

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE FAITH WE PREACH

*But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart:
that is, the word of faith, which we preach.*

Romans 10:8

Most people consider that a preacher is someone who has a job as a “pastor” in a local church. They believe that he became qualified to hold this “position” by going to some sort of school and being trained in the mechanics of public speaking, “spiritual” counseling, and the study of the Bible. Most would be of the notion that it is his responsibility to give comfort and help to whichever congregation is paying his salary, and to the community in general. All of these things have a measure of usefulness in the fleshly exercise of religion, and to a certain extent often lend true aid to some in various exercises of distress which are common to the natural man.

We would not undertake to make a commentary on the “duties” of being such a “pastor”, nor in any way to make light of these endeavors. Yet we would desire to make clear that being a “pastor” and being a “preacher” are two very different activities. Some are called to fulfill the role of “pastor” in local assemblies, who are also called to “preach”, but this is not always the case and those activities are not to be confused.

Men who are called to be “pastors” (i.e.; under-shepherds and not those merely given a title) in the scriptural sense, must be equipped for this task, by being given the heart of a shepherd who tends and defends the flock over which they have been made overseers. They must give an account for the sheep to the GREAT SHEPHERD. (see Heb 13:17) They must be those who are “*apt to teach*”, of sober mind, and given to hospitality. (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7) No man can teach them these “traits”, but they have them bestowed upon them by the GIVER of all gifts. “*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*” (Eph 4:7-8) “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for (i.e.; unto) the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*” (Eph 4:11-12) A properly functioning church is an assembly of saints “ministering” to one another according to the various gifts that each is given.

The call to preach, however, is not, in its plainest scriptural context, primarily carried out as a function of being a “pastor”, nor is it solely exercised in that capacity. The call to preach (i.e.; declare good tidings) is not essentially connected with the assembling of the saints. While local churches might recognize those who are fitted for the office of elders (i.e.; pastors) and set them apart (i.e.; call them) unto this work, no church upon the earth can “call” a man to preach. The LORD alone issues this call and equips those HE calls for the task quite apart from human interaction or approval.

Those so “called” to carry out this task of preaching cannot escape it, as Jonah found out, and as Paul testified, “*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*” (1Cor 9:16) Men cannot “send” men to preach nor can they prevent those whom the LORD has “sent” from performing this work. Paul declares this fact when he describes how the LORD is pleased to bring LIFE and immortality to light, to those whom HE has ordained unto eternal life. (see Acts 13:48; II Tim.1:10) “*How then*

shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom 10:14-15)

The LORD's hand is not shortened to save by many or by few, and HE most certainly does not "depend" on men to bring the gospel to those HE gives ears to hear it, but HE does in most cases use the foolishness of "preaching" to "save them that believe." Thus, it is a great privilege which HE is pleased to grant to those heralds of HIS TRUTH, which HE has fitted to the task, to declare the unsearchable riches of CHRIST.

The greatest PREACHER that has ever lived is HE who said, "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.*" (Isa 61:1-3, see Luke 4:18-19) This is the PATTERN for all who would hereafter preach.

Those who "preach" are to do so without regard for their personal benefit or safety. Their one desire is to exalt HIM who alone is worthy of all praise both as to HIS PERSON as well as HIS work of redemption. As Paul said, "*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Gal 6:14) They are to shun personal accolades, privileges, and titles bestowed by men. "*That no flesh should glory in his presence.*" (1Cor 1:29)

The Hebrew word for "preach" which is used here in Isaiah's prophecy literally means to "declare good news". The word used in the Greek by the LORD is the word from which we get our English word "evangelize", which again means to declare good news. This is the very definition of the Gospel. Thus, those who are given ears to hear rejoice at its sound.

While much more could be said as to the scriptural manner in which "preachers" are to conduct themselves, the most important aspect of all "preaching" is the substance and basis of the message which is declared. This is that which Paul refers to when he says, "*the word of faith, which we preach.*" It does not matter how properly a man may conduct himself or how well spoken he may be; if his message deviates from that redemptive work which JESUS CHRIST has performed in the behalf of sinners, then he has not "preached" but rather beat the air and been as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal regardless of his popularity. Thus Paul declares, "*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" (1Cor 2:2)

The FAITH which we preach must be CHRIST. "*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*" (1Cor 1:30-31) This is an inclusive and exclusive message. No other "FAITH" will do. Nothing can be added to or taken from it. "*But Christ is all, and in all.*" (Col 3:11)

The FAITH which we preach must be clearly declared to be the gift of GOD lest "*any man should boast.*" This declaration takes away all grounds upon which a man might boast, "*For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* (1Cor 4:7)

The FAITH which we preach must be concerned with its OBJECT more so than its activity. Abraham "believed" GOD. His faith is noted because of its OBJECT and not his endeavor. GOD is not pleased with the "act of faith", but rather the ONE in whom that faith rests as Paul said, "*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2Tim 1:12) "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Heb 11:6) CHRIST is that ONE FAITH, ONE LORD, and ONE BAPTISM upon which all of our hopes firmly rest. What faith do you preach? mam*