

# THE GREATEST WORK IN THE WORLD

By Boyce Mouton

CONGRATULATIONS! If God has called you to preach the Gospel, you are involved in the greatest work in the world! Along with this great privilege, however, there are also great responsibilities. Please prayerfully consider the following:

- Preaching the Gospel is a privilege exclusively reserved for man. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father in heaven. He does not preach to us. Jesus has millions of angels that do His bidding, but they do not preach to us. Jesus commissioned men like you and me to go into all the world and preach. Please do not take lightly the privilege and responsibility of preaching the Gospel!
- There is something exciting about bringing good news. Remember the story of Ahimaaz in the days of King David. He begged for the privilege of telling the good news to David that the Lord had delivered him from the hand of his enemies (2 Sam. 18:19) We also should be excited about telling good news.
- God is Sovereign. He can save the world any way He wants to. In His infinite wisdom, however, He has determined to save the world through preaching. As the heavens are high above the earth, His thoughts and His ways are higher than ours. When we preach His word, we are accomplishing His eternal purpose. Our preaching is not in vain, for He has promised that it will accomplish what He intends it to (Is. 55:8 - 13; 1 Cor. 1:18 - 31).
- The fact that human beings are responsible for preaching can easily be demonstrated from Scripture. Remember when Saul (also called Paul), received his vision on the road to Damascus. Jesus appeared to him but did not tell him how to be saved. Neither did angels tell him what to do. It was a man who told him what to do. Jesus sent him to Damascus where a man named Annanias told him what to do to be saved (Acts 22:10). Similarly, when Cornelius received a vision he also was sent for a man (Peter) who would tell him what to do to be saved (Acts 10:5). When Paul was at Troaz he received a vision of a man from Macedonia begging for help. God did not send an angel to Macedonia to preach, He sent Paul (Acts 16:9 - 10). So when God wants someone to be saved, He sends preachers like you and me to tell them what to do.
- The Scriptures liken preachers to those who sow good seed. As you know, not all the seed sown will grow and produce fruit. Some seeds will fall by the wayside, and others on stony ground, and others among the thorns. Some seed, however, will fall on "good soil" and produce much fruit (Lk. 8:4 - 15). Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5). The only people he saved, however, were the members of his family. May God grant every preacher the privilege of saving the members of his own family.
- Preachers experience great joy in their work. The Psalmist describes this joy with these words: **"Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him."** (Ps 126:5-6) How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15).
- The seed we sow, as you know, is eternal. It is the Word of God which lives and abides forever (Luke 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23) The words of Jesus cannot be destroyed for they are "spirit" and "life" (Jn. 6:63). Heaven and earth will pass away, but the words of Christ will not! (Matt. 24:35).
- The importance of preaching this Good News cannot be over emphasized. Preaching was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world and is part of His eternal plan to save the world (1 Pet. 1:18 - 20).

- This Good News we preach is so wonderful that it is beyond human expectation. When Isaiah wrote: **“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”** - he was not talking about heaven, he was talking about the message of the Gospel which we are privileged to preach (1 Cor. 2:9 - 10).
- Again, we repeat that preaching the Gospel is a privilege. Not everyone is called to preach. Paul wrote by inspiration that not many wise, not many mighty, and not many noble have been called to preach. Strangely enough, God has reserved this privilege for those who are despised by the world (1 Cor. 1:26 - 31). We should not be surprised by this, for Jesus Himself was despised and rejected by men (Is. 53:3).
- Preachers of the Gospel, however, are never abandoned by Jesus. Remember when Jesus commanded His Apostles to go and preach, He also promised to be with them until the end of the world (Matt. 28:18 - 20). Surely He will also be with you as you preach the Gospel.
- Remember! Preaching the Gospel is God’s work. When we are preaching we are laboring together with Him (1 Cor. 3:9). God works with us every day as we do His will. He helps one man to plant, and another to water, but ultimately it is God Himself who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). No one becomes a part of God’s church until He adds them (Acts 2:47).
- Many times preachers face circumstances where we do not know what to do. Since we are yoked together with Christ, however, we do not need to worry. He will help us during these difficult times. As we labor in His yoke, Jesus is constantly by our side so we can learn from Him. (Matt. 11:28 - 30). Sometimes God waits until the last minute to tell us what to do, but He has always promised to help. (Matt. 10:19 - 20).
- God has also promised that when we lack wisdom, He will give it to us if we only ask in faith (James 1:5).
- We also have the promise of Jesus that He will never to leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5)
- Earthly success is rewarded by temporary treasures, but those who are faithful in preaching the Gospel will receive an eternal reward (1 Cor. 9:24 - 27).
- When we stand before God, no preacher of the Gospel will regret being faithful to His calling!

#### OBVIOUSLY, PREACHERS HAVE A GREAT AND SACRED RESPONSIBILITY

- Since God has entrusted us with so great a privilege, He requires us to be faithful to our calling. It is not an option, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:1 - 2). No matter what gift you are given, God requires you to be faithful in the stewardship of that gift.
- Jesus said that when the Master returns, He will require us to give an account of the talents we have received (Matt. 25:14 - 30).
- Remember that Paul was set apart from birth to preach to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15, 16). Please also remember that he was required by God to be faithful to his calling. In fact, Paul wrote: “woe is me if I preach not the Gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16).
- If God has called you to preach, you will also be called to give an account of your ministry.
- The Bible teaches that preachers are like watchmen whom God assigns to warn His people of danger.
  - When the people of Israel rejected the message of Amos, he reminded them that God never brings judgement without revealing this message to His servants, the prophets (Amos 3:7). God sent Amos to warn Israel, but when they refused to

- repent, God raised up the Assyrians to destroy them.
  - God told Ezekiel that he was a watchman to the house of Israel (Ez. 3:17). If he sounded the warning and the people refused to listen, they would die in their iniquity but Ezekiel would be delivered. If, however, Ezekiel refused to warn the people, they would still die in their iniquity, but this time their blood would be upon the hands of the watchman (Ez. 3:18).
- Preachers are also like pastors, or shepherds whom God will ask to give an account for His sheep.
  - God pronounced judgement upon pastors during the days of Jeremiah because they scattered the flock of God and did not take care of them (Jer. 23:1 - 4)
  - Jesus said that the good shepherd would lay down his life for the sheep, while the hireling will abandon them in a time of danger (John 10:11 - 13).
  - Consider that the words God spoke to Jeremiah may also be asked of every pastor: "WHERE IS THE FLOCK THAT WAS ENTRUSTED TO YOU?" (Jer. 13:20).
- The responsibility of a preacher is made even more important by the fact that the Scriptures teach God's people to obey their leaders: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." (Heb 13:17) Note that with this authority, also comes responsibility. SPIRITUAL LEADERS WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO GOD!

THE PREACHER'S RESPONSIBILITY IS MADE EVEN GREATER BY THE FACT  
THAT MANY PEOPLE WILL FOLLOW THEIR PASTORS  
MORE THAN THEY WILL FOLLOW THE BIBLE

- Obviously, sheep follow their shepherd.
- The people of God are like sheep (Ps. 100:3). They will also follow a shepherd.
- People without a shepherd are to be pitied. Jesus had compassion on people who were like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36).
- It is very important, however, for people to choose the right shepherd. Some shepherds are like wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). Other shepherds are spiritually blind and when the blind follow the blind, both fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:14).
- JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND WE SHOULD FOLLOW OUR PASTORS, ONLY AS THEY FOLLOW CHRIST (1 COR. 11:1) Paul wrote: "**Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ**" (1 Cor. 11:1).
- While this is an admirable goal, in the real world most people still follow their pastors.
- Many people in the world do not have Bibles, and some cannot even read or write. These people need someone to guide them.
- Many who have Bibles have not read them. It is sad that many Christians have never yet read the whole Bible. Certainly most have never studied the whole Bible. That's why they need guidance!
- The Scriptures even command the people of God to:
  - Imitate the faith of their pastors (Heb. 13:7)
  - Obey their pastors and submit to their authority (Heb. 13:17)
- The Bible compares teachers to:
  - Bits in the mouth of a horse (Ja. 3:3)
  - A small rudder that turns a great ship (Ja. 3:4).
  - A little fire that can burn down an entire forest (Ja. 3:5).

- Because teachers have so much influence, God is going to judge them more strictly (Ja. 3:1).
- Jesus also said that we just like we know a tree by its fruit, we can also know religious teachers by their fruit (Matt. 7:15 - 20).
  - These words of Jesus are both simple and profound.
  - The best way to recognize a tree is not by a leaf, or a piece of bark, but by the fruit it produces.
  - The best way to recognize a teacher is not by his appearance, and not even by the words he speaks. The best way to tell the true teacher from the false teacher is by the fruit that he produces.
    - In this regard James points out that some teachers produce bitter envy, selfish ambition, and disorder. Obviously such teachers do not represent God (Ja. 3:13 - 16).
    - James continues that the fruit that comes from God is pure, peace loving, considerate, submissive, and full of mercy (Ja. 3:17 - 18).
    - Both types of teachers may sound alike to the untrained ear, but there is a dramatic difference in the fruit they produce.

#### TRUE TEACHERS WILL ALWAYS EXALT JESUS CHRIST

- John the Baptist refused to take the honor that belonged to Christ. He said that he wanted Jesus to increase at the same time he was decreasing (John 3:30). We need to be like John the Baptist!
- Herod actually died after giving a great speech because he did not give glory to God (Acts 12:23). Don't be like Herod!
- Diotrephes was a bad teacher who refused to receive the brethren and wanted to exalt himself (3 John 9 - 11). Don't be like Diotrephes!
- Exalting Jesus was the cure for the division in the church at Corinth.
  - Christ is not divided, but the church at Corinth was (1 Cor. 1:10 - 17).
  - Some in Corinth were following Paul, others were following Apollos, and others were following Cephas (1 Cor. 1:12). It seems that the situation was so volatile that Paul was merely using himself and Apollos as examples (1 Cor. 4:6).
  - The true foundation for Christian unity is not Paul, Apollos, or any man. The true foundation for Christian unity is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11).
  - Christian unity is possible! The Jerusalem Church was so united that they had everything in common (Acts 2:42 - 47).
    - These people came from many different nations (Acts 2:5).
    - These people belonged to different Jewish denominations (Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, etc.)
    - The unity these people experienced was not in their national heritage or denominational loyalty. Their unity was in Jesus Christ.
  - **THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WHEN SOMEONE WHO CLAIMS TO BE A CHRISTIAN EXALTS A MAN OR A DENOMINATION MORE THAN JESUS!**

#### WE SHALL ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

**“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” (2**

## Cor 5:10)

Note that we shall all be judged as individuals. We are saved as individuals, and we will also be judged as individuals. It is therefore important that you “examine yourselves” whether you are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). Paul is a good example in this regard.

- Paul worked hard as a preacher.
  - He labored night and day (2 Thess. 3:8).
  - He was often hungry and poorly clothed (1 Cor. 4:10 - 13).
  - He was often persecuted (2 Cor. 11:23 - 29).
  - Paul did not take his salvation for granted, but worked for Christ like an athlete in training. Paul wrote: **“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” (1 Cor 9:25-27)**
  - Paul knew that he was going to receive a “crown of righteousness” from Jesus (2 Tim. 4:6 - 8).
  - The crown of righteousness was not just for Paul, but also for all those who faithfully serve Christ (2 Tim. 4:8).
- Paul encouraged others to follow his example (Phil. 3:17)
  - Timothy was also to fight the good fight (1 Tim. 1:18).
    - He was to endure hardship as a good soldier (2 Tim. 2:3, 4)
    - He was also to train like an athlete in competition (2 Tim. 2:5).
    - He was to work hard like a farmer expecting a crop (2 Tim. 2:6).
  - Titus was also encouraged to be a true preacher.
    - He was to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions (Tit. 2:12)
    - He was to live a self controlled, upright, and godly life (Tit. 2:12).
    - If Titus would do these things the coming of Christ would be a “blessed hope and glorious appearing” (Tit. 2:13).
- When converts are not faithful, preachers suffer loss, but do not lose their salvation.
  - Some converts are like gold, silver, or costly stones (1 Cor. 3:12)
  - Other converts are like wood, hay, or straw (1 Cor. 3:12).
  - The true nature of a convert is determined by the fires of judgement. The converts who are like gold, silver, and costly stones remain. The converts like wood, hay, and straw are destroyed (1 Cor. 3:10 - 15).
  - Preachers suffer loss when their converts do not remain true. This however, does not cause the preacher to lose his salvation (1 Cor. 3:15).
  - Salvation is a personal matter. We cannot be saved or lost for anyone else.

### BE FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH

**“be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev 2:10)**

- Some are faithful until they get old.
- Others are faithful until they get sick.
- Others are faithful until they have problems.
- Others are faithful until they are persecuted.
- If you want to receive the crown of life, you must be faithful until death!