

# Preaching the Gospel

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

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## "...Do The Work Of An Evangelist..." (1)

Keith Storment

### Introduction

In 2 Tim. 4:5 Paul admonishes his young protege, Timothy, to "...be sober in all things, endure hardship, **Do the work of an evangelist**, fulfill your ministry."

In our last article we discussed just what a preacher is from a scriptural viewpoint and why the work of preaching is so important. In addition, we can see in the context of this verse several reasons why we need faithful men, young and old, to be willing to take on the privilege and responsibility of doing 'the work of an evangelist':

1. There is the solemn charge in vs. 1 that all men with ability and opportunity should feel the weight of.
2. The charge backs up the definite command in vs. 2 to 'preach the Word.'
3. The attitudes that many will manifest—vs. 1,4—make it imperative that someone live up to the charge of faithfully preaching the gospel.
4. Then, in vs. 6-8, we see a final reason: Older preachers are passing from the scene of earthly affairs; new blood must be trained, willing and able, to take their place.

But the main point we wish to discuss is: Just what is 'the work of an evangelist'? What was Paul telling Timothy to do when he told him to 'do the work of an evangelist'? Brothers and sisters today expect many things of the man who preaches with either the stated or implied idea; "Why, that's the preacher's job!". Well, is it? Let's find out just what God expects this mysterious creature called 'the preacher' to be doing.

### The Work of an Evangelist Is Threefold

Ezra 7:10, while not directly describing a preacher of the gospel today, does give an excellent summary of his work: "*For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.*" Thus we can itemize the three general duties of an evangelist as follows:

1. He is to '**study**' the Law of the Lord.' This (harmonizes with Paul's instructions to Timothy: "...Give attendance to reading..." (1 Tim. 4:13KJV); "*Diligently study to show yourself approved to God as a workman that does not need to be ashamed; handling accurately the word of truth.*" (2 Tim. 2:15, combining the NASV and KJV renderings)
2. Then he is to **practice** the Law of the Lord; applying its truths to himself and striving to live by them. This was Ezra's second determination, and again we find

Paul telling Timothy to show himself *'an example of those who believe.'* (1 Tim. 4:12).

3. Only after fulfilling the above duties, Is the evangelist properly fit for his third duty: ***"to teach His statutes and ordinances"*** to the spiritual house of Israel today. Once more, we are faced with Paul's simple command: *"Preach the Word"* (2 Tim. 4:2).

This gives us a general Idea of the evangelist's duties. Lord willing, in our next article, we shall examine some specific duties of the preacher. But first, to clarify a bit, let's get a good idea of what his work is not. As with the other aspects of preaching and preachers; 'the preacher's job' has been clouded over with human traditions and ideas. Such needs to be removed from our minds so that we can clearly focus on the God-given duties of the evangelist.

### **Doing The Work of an Evangelist Does Not Involve Being:**

**1. A church 'go fer'.** I'm sure we're all familiar with the idea of a 'go fer.' He is the general flunky on the job who is always being told to 'go fer' this and 'go fer' that. Sadly, this is the role many see the preacher as filling: Someone to handle all the miscellaneous details involved in 'running a church.'

Sometimes a preacher is expected to: handle all church correspondence (setting up meetings, replying to requests for support, etc.), handle all phases of bulletin production from writing and printing it to keeping up the mailing list; take care of the church property; and assorted other chores. In addition he is expected to fulfill his 'pastorial duty' by: visiting **all** the sick (no matter how trifling the ill) of the church or vaguely related thereto ("Oh, preacher! sister Lou's third cousin by marriage is so sick with a headache...!"); rounding up all the stray sheep of the congregation (no matter how long they've been straying, the new man is supposed to be able to wave a magic wand and 'bring them in'); and settle every personal dispute among brethren. After all that, I don't see how a man has time to breathe; much less study and preach!

We need to realize that much of the above are specific duties; not of the preacher, but of elders and deacons. When there are no elders and deacons, the preacher bears an equal responsibility with other members to see that such work is done, but not a greater one. (To the anguished cry of some: "Well, what's he getting paid for?" I reply, "Nothing!" The preacher is not being 'paid for' doing anything. He is having his livelihood provided so that he might preach the gospel. (1 Cor. 9:14)

Too many churches and preachers have forgotten that it is not desirable *'to neglect the Word of God in order to serve tables.'* (Acts 6:2) Since the preacher is so busy tending to 'go fer'ing' work that he has little time to truly study God's Word; the people get only a constant diet of warmed-over, rehashed first principle sermons. While some of such is profitable, a continuous diet of such never gives God's people a firm grasp of divine truth; the meat they need to *'go on to perfection.'* We need men who will disregard this traditional 'preacher role' and *'devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word'* (Acts 6:4); lest God's people again be destroyed *'for a lack of knowledge.'* (Hosea 4:6)

**2. A church clothes horse.** Now some folks want 'their' preacher to be a real 'dressed up dude.' His tie and socks must match (and I guess his shoes and shirt as well!); he must never be so undignified as to appear in a sports coat and slacks instead of a two or three piece suit; and perish the thought of him appearing in public without his suit-coat (then he doesn't 'look like a preacher!'). And if he should dare take his tie off—that's unforgivable—that man has got to go!

Now, perhaps I'm exaggerating a trifle; but I've had experience with the undue emphasis some put on appearance. Also, I realize that a preacher should seek to be neat and respectable in appearance when he is in public. (Cf. my remarks last article on the preacher in his role as apostle) So don't take this as condoning sloppiness in clothing or 'blue-jean' casualness for all occasions. (For some events blue-jeans are fitting; I don't think anyone would recommend a suit and tie to play softball in! And if you say it isn't proper for preachers to do something so undignified as playing softball, you're hopeless anyway!) Such is another extreme to avoid. But

I do not believe one has to wear a suit and tie to be respectable in appearance. In fact anyone who sets store by 'looking like a preacher' might ought to read Mt. 23:5 real carefully.

3. **A Church Ambassador.** All Christians are expected to be sociable. Paul stated in 1 Cor. 5:10 that if one were to seek to avoid contact with the immoral of the world; one would have to leave the world. Such is not presented as a desirable alternative. Rather, Christians are to be as their Lord— John 2:1,1; Matt. 9:10ff—and associate with the world.

But some expect more of a preacher than simple sociableness and friendliness. He is to be 'well-known' in the community; one who is on speaking terms with 'everybody who is somebody'. This way they feel the church can be well-known and attract the 'right' people. In addition they are expected to have a regular schedule of social visits to all the members (whether they care to invite him or not!).

Now, I know of few preachers who are not friendly individuals; I know of fewer still who would not make immediate arrangements to visit a home on spiritual business: a Bible study; help with a spiritual problem, etc. But to expect a preacher to serve as a sort of walking 'good-will ambassador' for the church is to expect more of him than the Lord does. Much-needed study time can easily be frittered away with endless social visits that serve no worthwhile purpose.

4. **A church doctor.** Some may be ready to revoke my 'preaching license' for this; but I don't believe it is the preacher's job to visit and pray for the sick! But hear me, out; I'm not saying that the Christian who is a preacher has no obligations to the sick and infirm; I am saying that such is not 'the work of an evangelist.'

All Christians are charged to visit and care for those that are sick or otherwise in need. (Gal. 6:20; James 1:27) If any group of Christians has a special obligation to the sick It would be the elders—James 5:14 - *“Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders...”*—not the preacher. I count it a privilege to visit the sick as time allows but not as part of my 'pastorial duties' or whatever. I am more than happy to pray on their behalf while I'm visiting if asked to do so; but I hope to make it clear that a preacher's visits and prayers offer no more benefit than any other faithful Christian's. Preachers have no 'hotline to Heaven'; no more 'pull' with the Father; than any righteous man does. (James 5:16)

5. **A church coach.** Oh how the pendulum swings! From one extreme we quickly jump to another. First the churches totally ignore the young people (Well, you're really too young to do anything—wait a few years!); then, when such neglect bears its natural evil fruit, they feel they must make a special case of 'our young people.' So now it's a special 'young people's program' and the preacher is expected to function as 'church coach'— to 'work well with the teenagers.'

Why not let the preacher do what he is charged of God to do: Preach the gospel without partiality to anyone? (1 Tim. 5:21) Then let the young people do their part in the church's work as individual members should. (Eph. 4:16) All the church is supposed to offer the young is what she has to offer the old— the gospel and a place in 'the work of service.' (Rom. 1:16; 4:12) Anything beyond this is not the responsibility of either the church or the preacher; but of the parents. (Eph. 6:4) And I've found that such a program works well with a certain type of young people and older ones as well—the type that are spiritually minded!

6. **A church boss.** Many times, in relatively new congregations (and some older ones, as well) an older preacher's advice may carry much weight because of the acquired wisdom of experience and years. Even a younger preacher may find himself placed in somewhat of a leadership role because his message carries the authority of heaven with it. (Titus 2:15) Such things are 'judgment calls' where it is most difficult to tell right from wrong until definite abuses take place.

But when preachers start to 'take charge'; whether they be older or younger, and distort this leadership quality so that they can 'run things the way they should be run'; they are definitely out of line. And if members allow such to happen or actively seek to place the role of 'church boss' on the preacher's shoulders; then there certainly is a violation of God's will involved. All should be reminded that the oversight of the church was given to elders not preachers; and, by implication, in the absence of elders all the men should decide the course of action to be taken by the church in fulfilling her God-given role.

The evangelist's duty in church matters is to tell the Lord's people what the Lord wants His church to do. He has the divine obligation to make this as emphatic as possible when it is a matter of a "Thus saith the Lord" (Titus 2:15) and as uncontentiously as possible when it is a matter of expediency or personal opinion (Titus 3:10,11). But he has no right to seek to enforce the Lord's will for Him; nor to force his way in judgment matters (however 'wise' he may judge it to be!). (Cf. 3 John 9,10)

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## **Arranging and Stating Main Points**

I was given a sermon outline to critique. Its title was *The Preciousness of Reconciliation*, the text was Colossians 1, and the verses cited for various sections were 15-29.

I looked at the main points which were:

- I. The importance of Jesus in reconciliation--Col. 1:19-21
- II. Reconciliation is hard to grasp—Col. 1:20-22
- III. Through reconciliation you have an opportunity to be like Jesus—Col. 1:22
- IV. But salvation is conditional—Col. 1:23a
- V. The closing words of this section urge us to get the message of reconciliation to others—Col. 1:23b-29

These are all good points, but they don't "march" very well. By "march" I mean—progress in a straight line to the conclusion.

The conclusion should be in your mind when you START arranging your sermon. You should have a clear PURPOSE STATEMENT either written down or in your mind. Then everything in your sermon should be arranged to bring the greatest force on the hearers—force to bring them to the conclusion you have decided on.

I suggested rearranging the material under these headings:

- I. What is reconciliation?
- II. Why do we have to be reconciled to God?
- III. What part does Jesus have in our reconciliation?
- IV. What must I do to be reconciled to God?

All of the material covered in the original sermon can easily be fitted under these four headings. There is a progression with the sermon advancing in one direction throughout. The preacher is now set to write a stirring conclusion and appeal.

Preacher, work on dividing your sermon into good main sections which are arranged to accomplish your purpose. Mediocre sermons will become excellent sermons when the main sections are arranged well.

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