacher is the Lord's servant, not man's.

(Note: There is nothing scripturally wrong with a qualified man who preaches also serving as either one of the pastors (elders) or deacons; the point is that he should neither take nor be given either a role of authority or subjection that the Bible does not accord him.)

3. And he is not 'the reverend'—someone a 'cut above' the ordinary members. It is true, he is a spiritual priest of God; but so is every other Christian! (1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 12:1)

Now, according to the New Testament, the preacher is on earth as:

1. A preacher, to take first things first! This word is a translation of a Greek word that, according to Vine and others, means 'one who proclaims a message.' It is used in 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11; and Rom. 10:14. This gives us the basic thought as to a preacher's duty: he has a message and he must proclaim it.

2. An evangelist. Timothy was commanded to do the work of an evangelist. (2 Tim. 4:5). Evangelists are listed as one of Christ's gifts to the church, (Eph. 4:11) and Philip was described as an evangelist. (Acts 21:8). The meaning of this word is 'a messenger of good' and the connection between this idea and that of 'preacher' is obvious. As a preacher a man has a message to proclaim; by God's also describing him as an evangelist we learn that the preacher's message is 'glad tidings of good things.' (Rom. 10:15)

The old stereotype of the preacher as a solemn 'man in black' with tidings only of 'gloom and doom' is a misconception. Rather, he comes bearing the greatest news; the happiest news; a sin-wearied world ever heard: "A Saviour has died!"

3. A bond-servant of Christ. This term is often used of Christians in general. (Cf. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:21-23; Rom. 6:17,18) But I believe it is sometimes used with special reference to those who preach the gospel.

To both the Roman and Philippian Christians Paul describes himself as 'a bond-servant of Christ.' (Rom. 1:1; Ph. 1:1) To the Philippians he included Timothy in that description. In Gal. 1:10, the same apostle declared that being 'the bond-servant of Christ' precluded him from pleasing men. And as he was instructing his younger protege, Timothy, in the qualities a preacher must possess, he began his remarks: "...the Lord's bond-servant..." (2 Tim. 2:23-25)

Having determined that the term 'bond-servant of Christ' has a special application to preachers: What is its meaning? and what is the message for us? The term literally describes a slave—one who is bound absolutely by law to another to do their will. The application for preachers is simple if we are willing to accept it: He is the Lord's slave; not the church's or the Christian's. Sometimes folks seem to feel like: "Well, we **pay** the preacher—he should do what we want him to!" Not so; the preacher is the Lord's slave and the fact that he may be partially or fully supported by a church does not change that fact. The man who would be faithful to God as a gospel preacher does not have the option of pleasing men.

4. A minister—a servant' or 'one who serves.' This also is a shared role—all Christians should be ministers—people who serve. Paul said that 'saints' (not just preachers) were to be 'equipped for the work of service' (ministry-KJV). (Eph. 4:12) So, all Christians have a 'ministry'—a place of service—In the Lord's kingdom. The man who preaches is simply a Christian who has been given 'the ministry of the word.' (Acts 6:4) His place of service is to 'preach the Word.' (2 Tim. 4:2,4)

As with a bond-servant, the primary obligation of the preacher is to be a 'good servant (minister-KJV) of Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 4:6) but this necessarily involves him in 'serving' or 'ministering' unto men. (1 Cor. 3:5,6) As the Lord's servant, he will render service to others; not because he is under their control, but because he is under the Lord's control.

5. The man of God. Paul, in writing to Timothy, twice uses this term to describe the preacher. (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:17) The significance of this may be seen in the Old Testament usage of this term. used to describe: Moses (Dt. 33:1); an unnamed prophet (1 Sam. 2:27); Elisha (2 Kg. 5:8); and others. So, in using this term, Paul links the work of Timothy (and other faithful men who follow in his steps) with that of Moses, Elisha, and all the prophets of old. The preacher, as were those heroes of faith, is God's man with God's plan for God's people.

6. An apostle—a 'sent-out one.' I realize some might object to using this term to describe today's preachers; but I believe such usage is in harmony with at least one New Testament use of the word. The word 'apostle' is used in at least four ways in the New Testament:

a. To describe those twelve men who personally companied with Jesus and personally witnessed His Resurrection; who were personally commissioned by Him to preach. (Acts 1:21, 22; Mt. 28:18ff.)

b. To describe Paul who, though not one of the original Twelve, received, as one 'untimely born', a special apostolic commission. (1 Cor. 15:8-10)

c. To describe anyone 'sent-out' to preach. Witness Acts 14:4,14 where both Paul and Barnabas are described as apostles; though only Paul had received the apostolic commission referred to in 'a.' and 'b.' above. Also note Rom. 16:17 which lists several otherwise unknown men as 'outstanding among the apostles'; and also 1 Thess. 2:6 where the only logical antecedent for the Plural 'apostles' are the individuals mentioned in 1:1 of that letter. Only one of those individuals had received the special commission referred to above.

d. And, also, to describe anyone 'sent out.' The word translated 'messenger(s)' in Ph. 2:25 and 2 Cor. 8:23 Is the same word elsewhere rendered 'apostle(s).'

Now certainly no serious Bible student would argue that today's preacher is an apostle in the sense of either the first or second of these usages; but I believe he fits to a T the sense of the third. Now of course wisdom would dictate against a preacher calling himself an apostle, but the idea should remain because there is a very valuable lesson here; one it took me a while to learn myself.

And one last point to note before moving on. All of these terms are descriptive only. To use any of them as titles of distinction, to set preachers up as a 'breed apart' from the 'common herd' of other Christians, is a clear violation of the principle taught in Mt. 23:6-12.

The Preacher Is On Earth In The Name Of Heaven.

This means his work is important—the preacher is here with all the authority of Heaven behind him!(Cf. Tit. 2:15) In this section of our study, we'd like to examine just why preaching is so important.

Preaching is not important because of who the preacher is personally. I do not claim importance for myself but for the work I do. Like Paul and the office of apostle (1 Cor. 15:10), I hold the office of evangelist by 'the grace of God.' (Eph. 4:7,11)

But it seems some brethren have little appreciation of the importance of preachers and preaching. Preaching brethren are treated as 'second class' citizens in the kingdom; a 'necessary evil' churches must tolerate. (Perhaps some of this is due to the invisible 'temporary' sign that has been hung on preachers!) They personally are ignored; their families treated as social outcasts; no one seems hear a word they say and everything they do is criticized. Such treatment makes me angry. Angry not for my personal hurt, but for my Lord. You see, when people reject the work of a faithful servant of God, they, in reality have rejected the Lord! (1 Sam 8:7)

Such people need to realize that preaching is important—important because of its:

1. Potential. Preaching was designed by God to accomplish two primary purposes:

a. The salvation of souls. "God was well pleased, through the 'foolishness of (preaching) to save those who believe." (1 Cor. 1:21) Timothy was told that the man who 'paid close attention' to himself and his teaching would insure salvation for himself and those who listened. (1 Tim. 4:16)

b. The edifying—building up—of saints. Eph, 4:11,12 tells us that one of the purposes for which evangelists (and others) exist is to the end goal of 'building up the body of Christ' by equipping saints to do the work of service. Now, if properly doing 'the work of an evangelist' will accomplish these great ends; then obviously, improper or neglectful handling of the duty will both damn the preacher's soul and those who hear, and tear down the Lord's church.

Of a truth, the work of a preacher has the greatest potential for either evil or good ever placed in mortal hands.

2. Origin. The first preachers were commissioned by the Lord Himself and given instructions to make more. (Mk. 16:15; Mt. 28:18-5 cf. 2 Tim. 2:2) The preacher is such by the grace of Christ and is one of His gifts to the church. (Eph. 4:7-12). The preacher, along with other servants of the church, should be appreciated for the work they do. (Cf. 1 Th. 5:12, 13) Personal habits, differences or agreements on matters of opinion may be used to like or dislike a preacher; but the true standard for either appreciation or rejection is the man's work—is he being faithful to the charge of the Lord?

3. Holy Trust. Several times, Paul reminded Timothy that the gospel has been entrusted to preachers and they must guard it with their lives. (1 Tim. 1:11; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14) As ones with such a trust, preachers must seek the approval of God, not men. (1 Th. 2:4) This reminds me of the awesome responsibility of security firms who are entrusted with the protection of very important people and extremely valuable material property. Now, how much greater is the preacher's responsibility when he has, as it were, been entrusted with 'the crown jewels of Heaven'?

Sometimes the charge is leveled that such and such a preacher 'studies too much'! Maybe so...maybe not. Maybe he just feels the terrible responsibility that God has given him and it scares him almost to death! And it should! After all, the gospel is God's dynamite (Rom. 1:16 Gk.); the Spirit's sword (Eph. 6:17); and everyone should know: You handle swords and dynamite carefully!

**For a study of the woman's head covering in worship go to:
www.headcoverings.org**

Expository Preaching

I wanted to preach *Will A Man Rob God?* based on Malachi 3:8-12. But as I studied the passage I realized that the entire book of Malachi contained rich sermon material. As a result I preached the following: *Jehovah Still Loves Israel* (1:1-5), *Where Is My Honor? Where Is My Respect?*(1:6-2:9); *“I Hate Divorce!”* (2:10-16), *Making God Weary* (2:17-3:6), *Will A Man Rob God?* (3:7-12). I intend finishing the series by preaching about John the Baptist (3:1; 4:5).

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When a sermon, or a series of sermons, is based on a fairly long passage of scripture, and all of the main points and most of the material for the sermon(s) are taken from that passage, the sermons are called “Expository Sermons.”

When I preach expository sermons I find that I deal with subjects which I might not preach on in topical sermons. I find that I can help the hearers to a better understanding of the text of the Bible. And I find that I gain much from the deep study of the Biblical text which is necessary for such preaching.

However I find it difficult to preach a series of sermons on a long section of scripture because I have to work hard to keep the sermons from being too much alike.

When I prepare an expository sermon, I usually read what Matthew Henry comments on the passage. His comments are on the free “e-Sword” computer program, and his comments are outlined and always cover a section of several verses. I

call him “a preacher’s commentator.” He wrote in the early 1700’s, so his English is old-fashioned, and he had the usual denominational ideas concerning the Holy Spirit, etc. But in spite of those problems, I find him to be very, very useful. I used his outlines and comments quite a bit in the series preached from Malachi.

In addition, I studied Homer Hailey’s commentary on The Minor Prophets, and occasionally consulted The Pulpit Commentary. I tried to make each sermon vital to the audience, dealing with up-to-date problems.

If you are new to expository preaching, start with Bible stories: Joseph, a Study of God’s Providence; the different cases of conversion in the book of Acts; Abraham, the Man of Faith. Later you can graduate to preaching from 1 Peter and, finally, from Romans. The preacher who works hard at expository preaching will profit his hearers—and himself!

The free e-Sword Bible program is great. For information on how to download it, write to [Joel Williams, joelwms@biblemirror.com](mailto:joelwms@biblemirror.com).

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