

# Preaching the Gospel

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

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## Serving God for Nothing

Barry Kercheville

As I write, I am in my third visit to India teaching Indian preachers. Many are relatively young in the faith and have an immature concept of New Testament Christianity (which is one of the major reasons we are here). American money, offered indiscriminately, has the tendency of luring unscrupulous men into preaching—something that is not totally unknown in the United States. These will gather up “baptisms” to impress visiting American preachers in the hope of obtaining support. They will hint that if only they had more money they could work harder for the Lord’s cause. Their promise is not a result of a burning desire to work full-time saving souls. In fact, it is clear that if there was no money, there would be no work for the Lord.

The apostle Paul expressed the proper attitude: “*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel*” (1 Cor. 9:16). C. A. Burcham encouraged me in my younger years when he said something on the order of, “In preaching, we always have a job; the question is whether we will be supported by the brethren or we will support ourselves.” Indeed, money cannot be the driving force, but instead, “*the love of Christ constrains us*” (2 Cor. 5:14).

This spirit must not only infect those who preach. Satan’s challenge to God concerning Job was, “*Does Job serve God for nothing?*” Satan’s argument was that Job only served God because of the physical blessings bestowed on him. If these were taken away, Satan was convinced that Job would curse God. Therefore trials are used by God to filter out those who find serving God a convenient and profitable lifestyle (1 Pet. 1:7).

Every year we watch Christians fall when tough times challenge their faith. They are the “*wood, hay, and straw*” of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 3:12-13, and they are burned in the “*fire*.” We have now entered a new year and more trials await us. Who among us will be the wood, hay, and straw? It will be those who do not serve God for nothing. But for those who endure, the result will be a proven character that will find praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

--*Focus Magazine*, February 2008

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. – *Philippians 1:9-10*.

## SO YOU WANT TO BE A PREACHER?

Jefferson David Tant, [jdtant3@juno.com](mailto:jdtant3@juno.com)

### Preaching is a life of facing difficulties

I call as my first witness an early preacher—the apostle Paul. If you don't recall his difficulties, get your Bible and read II Corinthians 11. I don't think I could round up 1,000 preachers whose combined experiences could add up to what Paul encountered. Thankfully, most of those who read this live in a nation where we have freedom, and where we are financially comfortable.

That part about being “financially comfortable” certainly was not true of an earlier generation of preachers. My own forebears, both father and grandfather, faced financial hardships in preaching. My grandfather, J. D. Tant, farmed to provide for his family, and my grandmother Nannie looked after the farm while he was often gone in gospel meetings and debates. On one occasion he held a meeting that the brethren deemed successful, and they invited him back the next year, but said they would have no money for his wages. He offered a solution. Some of the members raised hogs. Grandfather suggested that each one take a runt of the next litter, feed it the leftovers from the family dinner table, and he would take that as his pay. They got their pencils out and did some figuring before announcing they could not afford that. Grandfather's response was that if his preaching was not worth the slop from their tables, then there was no use in his coming back. (You need to read **J. D. Tant, Texas Preacher**. It is a rich reading experience.)

I remember when my father, Yater Tant, was preaching for a large church with 1,000 or so in attendance on Sunday. He was paid very little, which was partly due to a power struggle among the elders. We took in boarders, and eventually sold our car to pay the bills. Thankfully, we lived on the bus line, and were only a few blocks from the church building, so could walk to services. My family has endured a few hardships along the way, such as living in a mouse-infested four room house with three children and my wife's sister, for whom I fixed a room in the attic.

Financial struggles are not the only difficulties. There are also “brethren” difficulties. Many years ago while in New Mexico a local theater was presenting a live show featuring a “dance contest” with Chubby Checker, a popular rock-and-roll singer at the time. I learned that one of our young teenagers was going to attend, and possibly would enter the contest. After our ladies Bible class one morning, I took the newspaper clipping to the mother of the girl, and quietly asked her if she thought her daughter ought to attend. Mom commenced to scream and shout that I should leave her alone, and left the building in tears. The next night the two elders came to visit me and criticize my meddling in the affairs of that family. They opined I was lucky her husband did not come and hit me. They instructed me to leave the members alone and teach the aliens while they would take care of the members. I replied that I was glad to hear that, as there was another particular family whose daughter was not behaving right, and they needed to talk to them. “Well, you preach about that from the pulpit. They know what's right. So what else you want us to do?”

We invited M. Roy Stevens for a singing school. The elders told me to select men for him to work with. About the third night of the meeting, the younger elder told me the older wanted to fire me—that night! Why? Because I had not asked him to lead singing yet! And so it goes.

How does one respond to such situations? You accept it as a part of being a servant of Christ. You do not throw up your hands and quit, nor do you in anger retaliate. You sometimes bite your tongue, and you pray for your brethren. As Paul detailed the hardships he had encountered in his travels, he concluded by writing *“Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?”* (II Cor. 11:28-29). *“Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord”* (James 5:10).

## [Books Which Help Preachers](#)

**Walking By Faith by Roy Cogdill**, published by Guardian of Truth Foundation. This is the book Bro. Cogdill wrote which deals with the organization and work of the church. In it he deals specifically with the problems of institutionalism (church-supported orphan homes and schools, sponsoring church, etc.) It is in the style of his *The New Testament Church*, but it has more discussion and explanation. His section on how to establish authority is the best I know of, and the chapter on how to apply examples is especially helpful.

**Vine's Expository Dictionary**. This standard reference work is very helpful. It lists the English words found in the King James Version of the Bible, gives the Greek word in English letters and Greek letters, and then defines the word very carefully. It usually lists all, or most, of the passages where the word is found. You don't have to know Greek to use this book.

**Truth Commentaries**, Guardian of Truth Foundation. Save up your money and buy these books. At present there are the following volumes, written by different gospel preachers: Jeremiah; Mark; John; Acts; Romans; 1 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians and Colossians; 1-2 Timothy and Titus and Philemon; 1 Peter; 2 Peter and Jude; Revelation. I find the ones written by Clinton Hamilton to be difficult reading (Romans, 1 Peter, 2 Peter and Jude). The rest are simply great. To me they are thrilling. I especially recommend Acts, John, and Revelation. But you should try to get all of these commentaries.

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## [Online With Joel](#)



[www.deusvitae.com](http://www.deusvitae.com)

Ethan Longhenry is a young preacher but he is a good Bible student. On his website, he has detailed sermon outlines, debates (unfortunately the links to those do not work right now), information on many denominations (I used his study of Gnosticism when preaching on the Gospel of Judas), various articles, and more. I will not say that he always is right since I haven't read much of what he has written, but he does make his arguments clearly and his material is worth reading.

[www.apologeticspress.org](http://www.apologeticspress.org)

Apologetics Press is a website that deals with Biblical apologetics - explaining hard things about faith in God and the Bible. They write in an easy-to-read manner so that even when scientific arguments are being made, non-scientists can understand them. Websites like this are useful when you are having doubts about your faith or you are trying to help someone who is having doubts. It is good to read them with a critical eye, however, and not simply accept what they say because you agree with their conclusion. This is especially true if you are trying to help someone who is a critical thinker and are using arguments from someone else. There are many apologists who are not entirely honest in order to make their points, and often it is easy to see. We need to be careful, but if we use these resources properly they can be a great help.

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## Using Sermons, Articles, and Sermon Outlines of Others

I have profited much from the written sermons and articles of faithful brethren. I have used their material and outlines for effective sermons. I think every gospel preacher has done this.

I like sermons which are completely written out. In that way I can see how the preacher develops his theme, and it helps me. Perhaps it is because I got the book when I was at an impressionable age, but the book of sermons by J. W. McGarvey has been my favorite. They are simply great sermons.

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**This file is formatted for printing on both sides of the paper, with room to punch holes on the left for inserting in a notebook.**

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Sermon outline books have been of less value to me. But they can be of great help, too.

And I have found that articles in gospel papers have been a source of very good sermon material. They are often condensed sermons. For instance, if you will download the March 2008 issue of *Gospel Guide* ([www.gospel-guide.org](http://www.gospel-guide.org)) you will find that nearly every one of the articles will make a fine sermon.

In every case the preacher must digest the material, put it in his own words, and change it to fit his own style of preaching. When he preaches the sermon, it must be HIS sermon.

The temptation is to use the same words as found in the article or written sermon. Always that makes for stiffness, or formality—at least I have found that to be so. Don't copy!

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*From Preaching: Principles and Practice by Thomas H. Holland.*

### **III. False Positions of Preaching**

Secular Speaking: Concerned only with life here and now.

Speculative Theorizing: The false view concerning the subjective nature of truth, when tied to the notion that the Scriptures do not contain a complete revelation of God's will give rise to pseudo-prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ, baseless "testimony" concerning mysterious and mystical workings of the "Holy Spirit", and vain claims about infallible knowledge concerning the future.

Sensational Showmanship—The purpose of preaching explodes the myth of pulpit showmanship. Biblical preaching is done for salvation and edification; it is not done for entertainment.

Spiritual Sophistry—Paul assured the Corinthians that he had not come to them with "excellence of speech, or of wisdom". (1 Cor. 2:1-2.) The word translated wisdom is *sophia*, from which the English word "sophistry" is derived. The Sophists were ancient Greek teachers of rhetoric and philosophy who employed subtle and fallacious reasoning to win approval of their proposals. A facade was of more value than fact to the Sophist; technique was more important than truth; the method became more significant than the veracity of the message.

It is spiritual sophistry to employ persuasive techniques to get "responses" so the ego of the preacher can be expanded. Persuasion without indoctrination is spiritual sophistry.

Broadus said, "It is lamentable to see how often the remarks made by preachers themselves . . . are confined to a discussion of the performance and the performer."

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