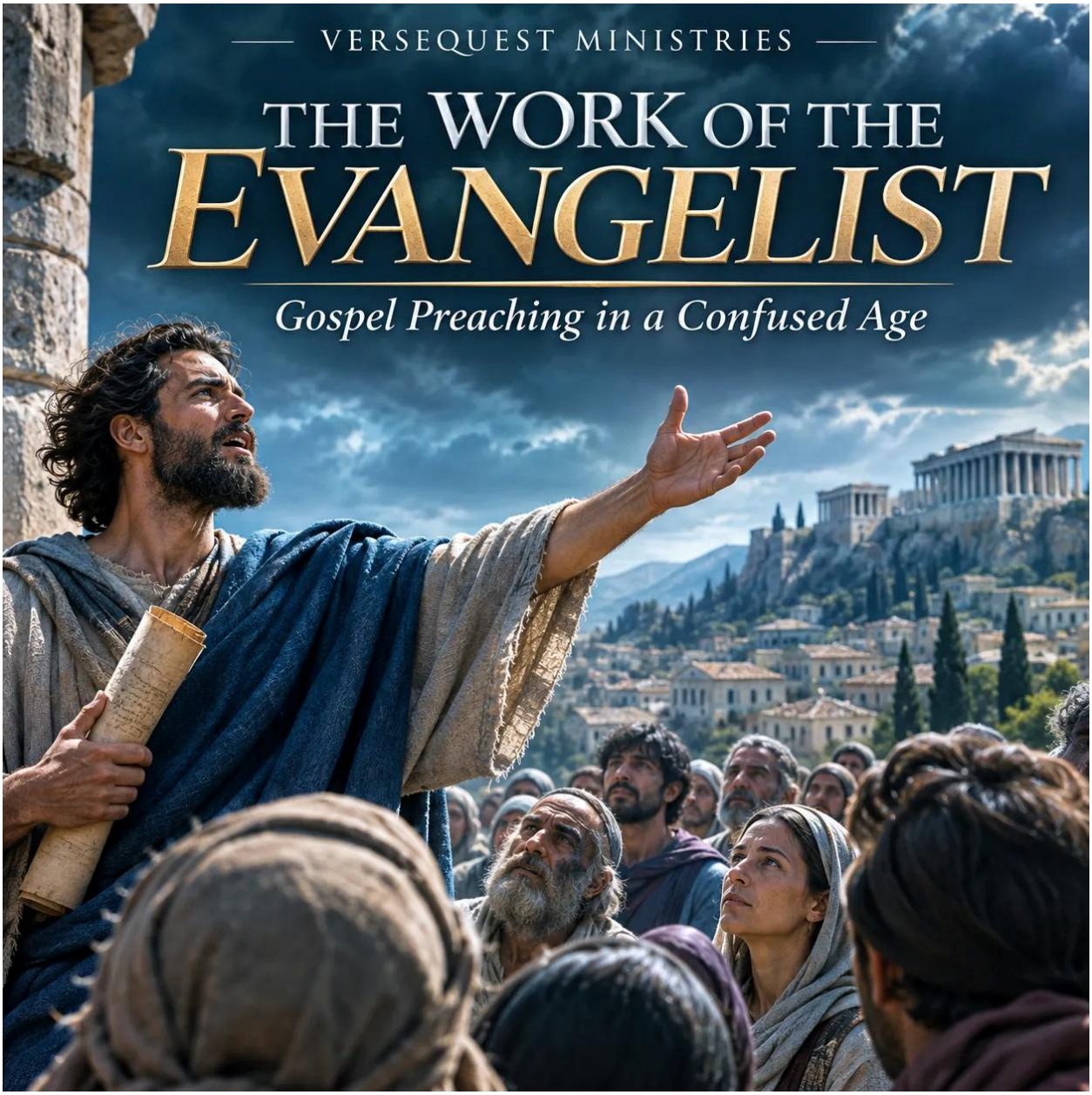
The Work of the Evangelist

Gospel Preaching in a Confused Age

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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The Work of the Evangelist

Gospel Preaching in a Confused Age

A VerseQuest Ministries Bible Study Series

Written by Pastor Paul Tackett

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Statement of Purpose

The Work of the Evangelist – Gospel Preaching in a Confused Age is a ten-part biblical teaching series examining the calling, message, authority, responsibilities, conduct, hardships, financial integrity, and final accountability of the New Testament evangelist.

This publication is intended to strengthen believers, encourage faithful gospel preaching, defend sound biblical doctrine, and equip Christians to understand and proclaim salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Its purpose is biblical instruction, spiritual edification, and the advancement of the gospel—not personal recognition, religious entertainment, or commercial exploitation.

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All Glory Belongs to Jesus Christ

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.”

2 Corinthians 4:5 (KJV)

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Introduction – The Work of the Evangelist

Gospel Preaching in a Confused Age

There was a time when the word *evangelist* immediately brought to mind a man carrying a Bible, preaching Jesus Christ, warning sinners about judgment, and telling the lost how to be saved. He might have stood behind a wooden pulpit in a little country church, preached beneath a tent stretched across a vacant field, walked the streets with gospel literature, or sat across a kitchen table explaining salvation to one troubled sinner. He did not need an elaborate production, a professional publicity department, or a personality large enough to fill the building before the congregation arrived. He needed a Bible, a message, and enough conviction to deliver that message whether the people appreciated it or not. Today, the word has been stretched, polished, marketed, and decorated until almost anybody with a microphone, a mailing list, and a respectable collection of speaking engagements can claim the title. Some travel constantly without seriously reaching the lost. Others have become professional entertainers who happen to include a few Bible verses between amusing stories. Still others have converted gospel ministry into a profitable religious enterprise. Somewhere in all that activity, the original assignment has been buried beneath the machinery. **The Lord Jesus Christ did not call evangelists to become religious celebrities. He gave them to His church because sinners need the gospel, believers need strengthening, and the truth needs to be proclaimed.**

The question that must be settled at the beginning of this study is not whether a man is popular, talented, educated, ordained, well traveled, or capable of holding an audience's attention. The question is whether he is doing the work of an evangelist according to the word of God. Ephesians 4:11 declares, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” Verse 12 explains the purpose: “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Those words establish that evangelists are among the ministerial gifts provided by Jesus Christ for the benefit of His people. Acts 21:8 specifically identifies Philip as “the evangelist,” while 2 Timothy 4:5 commands Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” There is our biblical foundation. Christ gave the ministry, Philip provides an unmistakable historical example, and Timothy received a command concerning the work itself. That is considerably more authority than can be obtained from a stack of promotional brochures. A man may print *Evangelist* across his business card in letters large enough to be read from the highway, but the ink does not establish the calling. **A title identifies what a man claims to be. His obedience to Scripture reveals whether he is doing what the title requires.**

The central responsibility of the evangelist is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that gospel is not a religious suggestion waiting to be improved by modern imagination. Paul declared its essential content in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Romans 1:16 identifies that gospel as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not of works. These truths are not optional decorations attached to a preacher's favorite subject. They are the very message he has been commissioned to proclaim. An evangelist may possess extensive knowledge of prophecy, church history, Christian conduct, and a hundred other biblical subjects, but if he cannot clearly explain salvation to a sinner, he has neglected the foundation of his assignment. A man may thunder against the sins of society, describe the coming Tribulation, and deliver an unforgettable sermon concerning the judgment of God, yet leave a lost listener wondering what he must believe to receive eternal life. That is not a small oversight. **The preacher who can explain everything happening in the world except how a sinner gets saved has polished the windows while leaving the front door locked.**

The gospel must also be protected from the religious inventions that have accumulated around it. Baptismal regeneration, sacramental salvation, law-keeping as a requirement for justification, human merit, and every other attempt to supplement the finished work of Christ must be examined against the written Scriptures. Galatians 1:8 warns against preaching another gospel, while Romans 4:5 establishes that God justifies the ungodly who believe. The evangelist does not possess authority to change the terms of salvation merely because a denomination has maintained a contrary tradition for centuries. Neither may he exchange biblical conversion for emotional excitement, psychological improvement, or a pressured religious decision. A sinner is not saved because he cried at an altar, signed a card, repeated a sentence, joined an institution, or impressed the preacher with the sincerity of his response. Salvation rests upon Jesus Christ and His finished redemptive work, received through faith. The evangelist must make that message unmistakably clear. There is no room for religious salesmanship where eternal life is concerned. **Jesus Christ did not die upon the cross so that some ambitious preacher could establish a collection of additional payments before the sinner is permitted to receive what God offers by grace.**

The authority governing this ministry must always remain the written word of God, not the personality of the man proclaiming it. Paul charged Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2, “Preach the word.” He did not command him to preach his reputation, entertain the congregation, manufacture impressive revelations, or cultivate an audience willing to accept his every statement without examination. Second Timothy 3:16 declares that all Scripture is given by

inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the word of truth. Those instructions require serious attention to the biblical distinctions between Israel and the Church, law and grace, the kingdom and the body of Christ, and the various judgments and prophetic events revealed throughout Scripture. The evangelist must not tear verses from their historical settings and arrange them into a theological puzzle of his own invention. Nor should his experiences, dreams, traditions, and personal convictions become more authoritative than the Book. The Bereans were commended in Acts 17:11 because they searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether the things they heard were true. Every congregation should possess that same willingness to examine what is preached. **A preacher who becomes offended when somebody checks his sermon against the Bible has revealed that his confidence may rest more securely in his reputation than in the truth he claims to proclaim.**

The gospel must also be carried beyond the comfortable surroundings of familiar church meetings. Acts 8:4 records that believers scattered by persecution went everywhere preaching the word, while verse 5 declares that Philip went into Samaria and preached Christ. Paul reasoned in the synagogue and marketplace at Athens, and Romans 15:20 records his desire to preach where Christ had not been named. These examples demonstrate that gospel proclamation was never intended to remain permanently confined to the same collection of comfortable religious audiences. There is nothing wrong with evangelists traveling among sound churches, preaching special meetings, encouraging believers, or strengthening congregations through biblical instruction. Those activities can accomplish considerable good. The problem begins when the entire ministry becomes a religious circuit where almost everybody listening already knows the gospel, while the lost people outside those congregations remain largely untouched. A preacher may accumulate thousands of miles, hundreds of meetings, and enough invitations to keep his calendar occupied for years without making a serious effort to reach unbelievers. **A full itinerary does not necessarily mean a fulfilled ministry. An evangelist can travel around the world and still neglect the sinner living across the street.**

Nor should the evangelist become so fascinated with large audiences that he forgets the eternal importance of an individual soul. Acts 8 records Philip leaving the scene of public ministry in Samaria and encountering an Ethiopian eunuch on a desert road. The man was reading Isaiah 53 and needed somebody to explain the passage. Philip asked whether he understood what he was reading, listened to his question, and began at the same Scripture to preach Jesus. There was no auditorium, no advertising campaign, and no crowd waiting to applaud the conclusion. There was one man who needed understanding and one faithful servant equipped to supply it. Jesus Christ likewise spoke personally with Nicodemus

concerning the new birth and with the Samaritan woman concerning living water. Paul and Silas answered the Philippian jailer's question concerning salvation with the command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. These encounters expose the poverty of an evangelistic philosophy governed entirely by public recognition. The individual sinner must never become an inconvenience to a minister who considers himself too important for personal conversations. **A man who can preach to ten thousand people but cannot patiently explain the gospel to one confused sinner has acquired a platform considerably larger than his understanding of the ministry.**

The evangelist must also understand his relationship to the local church. Ephesians 4 establishes that Christ gave evangelists for the strengthening of His body, not for the creation of competing religious kingdoms. Acts 13 records the relationship between the church at Antioch and the missionary work of Barnabas and Saul, while Acts 14 describes their return and report concerning what God had accomplished. First Corinthians 3 reminds believers that Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Those passages establish cooperation rather than competition. A visiting evangelist is not a temporary dictator who arrives to take possession of another man's pulpit, undermine the pastor, and recruit personal admirers. Neither is the local church merely a convenient source of financial support or an audience assembled to appreciate the preacher's abilities. The evangelist should strengthen biblical doctrine, encourage gospel outreach, respect legitimate pastoral responsibility, and leave the congregation better equipped for continued service. Pastors should likewise recognize the value of faithful evangelistic labor without reducing special meetings to religious entertainment. **The church was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ, not with the visiting preacher's travel expenses. The pulpit is not his throne, the congregation is not his kingdom, and the pastor is not his competition.**

The responsibilities of evangelistic ministry will sometimes involve hardship, opposition, rejection, and genuine personal sacrifice. Paul warned Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12 that those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. He commanded him to endure hardness as a good soldier in 2 Timothy 2:3 and to endure afflictions while doing the work of an evangelist in 2 Timothy 4:5. The early believers faced persecution that scattered them from Jerusalem, while Paul and Silas experienced beatings and imprisonment at Philippi. The gospel has never carried a guarantee that every audience will receive it favorably. Yet Scripture also requires us to distinguish persecution for righteousness from trouble produced by personal misconduct. A preacher who lies, manipulates, behaves arrogantly, or insults people unnecessarily cannot automatically claim spiritual heroism when somebody objects. First Peter 4:15–16 makes a clear distinction between suffering as an evildoer and suffering as a Christian. The evangelist must therefore possess courage

without recklessness, conviction without unnecessary cruelty, and endurance without self-pity. **Not every closed door is an attack by the devil, not every offended listener is an enemy of the cross, and not every preacher who creates a public disturbance deserves to have his foolishness described as persecution.**

Financial integrity belongs to the same biblical standard. First Corinthians 9:14 establishes the legitimacy of material support for those preaching the gospel, while 1 Thessalonians 2:5 records Paul's rejection of flattering words and the cloak of covetousness. Second Corinthians 8:20–21 demonstrates his concern for honest financial administration, and 1 Timothy 6 warns against supposing that gain is godliness. There is nothing inherently wrong with an evangelist receiving offerings, travel assistance, compensation, or support for legitimate ministry expenses. Preaching the gospel does not eliminate the cost of transportation, food, lodging, equipment, or providing for a household. The corruption begins when financial advantage becomes the reason for the ministry or when the preacher manipulates believers through manufactured emergencies, exaggerated accomplishments, and promises that God's blessing can be purchased through donations. The man entrusted with financial support should handle it honestly and be willing to provide appropriate accountability. A preacher should never determine the spiritual importance of a congregation by the size of its offering. **The gospel is not merchandise, the pulpit is not a cash register, and a minister who sees every congregation as another opportunity to improve his income has confused serving the Lord with operating a religious business.**

There is another danger that deserves attention because it frequently appears after a preacher has experienced considerable success. He may begin believing his own publicity. A man who once considered it a privilege to explain salvation to a stranger may gradually become offended when people fail to recognize his importance. He begins demanding special treatment, resenting other faithful ministers, resisting legitimate correction, and treating ordinary responsibilities as beneath his dignity. The congregation that once encouraged him now becomes a source of personal admiration he believes he deserves. Paul confronted this very tendency in 1 Corinthians 3 when believers divided themselves around ministerial personalities. He asked, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” That question ought to settle the importance of the servant. Neither Paul nor Apollos was the Saviour. Neither purchased the church. Neither possessed the power to give spiritual life. The same is true of every modern evangelist, regardless of his reputation. **A preacher who becomes too important to be corrected has forgotten that Jesus Christ never appointed him to become the fourth person of the Godhead.**

And that brings us to the most solemn consideration of all: the day when the evangelist must answer for his ministry before the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares that believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, while 1 Corinthians 3:11–15 describes the testing of Christian work upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. This judgment concerns the believer's service and reward, not another opportunity to earn salvation. Salvation belongs to those who have trusted the finished work of Christ, and their eternal standing is not purchased through ministerial accomplishments. Nevertheless, the quality of Christian service matters. Wood, hay, and stubble may appear impressive when arranged beneath the favorable lighting of earthly recognition, but the Lord's examination will reveal what the work was actually worth. Paul understood this when he told Timothy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” He did not claim to have accumulated the greatest following or established the most profitable religious organization. He testified that he had finished his assigned course. **The applause of a congregation may last a few minutes, a preacher's reputation may survive a few generations, but the judgment seat of Christ will settle what his ministry was actually worth.**

Throughout these ten studies, we will examine the evangelist from the standpoint of the King James Bible rather than the traditions of the modern religious industry. We will establish the nature of his calling, the content of his gospel, the authority of Scripture, the necessity of public proclamation, the value of personal soul-winning, his responsibility toward the churches, the importance of carrying the message into neglected places, the endurance required when opposition arises, the integrity demanded in financial matters, and the final accountability awaiting every servant of Jesus Christ. These are not ten unrelated observations about religious employment. They are ten connected responsibilities belonging to a ministry that Christ Himself provided for the benefit of His people. Every subject must be judged according to Scripture, and every practical application must remain consistent with sound doctrine. The purpose is not to construct an impossible image of a flawless preacher who never makes mistakes. It is to establish a biblical standard that exposes religious pretense, corrects dangerous misconceptions, encourages faithful servants, and reminds the churches what genuine evangelistic labor should accomplish. The evangelist does not need another collection of flattering slogans. He needs an open Bible and enough honesty to measure himself by what it says.

The need for that examination is greater than ever in a confused religious age. Sinners are being offered emotional experiences in place of regeneration, religious ceremonies in place of grace, motivational speeches in place of gospel preaching, and financial promises in place of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Congregations are sometimes taught to admire the preacher more than they examine his message, while ministers become so

occupied with reputation, revenue, and recognition that ordinary gospel proclamation gradually disappears. None of these developments has changed the authority of Scripture. Jesus Christ still saves sinners through the gospel. The word of God still establishes truth. The local church still belongs to Christ. The Holy Ghost still directs believers toward obedience to the written word. And the evangelist remains responsible for proclaiming the message entrusted to him. **The world does not need a newer gospel, a more entertaining Saviour, or another religious celebrity demanding admiration. It needs the truth concerning Jesus Christ, delivered clearly, faithfully, and without apology.**

So let every preacher who claims the calling of an evangelist examine the responsibility he has undertaken, and let every church learn to distinguish genuine ministry from religious performance. The issue is not whether the preacher can impress a crowd, fill a calendar, raise an offering, or preserve a celebrated reputation. The issue is whether he knows the gospel, believes the Book, reaches the lost, strengthens the saints, handles the ministry honestly, and remains faithful to the Lord who called him. No man will stand before Jesus Christ and successfully substitute his publicity for obedience, his popularity for sound doctrine, or his financial accomplishments for spiritual faithfulness. The final command remains where Paul placed it in 2 Timothy 4:5: "Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." That is the standard upon which this series stands. **The evangelist was not called to entertain the church, impress the world, build a personal empire, or sell spiritual influence. He was called to preach Jesus Christ. Let the message be biblical, let the motives be clean, let the work be faithful, and let the glory belong to God. A preacher may spend his life making a name for himself and discover at the end that he accomplished very little for the Saviour. Better to be forgotten by the crowd and found faithful by Christ than to be celebrated by the world and ashamed before the Lord. Preach the Word. Reach the lost. Strengthen the church. Endure the hardness. Finish the course. And above all, make full proof of thy ministry.**

1 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – Called to Preach, Not Hired to Perform

Key Passage: Ephesians 4:11–12 (KJV)

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

Introduction

There is a considerable difference between a man whom Jesus Christ has equipped to preach the gospel and a man who has discovered that religious people will pay to hear him talk. The difference may not be immediately apparent to a congregation accustomed to judging preachers by their volume, vocabulary, wardrobe, or ability to keep everybody entertained until the closing prayer. A fellow can own three suits, four briefcases, a suitcase full of sermon outlines, and a mailing list stretching from Maine to California without possessing the first qualification that matters. He can thunder against Hollywood, tell forty amusing stories, imitate every preacher he ever heard, and leave the congregation convinced they witnessed something remarkable. But if the people never understood the gospel, and the Scriptures were merely decorations hung around his performance, what exactly did the man accomplish? Ephesians 4:11 does not say Christ gave some celebrities, motivational speakers, religious entertainers, or professional storytellers. It says He gave “some, evangelists.” That is where our investigation begins, because the Lord's definition outranks the religious industry's advertising department.

The evangelist occupies a legitimate place in the New Testament ministry, and that place was established by Jesus Christ rather than invented by a denominational committee. Ephesians 4:11 identifies the office and function among the ministerial gifts Christ gave His church. Acts 21:8 identifies Philip specifically as “the evangelist,” making him the clearest named example of the designation in the historical record. Second Timothy 4:5 commands Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist,” establishing that evangelistic labor is a responsibility to be fulfilled rather than a decorative title to be displayed. These passages must be examined together, because one identifies Christ as the giver, another supplies a living example, and the third describes the work that must actually be performed. A man cannot understand the evangelist by beginning with modern revival traditions and then searching for enough verses to make those traditions appear biblical. That is how religious confusion reproduces itself. The Bible is not a supply cabinet where a preacher collects supporting material for conclusions he reached before opening it.

The question is not whether evangelists should preach with conviction, travel between churches, receive financial support, or use appropriate means to communicate the gospel. Scripture supplies principles governing those matters, and we will examine them throughout this series. The question before us is more fundamental: What is an evangelist, who gives him his ministry, what distinguishes his responsibilities, and what must he accomplish to be faithful? We must also distinguish the particular ministerial work of an evangelist from the general responsibility of Christians to witness, and from the ministries of apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. Otherwise, we will either elevate every believer who passes out a gospel tract into a separate ministerial office or reduce a genuine calling to a fashionable title adopted by anyone who can obtain speaking engagements.

Neither error will survive an honest reading of the Scriptures. God did not establish evangelistic ministry to manufacture personalities worth admiring. He established it because sinners need the gospel and churches need servants who will faithfully proclaim it.

1. The Evangelist Is Christ's Gift, Not Religion's Invention

The first expression deserving attention in Ephesians 4:11 is not “evangelists,” but “And he gave.” That settles the question of ultimate authority before we begin discussing qualifications, reputation, education, or ministerial opportunities. The immediate context identifies the giver as the risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:8 declares, “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” The passage then moves to the ministerial gifts provided for the church. These are not positions that the religious world has authority to manufacture merely because an organization needs more representatives carrying its name. Christ distributes gifts according to His purposes, and the church is responsible to recognize and benefit from what He has given. A congregation may acknowledge a man's ministry, provide opportunities, examine his doctrine, and support his labor. None of those activities gives the congregation ownership of the ministry itself. The employer does not outrank the One who issued the commission.

The distinction matters because modern religion has developed an astonishing talent for confusing paperwork with spiritual qualification. A certificate may establish that an institution recognized someone. It cannot establish that Christ equipped him. A ministerial title may explain how a man is publicly identified. It does not prove he faithfully performs the work associated with that title. A Bible college can teach valuable material, and experienced pastors can provide instruction that prevents younger preachers from making unnecessary mistakes. There is nothing wrong with sound preparation. But a man can graduate with enough letters behind his name to resemble the alphabet section of a dictionary and still be unable to explain the gospel from 1 Corinthians 15. Conversely, a man without impressive academic recognition may faithfully preach the Scriptures and lead sinners to Christ. The issue is neither education nor ignorance as a virtue. The issue is biblical substance. The Holy Ghost has never required a diploma to make the gospel powerful, and He has never promised to bless ignorance merely because somebody mistakes it for spirituality.

Ephesians 4:12 explains why Christ gave these ministers: “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Those words prevent the evangelist from becoming the center of his own ministry. The objective is the benefit of Christ's people and the accomplishment of Christ's work. The body is to be strengthened, the saints furnished for service, and the ministry carried forward under the authority of its

Head. Verse 13 continues toward spiritual maturity, while verse 14 warns against being carried about with every wind of doctrine. A genuine evangelist therefore cannot be indifferent to what happens after sinners profess faith. His gospel preaching must agree with sound doctrine, and his labor should strengthen rather than destabilize the churches. The man who leaves behind theological confusion, unnecessary division, and a congregation more fascinated with him than with Jesus Christ has missed the direction of the passage. Christ gave ministers to build His body, not personal kingdoms.

2. Philip the Evangelist: A Biblical Example Worth Following

Acts 21:8 provides the clearest personal identification of an evangelist in the New Testament: “And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.” That statement is remarkable for what it says and for what it does not say. Philip is identified by his evangelistic ministry, and his earlier association with the seven appointed in Acts 6 is preserved. He did not begin as a professional traveling attraction. Acts 6 records the selection of men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, to address a practical need among the disciples. Philip's name appears among them. His subsequent evangelistic work did not make earlier service beneath his dignity. The man who would carry the gospel into Samaria had already been associated with responsibility in the congregation. That is a considerably healthier beginning than demanding a platform before proving oneself faithful.

Acts 8 demonstrates Philip's work in unmistakable language. Verse 5 states, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.” There is the central occupation of the evangelist. He preached Christ. The chapter records a significant response among the people, accompanied by miracles and signs occurring in that historical setting. Those signs must be understood within the transitional period covered by Acts, rather than turned into a compulsory formula for every evangelistic meeting in the present Church Age. Philip did not travel to Samaria to advertise a personal healing empire, establish a celebrity ministry, or persuade the population to finance his advancement. He proclaimed Christ, and the narrative repeatedly directs attention to the word of God and the response to it. Acts 8:12 mentions people believing Philip's preaching concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. The preacher was the messenger, not the message. A ministry becomes dangerously distorted when the instrument receives the glory that belongs to the One being proclaimed.

The same chapter takes Philip away from the public response in Samaria and places him on a desert road with one Ethiopian traveler. Acts 8:35 declares, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” Notice what

remained constant. The location changed, the audience changed, and the circumstances changed, but the central subject did not. Philip could address a city or explain Scripture to one man without needing the machinery of a large public gathering. He did not require a choir to warm up the audience, an advertising campaign to announce his arrival, or a collection before opening his mouth. The Ethiopian had a question about Isaiah 53, and Philip supplied the answer from Scripture. This is evangelistic ministry in its practical simplicity. A preacher who is useful only when the room is full may be more dependent upon applause than he cares to admit. Philip's example teaches that the worth of a gospel opportunity cannot be calculated by counting the chairs.

3. The Evangelist Is Not the Apostle, Prophet, or Pastor

Ephesians 4:11 distinguishes several ministerial gifts, and those distinctions are not included to provide a collection of interchangeable titles. The apostles held a foundational place in the early church, as Ephesians 2:20 identifies the household of God as "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." The apostles appointed and commissioned by Christ occupied a distinctive place in the revelation and establishment of New Testament doctrine. Paul's apostleship included his particular calling and the authority entrusted to him by the Lord. Those facts cannot be reproduced simply because a modern preacher decides that "apostle" sounds more impressive than "brother." Scripture does not authorize a man to manufacture foundational apostolic authority by changing the title on his stationery. Evangelists, meanwhile, are identified with gospel proclamation, and their work continues to serve the church. The distinctions are functional and doctrinal, not merely ceremonial. God did not provide these designations so that ambitious men could compete for the most magnificent nameplate.

Prophets also appear in the New Testament record, including those mentioned in Acts 11:27–28 and Acts 13:1. Their historical ministry must be understood in relation to the unfolding revelation and establishment of the church. That does not authorize a present-day evangelist to announce new revelations equal to Scripture or to place his private impressions above the completed written word of God. Second Timothy 3:16–17 declares that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and equips the man of God for every good work. The evangelist possesses no authority to revise what God has written, regardless of how spiritual his announcement sounds. Neither should a preacher imitate the sign gifts associated with particular stages of the apostolic record and then claim that every genuine evangelist must produce the same visible manifestations. Christ's gifts are not costumes to be exchanged during a religious performance. The evangelist must preach what God has revealed, not invent something new to keep his audience interested. A fresh claim of revelation cannot improve upon the gospel God has already delivered.

The distinction between evangelists and pastors is equally important. A pastor is charged with shepherding, feeding, and overseeing the flock entrusted to his care. Acts 20:28 commands the overseers to feed the church of God, while 1 Peter 5:2 exhorts elders to feed the flock willingly rather than for filthy lucre or personal domination. The evangelist's characteristic work emphasizes the proclamation and spread of the gospel, although he must also teach sound doctrine and may serve in other legitimate capacities. These ministries can cooperate without becoming identical. Timothy's charge to do the work of an evangelist demonstrates that evangelistic responsibility need not be confined to a man who travels constantly or uses one exclusive ministerial title. A pastor who preaches the gospel is not abandoning pastoral work, and an evangelist who instructs believers is not automatically claiming authority over their congregation. The problem begins when religious titles become territorial claims. An evangelist visiting a church should strengthen its ministry, not behave like a traveling landlord inspecting property he intends to seize.

4. Every Believer Should Witness, but Not Every Believer Holds the Same Ministry

A common source of confusion is the failure to distinguish the universal responsibility of believers to make Christ known from the particular ministerial gifts identified in Ephesians 4. Acts 8:4 states that those scattered by persecution “went every where preaching the word.” That passage demonstrates that the proclamation of God's truth was not restricted to a handful of officially recognized ministers. The believers who scattered did not need to become apostles or receive the title of evangelist before speaking the word. Likewise, believers today are responsible to testify concerning Jesus Christ and be prepared to give an answer for the hope within them, as 1 Peter 3:15 instructs. The New Testament does not teach that Christians may remain permanently silent about salvation while hiring a professional to handle every gospel conversation. A man who claims to love the Saviour but never wants anybody to hear about Him has a contradiction worth examining. Silence is a peculiar method of announcing good news.

Yet the responsibility of all believers does not erase the specific distinctions established in Ephesians 4:11. First Corinthians 12:29 asks, “Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?” The obvious answer is no. God does not assign identical functions to every member of Christ's body. The same principle applies when considering evangelistic ministry. Every Christian should be concerned about the lost, but not every Christian occupies the same recognized ministerial function as Philip. A believer who distributes gospel literature, witnesses to a neighbor, or explains salvation to a coworker is doing something good and necessary. That activity does not automatically establish him in the ministerial category identified in Ephesians 4. The distinction is not intended to discourage witnessing or reserve the gospel for a religious upper class. It

protects the biblical order of ministry while preserving the responsibility of ordinary believers. A soldier does not need to become a general before serving faithfully, and the army would be in considerable trouble if every private decided to appoint himself commander.

Neither should the evangelist use his particular calling to persuade ordinary Christians that witnessing is somebody else's business. Ephesians 4:12 expressly connects Christ's ministerial gifts with the perfecting of the saints and the work of the ministry. A faithful evangelist should help believers understand the gospel, answer common objections, recognize false doctrine, and develop confidence in opening the Scriptures with others. His work should multiply faithful testimony rather than cultivate helpless dependence upon his presence. If a congregation has heard a traveling preacher for twenty years but still believes nobody can explain salvation unless that preacher returns, somebody has confused ministerial service with permanent spiritual babysitting. The objective is not to make Christians spectators admiring one exceptionally talented performer. It is to strengthen the church in biblical truth and service. A good evangelist wants the gospel proclaimed even when he is not present to receive recognition. The man who becomes jealous when ordinary believers start witnessing successfully has forgotten whose message they are carrying.

5. The Evangelist's Message Must Come Before His Methods

Romans 10:13–17 provides one of the clearest statements concerning the necessity of gospel proclamation. Paul writes, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” He then asks how people shall call upon One in whom they have not believed, how they shall believe in One of whom they have not heard, and how they shall hear without a preacher. Verse 17 supplies the governing principle: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The immediate argument belongs within Romans 9–11, where Paul addresses Israel's relationship to the righteousness of God and the gospel. We must not remove that context. Nevertheless, the necessity of hearing God's word in order to believe is plainly applicable to gospel proclamation. The evangelist is not commissioned to create faith through excitement or manipulate it through clever presentation. He must deliver the message God has provided. The preacher's voice may carry the words, but the power does not originate in his vocal cords.

First Corinthians 15:1–4 establishes the gospel Paul preached: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. That gospel is not improved by attaching a collection of human requirements to the finished work of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares salvation to be by grace through faith, “not of works, lest any man should boast.” Romans 4:5 identifies God as the

One who justifies the ungodly who believe. An evangelist must know these passages well enough to explain salvation plainly without turning the invitation into a maze of contradictory instructions. A sinner does not need to purchase salvation, earn salvation, maintain salvation by religious performance, or submit to a preacher's personal system of ceremonies before receiving eternal life. The evangelist who makes human merit necessary for justification is not improving the gospel. He is corrupting it. A sermon can possess marvelous illustrations, emotional intensity, and an unforgettable ending while still delivering the wrong message. A beautifully wrapped package containing poison remains poison.

Methods must therefore remain servants of the message. Public meetings, personal conversations, printed literature, radio, recording equipment, websites, and other lawful means can provide opportunities to communicate Scripture. None of them possesses the authority to change what must be preached. A microphone can carry the gospel farther, but it cannot make an unscriptural sermon true. An attractive presentation may hold attention, but it cannot accomplish the work that belongs to the word of God. First Corinthians 1:21 declares that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Paul is not endorsing foolish doctrine or incompetent preparation; he is contrasting God's appointed means with the wisdom of a world that despises the message of the cross. The evangelist should therefore prepare carefully, speak intelligibly, and explain the Scriptures accurately without depending upon theatrical manipulation. If a man must deceive an audience into believing he possesses powers or revelations never promised in Scripture, he has already abandoned confidence in the message he claims to represent. The gospel needs faithful proclamation, not professional stage lighting.

6. The Evangelist Must Be Accountable Without Becoming a Religious Employee

The fact that Christ gives evangelists does not mean an evangelist becomes independent of every biblical responsibility or immune to correction. Acts 13:1–4 records the Holy Ghost directing the separation of Barnabas and Saul for their particular work in connection with the church at Antioch. Acts 14:26–27 later records their return and their report concerning what God had done through their ministry. Those passages concern missionary labor and do not establish a requirement that every evangelist must follow an identical organizational arrangement. They do, however, illustrate a biblical pattern of cooperation, sending, prayer, and communication between gospel workers and local believers. A man may be called of God without possessing the right to dismiss every question concerning his doctrine, behavior, or use of support. Divine calling is not a license for human arrogance. If a preacher responds to reasonable biblical examination by announcing that nobody may

question him because he is God's anointed servant, somebody ought to open the Scriptures before the collection plate makes another appearance.

Second Corinthians 4:5 provides a necessary correction: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” That sentence strikes directly at the temptation to turn ministerial authority into personal superiority. The evangelist serves Christ, and his service should benefit the people to whom he ministers. He should be willing to cooperate with sound churches, respect their legitimate leadership, maintain financial integrity, and receive scriptural correction when he is wrong. At the same time, accountability is not the same thing as surrendering biblical convictions to an organization determined to control his message. Acts 5:29 establishes the principle that obedience to God must take precedence over obedience to men when the two conflict. An evangelist must never compromise the gospel to secure invitations, preserve financial support, or satisfy a committee. His independence from unscriptural control must be matched by his submission to scriptural truth. Otherwise, the word “independent” can become nothing more than a polished description of a man who refuses to answer to anybody.

The practical relationship between evangelists and churches should be marked by honesty, cooperation, and spiritual usefulness. Third John 5–8 commends faithful treatment of brethren who went forth for the sake of the Name, and 1 Corinthians 9 establishes that gospel laborers may legitimately receive material support. Financial support is not inherently corruption, and refusal to receive support is not automatically superior spirituality. The danger comes when the evangelist begins evaluating churches by their offerings rather than their need, or when congregations assume that financial assistance gives them permission to dictate unscriptural preaching. The preacher is not a hired performer expected to provide a specified number of amusing stories before receiving his compensation. Neither is he a wandering proprietor entitled to generous treatment while refusing ordinary responsibility. His conduct should leave churches stronger in doctrine, encouraged in gospel work, and confident that their assistance served a legitimate biblical purpose. When a visiting preacher leaves behind nothing but an empty treasury and an enthusiastic report about himself, the congregation has reason to reconsider what kind of ministry it supported.

7. The Evangelist Must Make Full Proof of His Ministry

Second Timothy 4:1–5 places the work of an evangelist within one of the most solemn ministerial charges in the New Testament. Paul writes before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom. He commands Timothy to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season, and to

reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. He warns that a time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine but will gather teachers according to their own lusts, having itching ears. Then comes the command: “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” Those instructions are not a recipe for ministerial popularity. They are an announcement that fidelity to Scripture must continue even when the audience prefers something else. The evangelist is not authorized to measure his duty by the public appetite for his preaching. God never appointed the congregation's itching ears as editors of the Bible.

The expression “make full proof of thy ministry” reaches considerably deeper than maintaining an itinerary or delivering sermons on schedule. Timothy was commanded to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to him, not merely to maintain the outward appearance of being busy. A man can remain occupied in religious activity while neglecting the central work God requires. He can spend more time arranging advertisements than studying Scripture, more effort securing invitations than reaching sinners, and more attention cultivating influential acquaintances than guarding his doctrine. Activity is not identical to obedience. Paul also commands Timothy to watch in all things and endure afflictions, demonstrating that spiritual vigilance and perseverance belong alongside gospel proclamation. The evangelist must examine his message, his motives, his methods, and his conduct in light of Scripture. The preacher who cannot be bothered to correct his own errors should not be surprised when his ministry eventually becomes an exhibition of them. Nobody has ever received permission from the Lord to replace faithfulness with motion.

The final standard for ministry is not the judgment of a congregation, a committee, or a denominational convention. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” Second Corinthians 5:10 teaches that believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, while 1 Corinthians 3:11–15 addresses the testing of Christian work upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. That judgment concerns the believer's service and reward, not a second opportunity to purchase or earn the salvation already received by grace. These passages ought to remove considerable foolishness from the minds of men who mistake religious fame for divine approval. A crowded auditorium cannot prove a ministry faithful, and an unpopular sermon cannot prove it unsuccessful. Numbers may indicate opportunities, but they do not determine doctrinal accuracy. The evangelist will answer for whether he preached the truth, handled the Scriptures faithfully, and fulfilled his responsibilities. Applause is a poor substitute for the approval of Jesus Christ, particularly when the applause stops at the grave and the accounting begins beyond it.

Conclusion

The New Testament evangelist is neither a mysterious spiritual aristocrat nor a religious businessman with a specialized talent for public speaking. Ephesians 4:11 establishes that Christ gave evangelists to His church. Acts 21:8 identifies Philip by that ministry, and Acts 8 provides historical examples of his gospel proclamation. Second Timothy 4:5 commands Timothy to perform evangelistic work faithfully and completely. Romans 10:13–17 establishes the necessity of hearing the word of God for faith. Taken together, these passages produce a biblical picture considerably different from the entertainment-centered ministry that has become familiar in many religious circles. The evangelist is given a message to proclaim, a work to perform, a body of believers to benefit, and a Lord to obey. His authority is derived from Scripture, his gospel concerns Jesus Christ, and his success must be measured by faithfulness rather than personal fame. A preacher who spends his life making people remember him while neglecting to make Christ known has confused the servant with the Master.

This distinction ought to challenge both the men who claim the title and the churches that invite them. Evangelists must examine whether they are genuinely preaching the gospel or merely repeating familiar material that earns predictable responses. Churches must examine whether they are encouraging sound evangelistic labor or supporting an endless procession of religious entertainment. There is nothing inherently wrong with humor, personal illustrations, travel, organized meetings, or the appropriate support of preachers. But every one of those things must remain subordinate to Scripture and the actual work of the ministry. The congregation does not need a religious celebrity who can entertain its members while leaving them ignorant of biblical truth. It needs faithful preaching that explains salvation, corrects error, strengthens believers, and encourages the proclamation of the gospel beyond the church walls. An evangelist should leave people better acquainted with the Bible than with his personal biography. If the congregation can remember every amusing story but cannot explain how a sinner receives eternal life, the wrong message received the greatest attention.

The great command remains exactly where Paul placed it: “Preach the word.” The great responsibility remains exactly where Timothy received it: “Do the work of an evangelist.” And the great requirement remains exactly where God established it: “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” The evangelist does not need to manufacture a new gospel, invent a new authority, or develop an elaborate religious personality to justify his calling. He needs to know the Scriptures, preach Jesus Christ, confront false doctrine, serve faithfully, endure hardship, and finish the work entrusted to him. The world may demand entertainment, religious organizations may reward popularity, and churches may occasionally prefer a comfortable performance to an uncomfortable truth. None of those preferences changes the commission. When the preacher stands

before Jesus Christ, the Lord will not need to examine his advertising budget, count his social media followers, or request testimonials from impressed audiences to determine whether he was faithful. The Book will have settled the standard long before that day arrives. An evangelist was never called to make a name for himself. He was called to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ. The preacher is not the attraction, the pulpit is not a stage, the gospel is not merchandise, and the church of Jesus Christ is not an audience assembled to admire a performer. Preach the Word, proclaim the Saviour, reach the sinner, and leave the glory where it belongs.

2 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – Preaching the Gospel Without Changing the Message

Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 15:1–4 (KJV)

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”

Introduction

An evangelist who cannot explain the gospel has no business confusing sinners with everything else he knows. That may sound severe to a generation accustomed to measuring preaching by emotional excitement, attendance figures, impressive introductions, and the number of people who compliment the sermon afterward, but the Bible was never impressed by religious theatrics. A man can preach until the windows shake, the congregation sweats, and the song leader loses his voice, yet leave every lost sinner in the building just as ignorant of salvation as when he entered. He may know every fashionable controversy, possess an encyclopedic collection of amusing illustrations, and deliver a sermon polished enough to make a television announcer jealous. But if he cannot tell a sinner plainly how Jesus Christ saves the ungodly, his ministerial machinery is running without an engine. The evangelist has not been commissioned to impress the religious crowd with his accomplishments. He has been entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that message is not his property to rearrange, improve, dilute, decorate, or replace.

Paul settled the content of that gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. Writing to the Corinthian church, he reminded believers of the message he had preached, the message they had

received, and the message in which they stood. Then he identified its essential historical and doctrinal foundation: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Notice what Paul did not include as part of Christ's finished redemptive accomplishment. He did not announce that sinners must purchase forgiveness through ceremonies, earn justification through obedience to Moses, complete a prescribed program of religious improvement, or submit to ecclesiastical machinery before God can save them. The gospel centers upon what Jesus Christ accomplished, not what religious institutions demand. The sinner's responsibility is to believe the gospel, receiving by faith the salvation Christ purchased through His blood. When a preacher begins replacing that message with human achievement, he is no longer clarifying the gospel. He is tampering with it.

This distinction is especially necessary in an age when almost anything can be advertised as gospel preaching. Some substitute political excitement for the cross of Christ. Others turn salvation into a program of emotional recovery, financial advancement, improved relationships, or personal fulfillment. Still others bury the finished work of Calvary beneath baptismal requirements, sacramental obligations, religious law-keeping, or an endless list of conditions that supposedly complete what Jesus Christ failed to finish. Meanwhile, another class of preachers knows the correct doctrinal vocabulary but spends so little time explaining the gospel that a lost visitor could attend an entire meeting without understanding what he must believe. Every one of these errors reveals the same fundamental problem: the message has been displaced. Romans 1:16 declares the gospel to be “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” The power is in God's gospel, not the preacher's personality. The evangelist's responsibility is therefore unmistakable. He must preach the right message, explain it accurately, and refuse to exchange eternal truth for religious popularity.

1. The Gospel Is a Divine Message to Be Delivered, Not a Human Message to Be Improved

Paul introduced the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 with the words, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received.” That statement establishes a principle every evangelist ought to understand before accepting his first preaching engagement. Paul was not presenting himself as the inventor of the gospel. He was delivering what had been entrusted to him. The apostle's authority came from the Lord Jesus Christ, and the message was revealed and committed to him rather than manufactured through personal investigation or religious imagination. Galatians 1:11–12 confirms that Paul's gospel was not received from man but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the evangelist today is not authorized to devise a new message suited to the preferences of his

generation. He must faithfully proclaim the apostolic gospel already preserved in Scripture. A deliveryman who opens a package, removes its contents, and substitutes something of his own choosing has ceased being a faithful messenger. Religious respectability does not make that conduct any less dishonest when the package contains eternal truth.

Consider Paul's expression “first of all.” The gospel was not a minor theological subject reserved for occasional special meetings. It occupied a place of fundamental importance in his ministry. First Corinthians 2:2 records his determination to know nothing among the Corinthians “save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” That does not mean Paul never taught prophecy, church order, Christian conduct, spiritual gifts, or other doctrines. The Corinthian epistles themselves prove otherwise. It means the crucified Christ remained central to the message upon which their salvation and spiritual standing depended. The evangelist may possess considerable knowledge of Scripture, and he certainly should continue studying the whole counsel of God, but his appointed labor requires him to communicate salvation plainly. A preacher who knows the dimensions of the New Jerusalem but cannot explain justification by faith resembles a man who has memorized the furnishings of a mansion while remaining unable to find the front door. Biblical knowledge is valuable, but knowledge divorced from its proper purpose becomes an impressive collection of neglected responsibilities.

The gospel Paul delivered was not a collection of religious suggestions awaiting improvement by later generations. Galatians 1:8 declares that even if Paul himself or an angel from heaven preached another gospel contrary to what had already been preached, the offender was to be accursed. That warning places the message above the messenger, even when the messenger possesses extraordinary credentials. No preacher, church organization, denomination, religious council, or supposed supernatural visitor has authority to alter the gospel of God's grace. The evangelist must therefore measure every presentation of salvation against Scripture rather than against ministerial tradition. A message does not become biblical because it has been repeated for centuries, printed in expensive literature, or endorsed by a thousand religious personalities. Truth is not determined by the number of people who applaud it. God established the gospel before the modern religious marketplace existed, and He did not appoint that marketplace to supervise revisions. The evangelist is a herald entrusted with a proclamation, not an author hired to write a better ending.

2. Christ Died for Our Sins, Was Buried, and Rose Again

The first central statement in Paul's declaration is that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” Those words identify both the historical event and its saving significance. Jesus Christ did not merely die as an example of courage, a victim of political injustice, or a

misunderstood religious teacher whose ideals outlived Him. He died for our sins. Isaiah 53:5 declares, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” First Peter 2:24 states that Christ “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” Second Corinthians 5:21 declares that God made Him “to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” The death of Christ was substitutionary and redemptive. The sinless Saviour bore the judgment deserved by sinners. An evangelist who preaches the cross without explaining sin, guilt, substitution, and redemption has described the instrument of death while neglecting the reason for the sacrifice.

Paul next declares, “And that he was buried.” The burial establishes the reality of Christ's death and forms an essential part of the historical gospel proclamation. Jesus Christ did not merely appear to die before returning to public activity. His body was taken from the cross and placed in a tomb. The Gospel records identify Joseph of Arimathaea in connection with that burial, and Matthew 27 records the securing of the sepulchre. The burial also exposes the helplessness of every religious system that depends upon a dead founder. A dead religious teacher may leave behind admirable sayings, moral instructions, and loyal followers, but he cannot conquer death by remaining in the grave. Christianity does not rest upon the continuing influence of a deceased philosopher. It rests upon the accomplished redemption of the Son of God. The burial must never be detached from the resurrection, because an occupied tomb would leave the preacher with a tragedy rather than a victorious gospel. The grave received Christ's body, but it did not obtain permanent possession of Him.

Then comes the declaration upon which the entire Christian faith stands: “And that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” Paul spends the remainder of 1 Corinthians 15 defending the reality and consequences of the resurrection. Verse 17 states, “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” That is not decorative theology. It is the difference between salvation and hopelessness. Romans 4:25 declares that Christ “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” The resurrection vindicates the Saviour and demonstrates the triumph of His redemptive work. A preacher who reduces Christianity to good morals and improved behavior has neglected the event that distinguishes the gospel from every man-made program of self-reformation. Morality cannot raise the dead. Religious enthusiasm cannot empty a grave. Human sincerity cannot conquer sin. Jesus Christ arose bodily from the dead, and the gospel announces that victory. The cross declares the price was paid; the empty tomb declares the Saviour is alive.

3. The Gospel Is the Power of God, Not the Performance of the Preacher

Romans 1:16 contains one of Paul's clearest declarations concerning the gospel: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” The apostle did not identify eloquence, ministerial reputation, emotional intensity, musical ability, or audience response as the power of God unto salvation. He identified the gospel. The distinction is fundamental. The evangelist may possess natural speaking ability, and nothing in Scripture requires a preacher to communicate carelessly or unintelligibly. Nevertheless, ability must remain subordinate to truth. First Corinthians 1:18 declares that the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish, but unto those who are saved it is the power of God. The message will not necessarily impress the wisdom of this world, and its rejection does not prove that it needs modernization. A man who replaces the gospel with entertainment because sinners consider preaching foolish has solved the wrong problem. He has made the audience comfortable by removing the very message they needed.

Romans 1:17 continues, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” The gospel reveals God's righteousness and the means by which an unrighteous sinner can be justified before Him. Romans 3:23 declares that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:24 then speaks of being “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The sinner's problem is not merely that his life lacks direction, his relationships need improvement, or his personal ambitions have encountered obstacles. His problem is sin before a holy God. The gospel addresses that problem through the righteousness and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. An evangelist who never explains the sinner's guilt cannot properly explain the Saviour's sacrifice. He may offer encouragement, inspiration, and practical advice, but he has not yet delivered the biblical message of salvation. A doctor who refuses to identify a deadly disease because the patient dislikes unpleasant information has confused courtesy with malpractice.

Paul's statement that the gospel is “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” must also be handled in its biblical setting. The gospel was historically proclaimed first among the Jews, and the book of Acts records its expansion among the Gentiles. Romans 3:29–30 establishes that God justifies both circumcision and uncircumcision through faith, while Ephesians 2 explains the present unity of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body through Christ. These truths do not erase God's national promises to Israel, nor do they establish two competing methods of salvation in the present Church Age. The same gospel of grace must be proclaimed to Jew and Gentile alike. The evangelist must not preach one message to a religious audience and another to people unfamiliar with the Bible. Circumstances may affect how he explains the truth, but they cannot authorize changes to its substance. The gospel is sufficient for the educated and uneducated, rich and poor, respectable and

notorious. The power resides in God's provision, not in the preacher's ability to manufacture a favorable atmosphere.

4. Salvation by Grace Through Faith Cannot Be Purchased With Religious Works

Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Those words are clear enough to trouble every religious system that requires human performance as the foundation or completion of justification. Grace is not wages paid to a deserving employee. Romans 11:6 establishes the incompatibility of grace and works as competing grounds of acceptance before God. Romans 4:4–5 distinguishes the wages owed to a worker from the righteousness counted to the ungodly believer. Salvation is received through faith because Jesus Christ has accomplished what the sinner could never accomplish. The evangelist must explain that distinction without adding conditions that contradict it. A sinner cannot contribute merit to the finished work of Christ any more than a bankrupt debtor can improve a paid account by presenting an empty wallet. God does not offer eternal life as a reward for impressive religious performance. He offers salvation as His gift through Jesus Christ.

This truth directly exposes the error of making water baptism a condition for receiving justification in the present Church Age. Baptism is an important ordinance for believers, but Paul states in 1 Corinthians 1:17, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.” The apostle distinguished his commission to preach the gospel from the administration of water baptism. Ephesians 1:13 identifies hearing and believing the gospel as the occasion upon which believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. First Corinthians 15:1–4 does not add immersion, sprinkling, church membership, or sacramental administration to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection as required accomplishments for the sinner's justification. Passages concerning baptism in the Gospels and Acts must be considered in their actual historical and dispensational settings rather than carelessly combined into a system that contradicts Paul's explicit teaching concerning grace. Baptism can testify to faith, but it cannot become a competing saviour. Water may wash dirt from a man's body; it cannot remove the guilt of sin from his soul.

The same principle condemns every attempt to make religious ceremonies, observance of Mosaic ordinances, financial contributions, or moral achievements necessary to complete Christ's redemption. Galatians 2:16 states that a man is not justified by the works of the law, “but by the faith of Jesus Christ.” Galatians 3:2 asks whether the Spirit was received by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith. Those are not difficult questions unless somebody has already decided that salvation must pass through an institution before reaching the sinner. The law reveals sin and establishes guilt; it cannot furnish the

righteousness necessary for justification. Christian obedience and good works have their proper place after salvation, as Ephesians 2:10 demonstrates, but they are the intended fruit of God's workmanship rather than the purchase price of eternal life. Religious systems have spent centuries constructing elaborate arrangements to make sinners pay installments on a debt Christ already satisfied. The Bible presents a considerably better arrangement. Grace does not invite the sinner to help finish redemption; it calls him to believe the Redeemer who finished it.

5. Emotional Excitement Is Not Conversion, and a Religious Decision Is Not the Gospel

One of the most dangerous substitutions in modern evangelism is the assumption that a powerful emotional response necessarily establishes biblical salvation. A congregation may weep during a sermon, tremble beneath conviction, rush toward an altar, and experience extraordinary relief afterward without those emotions themselves constituting the gospel. Conversely, a sinner may quietly understand the truth, believe on Jesus Christ, and receive eternal life without supplying the dramatic testimony that a religious audience prefers. Salvation rests upon the promises of God, not the intensity of a person's feelings. John 3:36 declares, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Acts 16:31 records the answer given to the Philippian jailer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Neither passage makes emotional display the instrument of justification. Conviction may produce tears, and gratitude may produce joy, but neither tears nor joy can serve as a substitute for believing the gospel. A man can cry over his sins and remain lost, just as he can remain dry-eyed while genuinely trusting Christ.

This does not mean conviction of sin, repentance, or the turning of the heart toward God should be discarded. Scripture commands repentance and records the genuine response of sinners to divine truth. Acts 20:21 speaks of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” First Thessalonians 1:9 describes believers who turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. Second Corinthians 7:10 distinguishes godly sorrow from the sorrow of the world. These passages must be handled in their proper contexts without transforming repentance into a lifelong program of moral achievement required to purchase justification. Biblical repentance cannot be reduced to a meaningless recital of words, but neither should an evangelist redefine it as successful personal reform before God will save. The sinner must recognize the truth concerning his sin and the Saviour and respond to God in faith. A genuine change of heart toward God is not the same thing as earning righteousness through subsequent behavior. When a preacher confuses these matters, he places the frightened sinner on a treadmill and calls the exercise salvation.

Equally dangerous is the practice of treating a repeated prayer, raised hand, signed card, or public walk toward the pulpit as automatic proof of regeneration. A sinner may express

genuine faith through prayer, and there is nothing wrong with helping someone understand how to call upon the Lord. But the words of a prayer are not a magical formula that operates independently of belief. Romans 10:9–10 connects confession with faith in the heart, while Romans 10:14 asks how men shall call upon Him in whom they have not believed. The evangelist must explain the gospel before seeking a response and must avoid declaring someone saved merely because he performed the requested outward action. Neither should he manufacture impressive reports by pressuring confused people into professions they do not understand. First Corinthians 15:2 warns concerning believing in vain, within Paul's wider argument about the reality of Christ's resurrection. The seriousness of the message demands seriousness in its reception. The purpose of evangelism is not to collect decisions that impress churches, but to proclaim Christ so clearly that sinners know whom they are trusting and why.

6. Another Gospel Is Not a Harmless Variation of the Same Truth

Galatians 1:6–7 contains Paul's astonished rebuke: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” The historical controversy concerned teachers who were disturbing believers by introducing requirements associated with the Mosaic law, particularly circumcision, into their understanding of acceptance before God. The issue was not whether obedience matters in Christian living or whether the Old Testament possesses divine authority. The issue was whether sinners could be justified through faith in Christ while also being required to submit to the law as a condition of acceptance. Paul rejected that corruption absolutely. The gospel of grace cannot be reconciled with a competing system that makes human religious performance necessary for justification. The moment a preacher adds a required human contribution to the finished work of Christ, he has not discovered a more complete gospel. He has introduced a contradiction into the message.

Paul's warning becomes even stronger in Galatians 1:8–9, where he declares that anyone preaching a contrary gospel is to be accursed. The apostle applies that standard even to himself hypothetically and to an angel from heaven. That is about as far removed from modern religious tolerance as a man can travel without leaving the Bible entirely. Paul did not propose that the churches celebrate every alternative plan of salvation as a valuable expression of spiritual diversity. He identified the corruption of the gospel as a matter demanding decisive rejection. Galatians 5:4 warns those seeking justification through the law that they have fallen from grace. This is not a declaration that a genuinely regenerated believer loses eternal life every time he commits a sin; the warning concerns abandoning grace as the basis of justification in favor of law. Scripture must govern the doctrine, not a

preacher's favorite slogan. The evangelist cannot soften this distinction merely because a false gospel happens to be popular, ancient, emotional, or supported by an impressive religious organization.

The warning also applies to modern distortions that substitute human prosperity, political deliverance, personal achievement, or religious membership for the biblical message of salvation. There is nothing inherently wrong with teaching believers about finances, family responsibilities, civil government, or practical Christian conduct. The problem arises when those subjects displace Christ's redemptive work or are presented as the essential content of the gospel. A preacher who promises sinners improved circumstances without explaining their need for forgiveness has exchanged eternal salvation for temporary benefits. A minister who assures people that joining his institution guarantees acceptance with God has transferred confidence from Christ to religious machinery. And a supposed evangelist who builds his message around miraculous wealth while neglecting the cross has discovered a convenient gospel for the collection plate. Paul preached a crucified and risen Saviour, not a supernatural investment program. The gospel does not need a modern replacement. It needs faithful messengers who will stop apologizing for the original.

7. Philip Preached Christ, Not Philip, and the Difference Still Matters

Acts 8:5 provides a remarkably concise description of Philip's evangelistic ministry: “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.” The historical setting deserves attention. Philip was ministering during the transitional events recorded in Acts, when the gospel was spreading beyond Jerusalem and the relationship of Samaritan believers to the developing church was being established. The chapter records signs and miracles associated with Philip's ministry, along with the people's response to his preaching. Acts 8:12 states, “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” The order deserves examination: Philip preached, the people believed, and baptism followed. The passage does not establish a modern requirement that every evangelist reproduce the same miraculous signs. Nor should the distinctive events surrounding the Samaritan reception of the Holy Ghost in Acts 8:14–17 be flattened into a universal procedure contradicting Ephesians 1:13. The evangelist must respect the historical setting while retaining the unmistakable emphasis upon preaching Christ.

The chapter also records Simon, who had previously practiced sorcery and astonished the people of Samaria. Acts 8:9 describes him as giving out that he himself was some great one. The contrast with Philip's ministry is difficult to miss. Simon had cultivated personal fascination; Philip proclaimed Jesus Christ. Simon's influence rested upon astonishing the people and directing attention toward himself. Philip's legitimate evangelistic labor

directed attention toward the Saviour. The subsequent confrontation involving Simon in Acts 8:18–23 exposes the danger of attempting to obtain spiritual power for corrupt purposes. Peter rebuked him for supposing that the gift of God could be purchased with money. That rebuke ought to make every religious profiteer uncomfortable. The gospel is not a commodity, and spiritual authority is not merchandise available to the highest bidder. A preacher who spends more time advertising his supposed greatness than explaining the greatness of Christ is following a very dangerous pattern. The people of Samaria had already seen enough religious spectacle. What they needed was the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

Philip's later encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch provides another excellent example of proper gospel-centered ministry. Acts 8:35 declares, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” The Ethiopian was reading Isaiah 53 and needed understanding. Philip did not exploit the opportunity to explain his personal achievements, distribute an advertisement for future appearances, or entertain the traveler with unrelated stories. He began with Scripture and preached Jesus. The narrative must be understood in its Acts setting, but the ministerial principle remains unmistakable. The evangelist must know how to begin with the Bible and direct the sinner toward the Saviour. That requires more than an emotional invitation at the conclusion of a sermon. It requires explaining who Christ is, why He died, what His resurrection accomplished, and how the sinner receives the salvation offered through Him. The preacher's personality may be remembered or forgotten, but the gospel must be understood. Philip did not need to make himself the center of the story because he knew the One who belonged at the center.

Conclusion

The work of the evangelist is inseparable from the gospel he has been commissioned to proclaim. First Corinthians 15:1–4 establishes the message: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Romans 1:16 establishes its power unto salvation for everyone who believes. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith apart from works. Galatians 1:6–9 establishes the seriousness of corrupting that message. Acts 8 demonstrates what happens when a faithful evangelist directs attention toward Jesus Christ rather than himself. These passages do not leave the preacher free to invent whatever religious presentation seems most effective at attracting an audience. His responsibility is to proclaim the message God has already supplied. He must explain sin without concealing its seriousness, preach the cross without diminishing its sufficiency, proclaim the resurrection without reducing it to symbolism, and invite sinners to believe without imposing conditions contrary to grace. The gospel is not one

department among many in evangelistic ministry. It is the foundation upon which the ministry stands.

Every evangelist should therefore examine his preaching with a simple but demanding question: Can a lost sinner hear this message and clearly understand how to be saved? If the answer is no, the preacher has work to do regardless of how impressed the congregation may have been. A sermon can contain accurate teaching concerning prophecy, family life, Christian separation, spiritual warfare, or a hundred other biblical subjects without functioning as a clear presentation of the gospel. Those subjects possess legitimate importance, and an evangelist should not pretend the Bible contains nothing beyond the plan of salvation. But when the purpose is evangelistic proclamation, the sinner must not be left searching through an hour of religious discussion for the message that determines his eternal destiny. Nor should the preacher confuse urgency with manipulation or conviction with emotional theater. The evangelist must deliver truth plainly enough to be understood and faithfully enough to be believed. He is not responsible for manufacturing regeneration through human methods. He is responsible for proclaiming the gospel upon which sinners must believe.

The religious world may continue producing new programs, fashionable terminology, impressive personalities, and increasingly elaborate methods for attracting audiences. It may discover additional ways to make church meetings resemble concerts, political rallies, motivational conferences, and theatrical productions. None of those developments can improve upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The sinner still needs forgiveness. The law still exposes guilt. Human righteousness still falls short of God's glory. Religious ceremonies still cannot purchase justification. Emotional excitement still cannot replace faith. And the risen Saviour remains sufficient to save those who believe on Him. The evangelist who understands these truths has no reason to apologize for the simplicity of the gospel and no authority to corrupt it for the sake of popularity. He may preach before thousands or explain salvation to one person sitting across a table, but the obligation remains unchanged. Paul declared what he had received, Philip preached Christ, and Timothy was commanded to do the work of an evangelist. That is a biblical standard worth preserving in every generation. The gospel does not need another ingredient, another condition, another ceremony, or another salesman. Jesus Christ finished the work of redemption, and the evangelist has been commanded to proclaim it. If the preacher changes the message, he has not improved the gospel. He has betrayed his commission.

3 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – The Bible Is the Authority, Not the Preacher's Personality

Key Passage: 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (KJV)

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Introduction

One of the greatest dangers facing a successful evangelist is discovering that people will believe almost anything he says as long as he says it confidently enough. Give a man a microphone, a reputation, a few impressive stories, and a congregation trained to applaud instead of examine, and you have assembled the necessary equipment for a considerable amount of religious foolishness. The preacher may be sincere, educated, experienced, and exceptionally gifted at communicating, but none of those qualities can turn an unscriptural statement into the truth. A man can pound the pulpit until the wood splinters, shout until his collar wilts, and announce that God personally revealed something to him last Thursday afternoon, but the question remains exactly where it started: What saith the scripture? Romans 4:3 asks that question in connection with justification, and the principle reaches every legitimate exercise of biblical teaching. The evangelist is not the authority standing behind the pulpit. The Book is the authority standing over him. When a preacher forgets that distinction, his ministry begins drifting from proclamation into personal promotion.

Paul understood this danger when he instructed Timothy concerning the Scriptures and the responsibilities of ministry. Second Timothy 3:14–17 establishes the divine origin, spiritual usefulness, and sufficiency of Scripture for furnishing the man of God. The following chapter then commands Timothy to preach the word, remain faithful under unfavorable circumstances, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with longsuffering and doctrine. Notice that Paul did not instruct Timothy to develop a magnetic personality, imitate the most popular public speaker, manufacture supernatural experiences, or discover what kind of preaching would receive the highest audience approval. He directed him to the written revelation of God. That distinction is not a minor preference concerning preaching style. It determines whether the congregation receives God's truth or merely the preacher's opinions dressed in religious clothing. A sermon can contain beautiful language, moving illustrations, and enough emotional energy to exhaust the congregation while possessing very little actual Scripture. Religious excitement is not automatically spiritual understanding, and impressive delivery is no guarantee of doctrinal accuracy.

The evangelist must therefore settle the question of authority before he begins discussing methods, opportunities, audiences, or ministerial success. Philip demonstrated the proper approach when he began with Isaiah 53 and preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. The Bereans demonstrated the proper response when they examined the Scriptures daily to determine whether Paul's preaching was true. Isaiah 8:20 establishes the principle of testing claims against divine revelation rather than accepting religious assertions merely because somebody speaks with confidence. These examples form a necessary safeguard against the personality-driven religion that has become increasingly familiar in modern Christianity. The Bible must govern the sermon, the interpretation, the doctrine, and the application. The preacher's experiences must submit to Scripture, his traditions must submit to Scripture, and his reputation must never place him beyond scriptural examination. When a man's personality becomes more important than the Book he carries, the congregation has exchanged biblical authority for religious celebrity, and the exchange rate is disastrous.

1. The Scriptures Make Men Wise Unto Salvation, Not Wise Unto Religious Entertainment

Paul begins his instruction in 2 Timothy 3:14 by commanding Timothy to continue in the things he had learned and been assured of, knowing from whom he had learned them. Verse 15 continues, “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” This statement deserves careful attention because it identifies something Scripture accomplishes that no amount of religious entertainment can produce. The Scriptures make men wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Timothy had received biblical instruction from childhood, and Paul connected that foundation with the saving truth revealed in Christ. The immediate context concerns Timothy's preparation for faithful ministry in an increasingly corrupt religious environment. The solution was not to invent a more attractive message. It was to continue in the truth already learned. A preacher who abandons Scripture because the crowd appears bored resembles a physician who throws away medicine because his patients would rather have candy.

The expression “wise unto salvation” also establishes the proper relationship between biblical knowledge and saving faith. A man may memorize historical details concerning Israel, explain the movements of ancient kingdoms, identify the twelve apostles, and describe the dimensions of Noah's ark without understanding how to be saved. Knowledge of biblical information must lead to the truth concerning Jesus Christ rather than becoming an intellectual trophy. Paul identifies salvation as being “through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” directing attention away from human religious accomplishment. First Corinthians

15:1–4 establishes the death of Christ for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection according to the Scriptures as the gospel Paul preached. Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The evangelist must communicate that message clearly. A sinner does not need to be impressed with the preacher's intellectual furniture. He needs to understand his guilt before God and the salvation provided through the crucified and risen Saviour.

There is another important consideration in Timothy's familiarity with the holy Scriptures. The writings Timothy knew from childhood included the Old Testament revelation, which testified beforehand concerning the promised Messiah. Those Scriptures must be handled in their proper historical and dispensational settings, yet they remain divinely inspired and profitable for Christian instruction. Paul was not teaching Timothy to drag every Old Testament command into the Church Age or transfer Israel's national promises to the body of Christ. He was showing that God's written revelation bears witness to His saving purposes. Romans 15:4 declares that things written aforetime were written for our learning, while 2 Timothy 2:15 requires the workman to rightly divide the word of truth. Those passages belong together. The evangelist must know both the value of the entire Bible and the necessity of interpreting its parts correctly. A preacher who ignores the Old Testament impoverishes his understanding, but one who mixes Israel's law with the gospel of grace can turn his ignorance into a false plan of salvation.

2. All Scripture Is Given by Inspiration of God, Not Manufactured by Religious Genius

Second Timothy 3:16 begins with a declaration that ought to settle a great many arguments before they get started: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The verse does not say that Scripture becomes authoritative when a preacher agrees with it, when an institution approves it, or when modern scholarship considers it acceptable. Its authority comes from God. The evangelist must approach the written word as divine revelation, not as religious clay waiting for an ambitious minister to reshape it according to contemporary preferences. This is why confidence in the King James Bible belongs at the center of faithful English-language preaching. The preacher is called to believe, study, and proclaim the words of Scripture rather than spend his ministry teaching congregations to distrust the Bible placed before them. A man who constantly questions the authority of his own preaching text eventually resembles a soldier who spends the battle explaining why his weapon probably will not work. The church needs confidence in God's words, not another exhibition of ministerial uncertainty.

Paul identifies four profitable operations of Scripture: doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Doctrine establishes what God teaches. Reproof exposes what contradicts that teaching. Correction brings the erring person or practice back into

agreement with truth. Instruction in righteousness establishes the proper course of conduct. Notice that Scripture performs functions modern religious entertainment frequently avoids. It teaches, confronts, corrects, and instructs. A preacher who eliminates reproof because it makes people uncomfortable has not discovered a superior method of ministry. He has removed one of the purposes for which Scripture was given. Likewise, a man who knows how to rebuke everybody but cannot teach sound doctrine has neglected another part of the verse. Biblical preaching is not merely shouting against evil, nor is it quietly distributing pleasant observations while pretending sin does not exist. It must explain God's truth accurately and apply that truth where Scripture requires. The Bible is not a collection of inspirational decorations for a comfortable religious meeting.

Verse 17 explains the intended result: “That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” The language concerns the furnishing and preparation of the man of God for faithful service. Scripture supplies what is necessary for his doctrinal instruction and ministerial responsibilities. This does not forbid learning practical skills, examining historical circumstances, or receiving counsel from experienced believers. It establishes that those secondary helps must never displace the authority of God's revelation. A preacher can possess an impressive library and still be poorly furnished if he neglects the Book that should govern everything else. He can attend countless conferences, accumulate certificates, and maintain a collection of sermon illustrations large enough to fill a warehouse, yet remain unable to distinguish justification from sanctification. The problem is not insufficient religious equipment. It is failure to use the equipment God supplied. The Bible does not need the preacher's personality to make it authoritative; the preacher needs the Bible's authority to make his ministry worth hearing.

3. Preach the Word, Not Whatever the Congregation Finds Entertaining

Second Timothy 4 opens with one of the most solemn charges ever delivered to a minister of Jesus Christ. Paul writes, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.” The command that follows is unmistakable: “Preach the word.” Paul places Timothy's responsibility beneath the authority of God and the future judgment of Jesus Christ. That setting leaves very little room for the preacher who treats his assignment as a contest in public popularity. The evangelist will not ultimately answer to an audience survey, a conference committee, or the people who complimented his delivery. He will answer to the Lord whose word he was commanded to preach. The congregation may reward entertaining nonsense, but divine judgment will not be conducted by applause. A preacher who remembers that reality will be considerably less interested in manufacturing excitement and considerably more concerned with handling Scripture faithfully.

Paul continues by commanding Timothy to be instant in season and out of season, and to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." That instruction requires faithfulness when the audience welcomes the message and when it does not. The preacher must correct error, confront sin, encourage obedience, and exercise patience while teaching sound doctrine. Notice that longsuffering and doctrine belong together. Biblical preaching is not an excuse for uncontrolled temper, personal cruelty, or the humiliation of people who genuinely need instruction. Neither does patience require surrendering clear biblical truth to avoid disagreement. The evangelist must recognize the difference between a confused sinner asking an honest question and a religious troublemaker determined to overturn sound doctrine. Both require scriptural answers, although the appropriate manner of response may differ. A preacher who possesses thunder without doctrine is merely making noise. A preacher who possesses doctrine without the courage to proclaim it has placed truth in storage where nobody can benefit from it.

The warning in 2 Timothy 4:3–4 explains why this command matters. Paul declares that a time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine but will gather teachers according to their own lusts, having itching ears. They will turn away from the truth and be turned unto fables. The passage does not merely predict an abundance of false teachers. It identifies audiences willing to obtain the teachers they prefer. That is a frightening arrangement because demand and supply cooperate in producing religious deception. People who refuse biblical correction can eventually find a preacher willing to assure them that correction is unnecessary. Modern religious marketing has become remarkably efficient at serving that appetite. There is a preacher for every preference, a doctrine for every desire, and enough attractive religious packaging to make false teaching appear respectable. But popularity cannot convert fables into truth. When itching ears choose the sermon, sound doctrine is usually the first thing escorted out of the building.

4. Philip Began at the Scripture and Preached Jesus, Not Philip

Acts 8:30–35 provides one of the finest illustrations of biblical evangelism in the New Testament. Philip encountered an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the prophet Isaiah, and Philip asked, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" The question reveals a fundamental responsibility of the evangelist. He must help people understand Scripture rather than merely admire his ability to speak about it. The Ethiopian acknowledged that he needed guidance, and Philip was invited to explain the passage. The text under consideration concerned the suffering servant described in Isaiah 53, including the language of a sheep led to the slaughter. Philip did not begin with a dramatic account of his recent experiences in Samaria or an elaborate explanation of his personal importance. Acts 8:35 declares, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and

preached unto him Jesus." There is a complete lesson in that sentence. Begin with the Scripture, explain its meaning, and direct the sinner toward Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 53 must first be understood within its own prophetic setting. The passage concerns the suffering servant who bears the transgressions and iniquities of others, and its language anticipates the redemptive suffering of the Messiah. Isaiah 53:5 declares, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." Verse 6 states that the LORD laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Philip recognized the fulfillment of that testimony in Jesus Christ. He did not invent an unrelated meaning because the Ethiopian happened to need an encouraging message. Neither did he pretend that the original prophetic context was irrelevant. The evangelist must recognize the relationship between prophetic revelation and its fulfillment without transferring every promise addressed to Israel into the Church Age. Scripture is not a jar of disconnected sentences from which a preacher may remove whichever words support his preferred conclusion. Every passage has a setting, an audience, and a meaning that must be respected.

The historical setting of Acts 8 also requires care. The chapter occurs during the transitional expansion of gospel ministry beyond Jerusalem, and it includes events concerning Samaria, the reception of the Holy Ghost, and water baptism. Those events should not be forced into a universal formula that contradicts the later doctrinal explanation of salvation and sealing in Ephesians 1:13. The lesson from Philip's personal evangelism is not that every recorded circumstance must be mechanically reproduced today. It is that the Scriptures supplied the foundation for his proclamation of Jesus Christ. An evangelist must understand the difference between explaining a historical event and turning every detail into a present command. Otherwise, he may preach a passage accurately enough to quote its words while misrepresenting its doctrinal application. Philip had one listener, one open passage, and a message concerning the Saviour. That was sufficient for genuine evangelistic instruction. The preacher who needs a thousand stories to explain what one passage plainly teaches has probably spent too much time decorating the sermon and too little time studying the text.

5. The Bereans Examined the Scriptures Instead of Worshipping the Messenger

Acts 17:10–12 records Paul's ministry among the Bereans, and the passage establishes a standard every congregation should practice. Acts 17:11 states, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." The historical setting concerns Jewish hearers in Berea examining the Scriptures in response to Paul's preaching concerning Jesus Christ. Their conduct is particularly significant because Paul was not an ordinary religious speaker with questionable credentials. He was an apostle of Jesus

Christ. Yet the Bereans were commended for examining the written revelation to determine whether his message agreed with it. They received the word with readiness while refusing to abandon scriptural examination. That combination is essential. A person can become so suspicious that he refuses to learn anything, or so impressed that he believes everything. The Bereans avoided both errors by remaining receptive and testing what they heard.

Consider what this means for modern evangelistic ministry. If Paul's preaching was examined against Scripture, no contemporary evangelist possesses a legitimate exemption from biblical scrutiny. A preacher may have decades of experience, an impressive testimony, a large following, and a reputation for powerful sermons, but none of those things makes his interpretations infallible. The congregation has both the right and responsibility to examine his teaching. First Thessalonians 5:21 declares, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” First John 4:1 warns believers not to believe every spirit but to try the spirits because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Biblical examination is not rebellion against legitimate ministerial authority. It is obedience to the authority that governs every minister. A faithful evangelist should welcome sincere questions about Scripture and willingly correct an error when the Book exposes it. The man who becomes angry whenever somebody opens a Bible to check his claims has revealed something troubling about the authority he actually recognizes.

The opposite approach produces congregations increasingly dependent upon personalities rather than Scripture. People begin defending a preacher's reputation before examining his doctrine. They excuse obvious contradictions because he possesses unusual speaking ability or because his ministry has existed for many years. Eventually, questioning the man becomes almost indistinguishable from questioning God. That is not biblical loyalty. It is religious confusion. First Corinthians 3:5 asks, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” The servants are instruments, not objects of devotion. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their divisions around ministerial personalities, and the same rebuke applies wherever modern Christians treat preachers like competing religious champions. The evangelist's task is to strengthen confidence in Scripture, not secure unquestioning allegiance to himself. A congregation that knows its preacher better than its Bible is prepared to defend the wrong authority whenever the two disagree.

6. Rightly Dividing Scripture Prevents the Evangelist From Preaching Doctrinal Confusion

Second Timothy 2:15 commands, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” That instruction establishes both the necessity of serious study and the responsibility of handling biblical

distinctions correctly. All Scripture is inspired, but not every passage addresses the same people under the same covenant or concerns the same dispensation. The evangelist must recognize who is speaking, who is being addressed, what circumstances govern the passage, and how its teaching relates to the present Church Age. Otherwise, the preacher may combine statements that belong to different historical settings and produce a doctrine that contradicts the biblical revelation as a whole. The Bible contains promises to Israel, instructions to the church, commands under the Mosaic law, revelations concerning the kingdom, and prophecies awaiting future fulfillment. Confusion results when a preacher treats those distinctions as obstacles instead of necessary parts of understanding. A man who refuses to read the address on the envelope should not complain when the contents make no sense.

Consider the distinction between Israel and the church. Jeremiah 31:31 explicitly identifies the house of Israel and the house of Judah in connection with the promised new covenant. Romans 11 maintains God's continuing purposes concerning Israel, while Ephesians 3 explains the revelation of the mystery concerning believing Jews and Gentiles in one body through Jesus Christ. These passages must be understood without teaching that the church has permanently replaced Israel or that national promises concerning Israel automatically belong to Gentile congregations. The same care applies when examining salvation in the book of Acts. Peter's address to Israel at Pentecost in Acts 2 belongs to its historical setting, while Paul's declaration of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4 and his teaching concerning salvation by grace through faith in Ephesians 2:8–9 establish the message proclaimed in the present Church Age. A preacher who combines every biblical statement about baptism, law, kingdom inheritance, and salvation without recognizing these distinctions can manufacture a religious obstacle course where Scripture presents the finished work of Christ.

Proper division also protects prophecy from becoming another casualty of careless preaching. The catching away of believers described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 must not be confused with every passage concerning Christ's visible return in judgment and the establishment of His kingdom. Daniel's prophetic program concerning Israel must not be erased by transferring its national details indiscriminately to the church. The judgment seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10 must be distinguished from the great white throne judgment in Revelation 20:11–15. These distinctions are not academic decorations reserved for people who enjoy elaborate charts. They preserve the meaning of God's revelation and prevent evangelists from teaching confusion while claiming biblical authority. Right division does not mean discarding passages that do not directly govern the believer's present position. Second Timothy 3:16 declares all Scripture profitable. It means understanding how each passage belongs within God's revealed purposes. The faithful workman does not

improve the Bible by rearranging its parts. He studies carefully enough to stop assembling doctrines from pieces that were never meant to be joined.

7. Experiences, Traditions, and Alleged Revelations Must Bow Before the Written Word

Isaiah 8:20 declares, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” The immediate context concerns the temptation to consult familiar spirits, wizards, and other forbidden sources instead of seeking the living God. Isaiah's warning was given within Israel's historical circumstances and must not be removed from that setting. Nevertheless, it establishes a principle demonstrated throughout Scripture: claims concerning divine truth must be tested against what God has revealed. The evangelist cannot establish doctrine through private impressions, dramatic dreams, supposed heavenly conversations, or experiences that contradict the written word. A remarkable experience may produce an unforgettable story, but memorability is not the same thing as divine authority. Deuteronomy 13:1–4 likewise warns Israel that even an impressive sign cannot justify following a message that turns people away from the LORD. God never authorized supernatural excitement to replace obedience to His revelation.

Personal testimonies can encourage believers and illustrate the consequences of biblical truth, but they must remain subordinate to Scripture. A preacher may describe how God delivered him from sin, sustained him through suffering, or provided opportunities for ministry. Such accounts can serve a useful purpose when they are truthful and properly understood. The difficulty begins when the testimony becomes the foundation of doctrine or when the preacher demands that everyone else reproduce his experience. Second Peter 1:16–21 is particularly instructive because Peter recalled his firsthand experience of Christ's glory and then directed attention to the sure word of prophecy and the divine origin of Scripture. The written revelation provides the standard by which spiritual claims must be examined. An evangelist who announces new revelations that contradict the Bible has no authority to demand belief merely because his account sounds extraordinary. Heaven has not authorized a second Bible delivered through somebody's imagination. A story may explain the truth, but it cannot become the truth merely because the preacher tells it with tears in his eyes.

Denominational traditions, celebrated ministers, and religious institutions must submit to the same examination. Mark 7:8–13 records Christ's rebuke of religious traditions that displaced God's commandments in their proper historical setting. Colossians 2:8 warns believers against being spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit according to the tradition of men rather than Christ. These passages expose the danger of allowing inherited customs to govern doctrine without scriptural warrant. The evangelist should respect

faithful servants and learn from sound teachers, but he must never surrender the authority of Scripture to a ministerial personality. Neither should he demand personal loyalty as the price of receiving biblical instruction. Galatians 1:8 places even an angel from heaven beneath the already delivered gospel. That leaves remarkably little room for a preacher claiming special exemption from scriptural examination. If his doctrine is correct, the Bible will support it. If his doctrine is false, applause cannot rescue it. The preacher's reputation may deserve consideration, but it never deserves sovereignty. The Book remains the final authority.

Conclusion

The evangelist has been entrusted with something infinitely more important than his own reputation. Second Timothy 3 establishes the divine inspiration and usefulness of Scripture, while Second Timothy 4 commands the faithful proclamation of that word regardless of changing religious appetites. Philip demonstrated how biblical evangelism begins with the written revelation and directs the hearer toward Jesus Christ. The Bereans demonstrated how responsible listeners examine the Scriptures even when the messenger possesses apostolic authority. Isaiah's warning demonstrates the danger of seeking religious guidance apart from God's revealed truth. Together, these passages establish a standard that no evangelist has authority to revise. The preacher must know the Book, believe the Book, rightly divide the Book, and proclaim what the Book actually teaches. His stories may illustrate, his experiences may encourage, and his abilities may assist communication, but none of those things can establish doctrine independently of Scripture. The congregation needs divine truth, not a personality powerful enough to make error sound convincing.

This standard places responsibility upon both the evangelist and those who hear him. The preacher must study diligently, interpret passages in their proper setting, distinguish Israel from the church, preserve salvation by grace through faith, and resist the temptation to exchange doctrine for audience approval. The congregation must refuse to become spiritually lazy merely because an impressive speaker occupies the pulpit. Every believer should develop sufficient familiarity with Scripture to recognize the gospel, identify obvious contradictions, and examine what is taught. Parents should teach their children to respect faithful ministers without imagining that ministers are incapable of error. Churches should encourage questions grounded in Scripture rather than cultivate fear of biblical examination. And evangelists should welcome the kind of serious attention that characterized the Bereans. A ministry that grows stronger when people open their Bibles is worth encouraging. A ministry that depends upon people keeping their Bibles closed has

already disclosed the weakness of its foundation. The word of God can survive examination; religious pretense usually prefers immunity.

The final issue is one of authority, and every preacher must settle it before he stands before another congregation. Is the written word of God sufficient to govern the message, or must the evangelist supplement it with personal revelations, inherited traditions, entertaining performances, and unquestionable claims of spiritual importance? Paul answered that question when he declared that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and commanded Timothy to preach the word. Philip answered it when he began with Isaiah and preached Jesus. The Bereans answered it when they searched the Scriptures daily. The evangelist who follows their example will not require an audience to surrender its judgment to his personality. He will demand that his own preaching submit to the authority of the Bible. He may be eloquent or ordinary, famous or obscure, welcomed or rejected, but the standard remains unchanged. His responsibility is not to manufacture truth, revise revelation, or persuade congregations that his opinions possess divine authority. His responsibility is to proclaim faithfully what God has written. A microphone can make a preacher louder, a reputation can make him popular, and a dramatic testimony can make him memorable, but only the word of God can make his message authoritative. The preacher is not above the Book. He is under it. And if his preaching cannot survive an open Bible, it has no business surviving in the pulpit.

4 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – Public Preaching in a World That Does Not Want to Hear

Key Passage: 2 Timothy 4:2 (KJV)

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Introduction

The New Testament evangelist was never commanded to wait until the world became comfortable with the gospel before opening his mouth. If that had been the requirement, the apostles would still be standing somewhere in Jerusalem waiting for a favorable public opinion poll. Jesus Christ was crucified by wicked hands, Stephen was stoned for his testimony, Paul was beaten and imprisoned, and the early believers encountered opposition almost everywhere the gospel challenged established religion. Yet the message continued moving. Acts 8:4 declares, “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went

every where preaching the word." There was no advertising agency arranging favorable publicity, no committee negotiating acceptable language with the opposition, and no guarantee that the audience would appreciate what it heard. Those believers possessed something more important than public approval. They possessed the word of God and understood that the truth needed to be proclaimed. The gospel was not designed to spend its entire existence inside a comfortable building while the lost world continued toward judgment without hearing it.

We have reached a peculiar condition in modern Christianity when some religious organizations can organize conferences, purchase equipment, maintain elaborate buildings, broadcast impressive productions, and develop sophisticated promotional campaigns, yet appear almost paralyzed at the thought of telling an unbeliever plainly how to be saved. The machinery is impressive, but somebody has misplaced the message. A congregation may spend thousands of dollars improving the sound system while possessing almost no organized effort to carry the gospel beyond its own property. Meanwhile, an evangelist can become so accustomed to speaking before friendly audiences that an encounter with genuine opposition seems like a ministerial emergency. Public preaching was never intended to depend upon comfortable circumstances. The New Testament records the gospel being proclaimed in synagogues, marketplaces, cities, private homes, prisons, and other places where people could be reached. The question was not whether the surroundings were fashionable. The question was whether sinners could hear the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, public preaching must not be confused with public foolishness. The Bible teaches that the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who perish, but that does not authorize a preacher to behave like a fool and then blame the resulting opposition upon the wickedness of the world. There is a considerable difference between offending sinners with biblical truth and offending everybody with unnecessary arrogance, theatrical stupidity, or personal insults. A man can stand on a street corner shouting religious accusations until pedestrians avoid him, but their avoidance does not automatically establish that he has suffered persecution for righteousness' sake. Genuine evangelism requires courage, sound doctrine, preparation, discernment, and a willingness to speak the truth without manipulating or unnecessarily provoking the audience. The objective is not to manufacture a confrontation that produces an impressive story for the next church meeting. The objective is to make Jesus Christ known. The preacher was commissioned to proclaim the gospel, not to become the loudest disturbance in the neighborhood.

1. The Gospel Was Carried Into the World, Not Confined to a Religious Building

Acts 8 begins with the persecution that followed Stephen's death. Saul was consenting unto his death, and a great persecution arose against the church at Jerusalem. The believers were scattered throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, while the apostles remained at Jerusalem. Verse 4 records the remarkable consequence: “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” The historical setting matters. This was the early period of the church's expansion, and the events in Acts were unfolding as the gospel spread beyond Jerusalem according to the divine purpose announced in Acts 1:8. The scattered believers were not conducting a carefully organized evangelistic conference. They were responding to persecution while carrying the word of God into new places. Their circumstances changed, but their responsibility to testify did not disappear. The enemies of the gospel attempted to scatter the Christians, and the Christians carried the message wherever they went. Persecution intended to suppress the testimony became an occasion for its wider proclamation.

Notice also that Acts 8:4 does not restrict this activity to the apostles. Verse 1 specifically records that the apostles remained in Jerusalem, while the scattered believers went everywhere preaching the word. That distinction demonstrates that publicly making Christ known was not reserved exclusively for men occupying a particular ministerial office. Ephesians 4:11 identifies evangelists among the gifts Christ gave His church, but the existence of that particular ministry never relieved ordinary believers of their responsibility to witness. A Christian does not need a famous name, an elaborate title, or a professional speaking career before telling another person about Jesus Christ. The evangelist may possess a recognized calling and particular ability for gospel proclamation, yet his example should encourage other believers rather than persuade them that witnessing belongs exclusively to professionals. The church is not a stadium filled with spectators watching one religious athlete perform. Every believer should understand the gospel well enough to explain the Saviour to someone who needs salvation.

The broader New Testament record confirms that gospel ministry was never permanently confined to one preferred location. Acts 5:42 records the apostles teaching and preaching Jesus Christ daily “in the temple, and in every house.” Acts 17 shows Paul reasoning in a synagogue and speaking with people in the marketplace. Acts 20:20 records Paul's testimony that he taught publicly and from house to house. These passages describe different historical circumstances and ministerial responsibilities, but together they demonstrate the legitimate use of varied opportunities to communicate biblical truth. The issue is not whether a church building is useful. It certainly is. The issue is whether the church has mistaken the building for the entire field of ministry. A meetinghouse is a place where believers assemble; it is not a fence around the gospel. When the church becomes

satisfied with reaching only those who already know where the church building is located, it has confused maintaining an address with fulfilling a mission.

2. Philip Went Into Samaria and Preached Christ to the People

Acts 8:5 declares, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.” That statement identifies both the activity and the central message of a genuine evangelist. Philip entered a place with a complicated religious and historical relationship to the Jews, and he proclaimed Jesus Christ. The Samaritans were not simply another congregation of Jerusalem believers waiting for a visiting preacher. The division between Jews and Samaritans had deep historical roots, as John 4:9 makes clear when the Samaritan woman questioned why Jesus, being a Jew, requested water from her. Philip's ministry therefore represented a significant geographical and religious expansion of the testimony concerning Christ. He did not wait for every historical grievance to be resolved before preaching. Neither did he begin by making the controversy between Jews and Samaritans the center of his message. He preached Christ, because the saving significance of Jesus Christ was infinitely greater than the prejudices separating the communities.

Acts 8:6 records that the people gave heed with one accord to the things Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles he performed. The chapter describes unclean spirits being cast out and people receiving healing, producing great joy in that city. These miracles belong to the historical setting of Acts and must not be converted into a compulsory requirement for every evangelist in the present Church Age. The transitional events associated with the gospel's expansion into Samaria are important, particularly when the apostles later came from Jerusalem and the Samaritan believers received the Holy Ghost in the circumstances described in Acts 8:14–17. The evangelist must rightly divide the word of truth rather than use those events to manufacture modern miracle-selling operations. What remains unmistakable is Philip's proclamation of Christ. The signs in that historical setting accompanied the ministry; they did not authorize replacing its central message. A preacher who possesses a collection of astonishing stories but cannot explain salvation has retained the excitement while misplacing the gospel.

Acts 8:12 states that the Samaritans believed Philip's preaching concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and they were baptized. This verse should be read in its historical context without carelessly transferring every distinctive event in Acts into an identical present-day procedure. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that Philip communicated definite truth capable of being understood and believed. Public preaching is not merely making religious noise in the presence of unbelievers. It involves conveying intelligible biblical content. The listeners must have an opportunity to understand who Jesus Christ is

and why His message matters. A man can occupy a busy street for three hours and communicate remarkably little if his attention remains fixed upon insulting passersby or advertising his own courage. Philip went to Samaria with Christ as his subject, and the historical record identifies what he preached. The successful evangelist is not the man who attracts the most attention to himself, but the man who makes the Saviour impossible to overlook in his message.

3. Paul Preached in the Synagogue and Marketplace Without Surrendering the Truth

Acts 17:16–17 records Paul's response when he arrived in Athens and observed a city given to idolatry. His spirit was stirred within him, and he disputed in the synagogue with the Jews and devout persons, and in the marketplace daily with those who met him. Paul did not interpret the city's idolatry as a reason to retreat into silence. Neither did he confine his ministry to people already sympathetic toward his message. He engaged religious hearers in the synagogue and ordinary public conversation in the marketplace. The historical circumstances concerned an apostle carrying the gospel among Gentiles during the expansion recorded in Acts, but the example demonstrates that public witness can occur in more than one setting. Paul recognized opportunities to address people where they actually gathered. The marketplace was not a substitute sanctuary requiring every pedestrian to behave like a church member. It was an opportunity to communicate truth among people who did not necessarily share his convictions.

The reaction was not universally favorable. Acts 17:18 records certain philosophers describing Paul as a babbler, while others questioned his preaching concerning Jesus and the resurrection. Paul encountered the intellectual pride of men who possessed enough philosophy to discuss almost anything but lacked understanding of the true God. His message eventually brought him before the Areopagus, where he addressed the religious condition of Athens. In Acts 17:22–23, Paul observed their religious practices and referred to an altar bearing the inscription “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” He used that observation as a point of contact, not as an endorsement of their idolatry. The distinction matters. Paul understood his audience sufficiently to expose its ignorance through a subject the people already recognized. That is discernment, not compromise. A preacher who refuses to understand what his listeners believe may spend an entire sermon answering questions nobody asked while leaving their actual errors untouched. Knowing the audience does not require surrendering biblical truth; it helps direct that truth where correction is needed.

Paul's sermon did not finish with admiration for Athenian philosophy. He proclaimed the Creator, rejected the notion that God could be contained in temples made with hands, condemned the ignorance of idolatry, and announced that God commanded all men everywhere to repent. Acts 17:31 identifies the coming judgment and the resurrection of

the appointed Man as central to Paul's proclamation. The audience responded in different ways. Some mocked, others expressed interest in hearing more, and certain individuals believed. Paul did not secure unanimous approval, and the record does not suggest that he considered his preaching a failure because some listeners rejected the resurrection. The evangelist must understand this distinction. He is responsible for faithfully communicating truth, not controlling every response. Paul did not travel to Athens to win a popularity contest among philosophers. He went there carrying a message that their philosophy could not supply: the living God had raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

4. The Foolishness of Preaching Is Not Permission for Foolish Preachers

First Corinthians 1:18 declares, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” Paul was addressing the contrast between divine revelation and the worldly wisdom that rejected God's method of salvation. Verse 21 explains that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. That does not mean God considers biblical preaching foolish in itself, nor does it suggest that stupidity becomes a ministerial qualification. The message appears foolish to the unbelieving world because human wisdom refuses to accept God's appointed means of redemption. The cross confronts man's pride by declaring that salvation cannot be earned through intellectual achievement, religious observance, or moral superiority. It requires faith in a crucified and risen Saviour. The offense lies in the message and what it reveals concerning human sin and divine grace, not in the preacher's ability to manufacture an embarrassing public exhibition.

First Corinthians 1:22–24 continues by contrasting the Jews who required a sign and the Greeks who sought wisdom with the apostolic proclamation of Christ crucified. Paul recognized that different audiences possessed different expectations, yet he refused to replace the message to satisfy either demand. This provides an essential correction to modern evangelistic methods. Some preachers attempt to impress audiences through alleged supernatural spectacles. Others abandon doctrinal substance to appear sophisticated before educated listeners. Still others mistake needless hostility for biblical boldness, imagining that the more people they offend personally, the more faithful their ministry must be. None of those approaches follows Paul's argument. The gospel itself confronts unbelief, but the preacher must not add unnecessary obstacles through arrogance or disorderly behavior. A man who insults a stranger's appearance, mocks his family, or blocks his path and then receives an angry response has not necessarily experienced persecution. He may simply have discovered that bad manners produce predictable consequences.

Scripture provides the proper balance. Colossians 4:5–6 commands believers to walk in wisdom toward those without and to let their speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. First Peter 3:15 instructs believers to be ready to answer with meekness and fear. These passages do not cancel the commands to reprove, rebuke, or proclaim uncomfortable truth. They govern the spirit and manner in which truth is communicated. Biblical courage is not measured by the number of unnecessary arguments a preacher can provoke. It is demonstrated when he faithfully declares the message despite genuine opposition. Public preaching requires discernment concerning location, audience, language, volume, and the possibility of meaningful communication. The evangelist should neither compromise biblical truth to avoid offense nor manufacture personal offense to advertise his bravery. If people reject the preacher because he faithfully proclaims Christ, he must endure it. If they reject him because he behaves like a fool, he should stop congratulating himself and correct his conduct.

5. Faith Comes by Hearing the Word of God, Not by Witnessing a Religious Spectacle

Romans 10:13 declares, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Paul immediately develops the necessity of believing, hearing, and preaching. Verse 14 asks how people shall call upon Him in whom they have not believed, how they shall believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how they shall hear without a preacher. Verse 17 supplies the conclusion: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The immediate context concerns Paul's discussion of Israel and the righteousness of God, including Israel's failure to submit to God's righteousness through faith. Those historical and doctrinal circumstances must be respected. Nevertheless, the principle concerning hearing God's word establishes the central necessity of intelligible gospel proclamation. People must hear the truth concerning Jesus Christ in order to believe upon Him. The evangelist therefore has a message to communicate, not merely a spectacle to present. Noise may attract attention, but noise cannot substitute for understanding.

This raises an important question about public preaching that is frequently overlooked. Are people actually hearing and understanding the gospel, or are they merely becoming aware that a religious person is making noise nearby? There is nothing inherently unbiblical about using a raised voice, amplification, or a public location where many people can hear. Practical circumstances may require those things. But volume must serve communication rather than replace it. The apostle Paul explained the necessity of understandable speech in 1 Corinthians 14:9, asking how people could know what was spoken if the words were not easy to understand. Although that chapter specifically addresses order and spiritual gifts in the assembly, its concern for intelligibility supplies a useful practical consideration.

A preacher who speaks loudly enough to interrupt a neighborhood but communicates too poorly to explain salvation has confused visibility with effectiveness. The gospel does not become more accurate when transmitted at an unbearable volume.

The content of public proclamation must remain the gospel identified in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Romans 3:23 establishes the sinner's guilt, Romans 5:8 declares God's love demonstrated through Christ's death, and Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith apart from works. These truths should be communicated clearly enough that an unbeliever can understand the need for salvation and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. The evangelist may address sin, judgment, repentance, and the consequences of unbelief without turning every encounter into an uncontrolled argument. He should also be capable of answering sincere questions and opening the Scriptures with individuals who desire further explanation. Public preaching and personal evangelism are not enemies competing for importance. Each can serve the same biblical objective. The purpose of the preacher's voice is not to prove how loudly he can speak, but to carry a message important enough that the world needs to hear it.

6. Preach in Season and Out of Season Without Changing the Message

Second Timothy 4:2 commands, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” Paul issued this charge to Timothy in the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the quick and the dead. The solemn setting removes any suggestion that preaching is merely an optional activity performed when circumstances are favorable. Timothy was to remain faithful when the message was welcomed and when it was rejected. The command did not authorize careless preparation, reckless disregard for legitimate circumstances, or unnecessary confrontation. It established that the preacher's duty must not be governed by the world's approval. An evangelist who changes his doctrine whenever the audience becomes uncomfortable has appointed public opinion as his final authority. That arrangement may produce a successful career, but it is a disastrous foundation for Christian ministry. The word of God must govern the message in every season, even when a different message would produce a larger crowd.

Paul explains the approaching danger in 2 Timothy 4:3–4, warning that people would refuse sound doctrine, accumulate teachers according to their own lusts, and turn away from truth unto fables. The warning exposes the connection between false teachers and audiences willing to support them. People who want their sins excused can usually locate someone willing to supply religious permission. Those who demand constant entertainment can find a preacher prepared to convert the pulpit into a stage. Those who

prefer political excitement to biblical instruction can find speakers capable of keeping them stirred up without explaining the Scriptures. The evangelist must refuse to become the religious employee of every changing appetite. He may address important contemporary issues when Scripture requires it, but the gospel must not become a minor feature buried beneath subjects chosen primarily because they attract attention. The preacher who measures truth by applause will eventually discover that a crowd can reward him for preaching exactly what it should have been warned against.

Verse 5 completes the charge: “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” Those commands establish vigilance, endurance, responsibility, and faithful completion as essential features of ministry. Opposition is not automatically evidence of failure, but neither is opposition automatically evidence of faithfulness. The evangelist must examine whether he is suffering for the truth or experiencing consequences created by his own misconduct. Paul himself provides an example of discernment in Acts 17, where he communicated directly without abandoning the gospel, and in Acts 22, where he used his lawful Roman citizenship when confronted with unjust treatment. Biblical courage does not require a preacher to ignore lawful protections or manufacture avoidable danger. There are times to speak publicly, times to answer personally, and circumstances requiring wisdom concerning where and how to continue. The command remains to preach the word. It does not command the evangelist to confuse stubbornness with spirituality or theatrical conflict with endurance.

7. The Church Must Take the Gospel Beyond Its Walls Without Turning Outreach Into a Circus

A local church has legitimate responsibilities concerning worship, doctrine, fellowship, ordinances, discipleship, and the care of believers. Acts 2:42 identifies the early disciples as continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Ephesians 4:11–16 describes Christ's gifts for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of His body. Those responsibilities must not be neglected in the name of evangelism. Nevertheless, a church that becomes so occupied with maintaining its own internal activities that it rarely communicates the gospel to unbelievers has neglected an important part of its calling. Second Corinthians 5:18–20 describes the ministry and word of reconciliation entrusted to believers and presents them as ambassadors for Christ. That responsibility requires more than maintaining an attractive building and hoping that lost people eventually discover the schedule. The congregation must be equipped and encouraged to carry the gospel into ordinary life, where its members encounter neighbors, coworkers, relatives, and strangers who need Christ.

Practical opportunities may include outdoor preaching, neighborhood visitation, gospel literature, personal conversations, public meetings, and other lawful and appropriate means of reaching people. No single method should be elevated into a universal test of spirituality. Scripture records public preaching, private instruction, and personal encounters, demonstrating that circumstances can differ without altering the central message. Churches should prepare believers to explain salvation clearly, answer common objections, and conduct themselves honorably before unbelievers. They should also respect legitimate boundaries concerning private property, safety, public access, and the ordinary rights of others. Deliberately blocking entrances, harassing people who refuse conversation, or provoking authorities merely to produce a dramatic persecution story does not improve the gospel. Christian liberty is not permission for ministerial foolishness. A faithful church can be bold without being disorderly, persistent without being abusive, and unmistakably biblical without turning every public encounter into a religious shouting match.

The evangelist can serve local churches by helping believers recover confidence in biblical outreach. He should demonstrate how to explain the gospel, open Scripture with an interested listener, answer reasonable questions, and remain composed when others disagree. His ministry should leave congregations better prepared to witness after he departs. He must not cultivate the impression that evangelism requires his particular personality, expensive equipment, or continual supervision. Nor should he reduce outreach to attendance statistics and impressive photographs. A church may distribute thousands of tracts without carefully considering whether its members can explain the contents. Another may organize an elaborate campaign yet fail to follow up with anyone expressing genuine interest. These weaknesses call for sound instruction rather than promotional exaggeration. The church does not exist to provide an audience for the evangelist, and the evangelist does not exist to decorate the church calendar. Both should be concerned that sinners hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

The New Testament record presents public gospel proclamation as a legitimate and necessary part of Christian ministry. Acts 8 demonstrates believers carrying the word beyond Jerusalem and Philip preaching Christ in Samaria. Acts 17 records Paul reasoning in the synagogue, speaking in the marketplace, and proclaiming the true God before an audience shaped by idolatry and philosophy. First Corinthians 1 establishes that the preaching of the cross confronts worldly wisdom because salvation rests upon God's provision rather than human achievement. Romans 10 demonstrates the necessity of hearing the word of God in order to believe. Second Timothy 4 commands faithful

preaching regardless of whether the surrounding circumstances are favorable. These passages provide a biblical foundation for public evangelism without requiring every believer to employ identical methods or reproduce every historical detail recorded in Acts. The message remains central. The circumstances may change, the audience may differ, and the reception may vary, but the evangelist's responsibility is to make Jesus Christ known faithfully.

The world does not owe the preacher applause, comfortable surroundings, an agreeable audience, or immunity from criticism. Unbelievers may reject the message because they reject the authority of Scripture, dislike the exposure of sin, or refuse the salvation offered through Jesus Christ. The evangelist must accept that possibility without compromising the gospel. At the same time, he must remain honest enough to distinguish rejection of Christ from rejection of his own unnecessary misconduct. A preacher does not prove spiritual courage by insulting people who cannot escape his attention, and he does not establish biblical faithfulness by making himself the center of every confrontation. He should prepare carefully, preach accurately, speak understandably, and exercise wisdom concerning the opportunities before him. When sincere listeners ask questions, he should answer from Scripture. When people mock, he should remain faithful. When opportunities close, he should continue seeking legitimate ways to proclaim the truth. The world may be hostile to the gospel, but hostility does not relieve the preacher of his obligation to conduct himself honorably.

The final question is not whether public preaching remains fashionable in an increasingly confused religious world. The question is whether Christians will continue proclaiming the message Christ entrusted to His servants. The cross has not changed, the resurrection has not been overturned, and the gospel has not lost its power because unbelieving men consider it foolish. The sinner still needs salvation, and salvation still comes through faith in Jesus Christ. The evangelist must therefore refuse the temptation to exchange biblical proclamation for religious entertainment or to confuse unnecessary public disturbance with genuine spiritual courage. His duty is to preach the word, explain the gospel, endure opposition, and make full proof of his ministry. Churches should strengthen that work rather than confining their concern for lost souls to the occasional special meeting. The gospel belongs wherever legitimate opportunities exist for people to hear and understand it. The streets do not need another religious celebrity demanding attention, and the churches do not need another entertainer collecting applause. The world needs to hear about Jesus Christ. The preacher was not commissioned to make himself notorious, but to make the Saviour known. The gospel is not confined to four walls, and the command to preach the word has never been cancelled by the world's refusal to listen.

5 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – One Sinner, One Bible, and a Soul Worth Reaching

Key Passage: Acts 8:30–35 (KJV)

“And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”

Introduction

An evangelist who can preach to five thousand people but cannot explain salvation to one confused sinner has an impressive platform and a serious problem. Somewhere along the way, modern religion developed the strange notion that the importance of an evangelistic opportunity can be measured by the size of the audience, the expense of the equipment, and the number of people available to photograph the results. A preacher addressing a packed auditorium is considered successful before he opens his Bible, while a Christian explaining salvation to one interested stranger barely receives a mention. Apparently, the religious bookkeeping department has decided that souls become more valuable when they arrive in large quantities. The New Testament does not operate by that arithmetic. In Acts 8, Philip preached Christ in Samaria, where multitudes heard his message. Yet the same chapter records him traveling into a desert to explain the Scriptures to one Ethiopian eunuch. One man, one open passage, one opportunity to preach Jesus Christ. Heaven did not regard that encounter as a minor assignment.

The account of Philip and the Ethiopian reveals something frequently missing from modern evangelistic programs: genuine concern for the individual sinner who needs understanding. Philip did not approach the man with a manufactured sales presentation, a predetermined number of questions, or a religious formula designed to produce an immediate response. He heard the man reading Isaiah, asked whether he understood the passage, listened to his answer, and explained the Scripture that was troubling him. The Ethiopian was not treated like a number waiting to be entered into an impressive ministry report. He was a man with a genuine question concerning God's revelation. Philip had enough biblical knowledge to answer him and enough concern to give him personal attention. That combination is worth

more than an auditorium filled with people who have been emotionally stirred but never properly instructed. A preacher who cannot recognize the difference between genuine faith and a pressured religious performance should not be trusted to manufacture salvation statistics.

The Scriptures provide additional examples of personal instruction that deserve careful examination. Jesus spoke with Nicodemus about the new birth and confronted the Samaritan woman with truth concerning her spiritual condition. Paul and Silas answered the Philippian jailer's urgent question about salvation with the command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jude distinguishes the need for compassion and the seriousness of warning those endangered by sin and falsehood. These passages belong to different historical circumstances, and their doctrinal distinctions must be preserved rather than mixed together carelessly. Nevertheless, they establish that personal evangelism requires biblical knowledge, spiritual discernment, honest communication, and concern for the individual. The objective is not to obtain a quick profession that satisfies the preacher. The objective is to make Jesus Christ known so that the sinner understands and believes the truth. A single soul is not a small audience when the subject is eternal life.

1. Philip Left the Multitudes Behind to Reach One Man in the Desert

Acts 8:26 begins with an extraordinary instruction: “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” The setting is important. Philip had been preaching in Samaria, where the people had responded to his proclamation of Christ. Acts 8:6 records multitudes giving heed to his preaching, and verse 8 declares that there was great joy in that city. From the standpoint of ordinary religious calculation, Philip was involved in precisely the kind of ministry that ought to attract attention. People were listening, remarkable events were occurring, and the work was advancing. Yet the historical narrative next directs attention to a desert road and an individual traveler. The account does not present an argument that large meetings are unimportant. It demonstrates that God's work cannot be measured merely by the number of people gathered in one location.

Verse 27 records Philip's response: “And he arose and went.” That simple statement deserves more attention than the elaborate excuses religious people sometimes construct when presented with an opportunity to obey God. Philip did not insist upon an explanation of the entire journey before moving. He did not demand a guarantee of a large audience or an assurance that his efforts would produce an impressive public report. The account then introduces an Ethiopian eunuch, a man of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, responsible for her treasure. He had traveled to Jerusalem to worship and was returning in his chariot while reading the prophet Isaiah. Here was a man possessing

considerable worldly responsibility and access to Scripture, yet still lacking an understanding of the passage before him. His official position could not supply spiritual understanding. A man may be trusted with a queen's treasure and still need somebody to explain the riches of God's word.

Acts 8:29 continues, “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” The supernatural direction given to Philip belongs to the historical record and should not be converted into a promise that every Christian today will receive audible instructions concerning whom to approach. God has already supplied written commandments governing gospel witness, and believers must not invent private revelations to justify ordinary obedience. The practical lesson is unmistakable: Philip responded to the opportunity before him. He approached the traveler rather than remaining occupied with thoughts of his former audience. Modern believers do not need to manufacture miraculous guidance before explaining the gospel to an interested person. They need knowledge of Scripture, willingness to speak, and wisdom concerning the circumstances. The Lord's work is not too important for an audience of one, and a preacher who considers personal evangelism beneath his dignity has become considerably more important in his own imagination than he is in the Bible.

2. The First Question Was About Understanding, Not Getting a Decision

Acts 8:30 records Philip running to the chariot and hearing the Ethiopian read the prophet Isaiah. His opening question was direct: “Understandest thou what thou readest?” That is an excellent example of personal evangelism beginning with the actual spiritual need of the individual. Philip did not immediately launch into a speech unrelated to what the man was reading. He did not assume that possessing Scripture meant understanding Scripture, nor did he treat the Ethiopian's confusion as an excuse for ridicule. He asked a question that opened the door for biblical instruction. The answer was equally revealing: “How can I, except some man should guide me?” The Ethiopian recognized his need for explanation and invited Philip to sit with him. There was willingness to learn on one side and readiness to teach on the other. The result was a conversation centered upon the written word of God rather than the personalities involved.

The importance of listening should not be overlooked. A Christian speaking with an unbeliever ought to determine what the individual actually understands about sin, Jesus Christ, the resurrection, and salvation. Some people have never heard a clear presentation of the gospel. Others have spent years beneath religious teaching that mixed grace with ceremonies, law-keeping, or human merit. Still others possess fragments of biblical knowledge without understanding how those truths fit together. An effective witness should not assume that every person needs the identical explanation delivered in precisely

the same manner. The message must remain unchanged, but the necessary instruction will differ according to the listener's confusion. Proverbs 18:13 warns, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” A preacher who answers questions nobody asked while ignoring the question directly before him may be speaking continuously without teaching anybody anything.

Personal evangelism also requires respect for the difference between an available opportunity and an unwilling audience. The Ethiopian invited Philip to join him, providing a clear opening for further conversation. Scripture does not authorize Christians to bully strangers, ignore reasonable refusals, or manipulate people into religious discussions against their will. Neither does it require silence whenever a conversation becomes uncomfortable. Wisdom recognizes when to explain, when to answer an objection, and when to discontinue an unproductive exchange. Colossians 4:6 instructs believers to let their speech be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that they may know how to answer every man. The evangelist should possess enough confidence in Scripture that he does not need to overpower the listener to defend the message. A man who cannot listen long enough to discover another person's confusion should not be surprised when his carefully rehearsed presentation produces more confusion than understanding.

3. Philip Opened Isaiah 53 and Preached Jesus Christ

The passage the Ethiopian was reading concerned the suffering servant described in Isaiah 53. Acts 8:32–33 records words concerning a sheep led to the slaughter and One whose life was taken from the earth. The Ethiopian asked Philip, “I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?” That question provided an opportunity to explain the prophetic testimony concerning the Messiah. Isaiah 53:5 declares, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Verse 6 continues by declaring that the LORD laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. The passage concerns the suffering of the One who bears the sins of others. Philip did not need to manufacture an interpretation or invent a dramatic experience to make the passage meaningful. The Scripture already possessed the answer.

Acts 8:35 supplies the decisive statement: “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” Observe the sequence. Philip recognized the passage, understood its subject, and directed the Ethiopian toward Jesus Christ. He did not begin with his own biography, the success of his work in Samaria, or the extraordinary circumstances that had brought him to the desert road. The Scripture provided the foundation, and Christ supplied the subject. This remains essential to gospel proclamation. First Corinthians 15:1–4 identifies the death of Christ for our sins, His burial,

and His resurrection the third day according to the Scriptures. The evangelist must explain why Christ died, what His resurrection accomplished, and how sinners receive salvation through faith. A person cannot place saving confidence in a gospel he has never understood. The preacher's responsibility is not to impress the listener with biblical terminology but to explain the truth those words convey.

The remainder of Acts 8 must be interpreted carefully because the chapter belongs to the transitional events following Christ's resurrection and ascension. Verse 37, as preserved in the King James Bible, records the Ethiopian's confession: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Baptism follows in the historical narrative. That sequence must not be manipulated into making water baptism the means by which a sinner purchases or completes justification in the present Church Age. Paul distinguishes his gospel commission from baptism in 1 Corinthians 1:17, while Ephesians 1:13 identifies believing the gospel as the occasion of the believer's sealing with the Holy Spirit. The account of Philip and the Ethiopian supplies a valuable example of scriptural explanation and personal faith without authorizing careless confusion between dispensational settings. The evangelist must know where the passage belongs before telling the sinner what it requires. A Bible opened without understanding can become just as dangerous as a Bible left closed.

4. Nicodemus Needed the New Birth, Not Another Religious Achievement

John 3 introduces Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews who came to Jesus by night. Unlike the Ethiopian traveler, Nicodemus approached the Lord with considerable religious knowledge and recognized standing among his people. He acknowledged that Jesus was a teacher come from God because of the miracles He performed. Yet Christ immediately confronted him with a truth his religious qualifications could not supply: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus possessed religious education, familiarity with the law, and public responsibility, but none of those advantages eliminated his spiritual need. This conversation occurred during Christ's earthly ministry to Israel, before His death and resurrection, and its kingdom language must be respected. Nevertheless, the necessity of spiritual life from God remains fundamental. Religious position cannot manufacture regeneration. A man may possess enough religious credentials to cover an office wall and still need the life that only God can give.

Nicodemus misunderstood Christ's statement by asking whether a man could enter his mother's womb a second time. Jesus explained the distinction between flesh and Spirit, declaring in John 3:6, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The Lord was not describing an improved version of natural human life or encouraging Nicodemus to become a more accomplished Pharisee. He was explaining the

necessity of a birth that human effort cannot produce. The conversation exposes the weakness of religious systems that substitute ceremonies, morality, ancestry, or institutional membership for spiritual life. The flesh cannot manufacture the new birth by improving its behavior. Nicodemus needed more than a revised religious program. He needed to understand what God alone could accomplish. Religion can polish the outside of a man until he shines like a freshly painted tombstone, but polishing cannot produce life where life is absent.

Jesus then directed Nicodemus toward the necessity of the Son of man's being lifted up, referring in John 3:14 to Moses lifting the serpent in the wilderness. The historical reference belongs to Numbers 21, where Israelites bitten by serpents were directed to look upon the appointed provision. Christ used that event to explain the significance of His own coming sacrifice. John 3:15–16 establishes that those believing in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The complete apostolic declaration of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection would be proclaimed following those accomplished events, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15. We must not pretend Nicodemus was receiving an identical presentation of every later Pauline doctrine before Calvary occurred. But neither should we miss the clear emphasis upon faith in the Son of God. Personal evangelism must identify the listener's actual problem. Nicodemus did not need another religious title. He needed to recognize that eternal life comes from God through Jesus Christ.

5. The Samaritan Woman Needed Living Water, Not Religious Flattery

John 4 records another personal conversation, this time between Jesus Christ and a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The historical circumstances differ significantly from those involving Nicodemus. She was not presented as a respected Jewish religious ruler, and the relationship between Jews and Samaritans created an additional barrier to ordinary social interaction. Yet Christ spoke with her directly, beginning with a request for water. When she questioned why a Jewish man would ask her for a drink, Jesus directed the conversation toward the gift of God and the living water He could provide. John 4:14 records His promise that the water He gives would become a well springing up into everlasting life. Christ did not need an elaborate public platform to communicate eternal truth. He used an ordinary circumstance to introduce a subject of everlasting importance. The encounter demonstrates that personal evangelism can begin naturally without becoming shallow or surrendering its biblical purpose.

The conversation did not remain at the level of pleasant religious conversation. Jesus told the woman to call her husband, and her answer exposed an important matter in her life. He revealed that she had had five husbands and that the man she presently had was not her husband. Christ did not ignore sin to avoid discomfort, but neither did He turn the

encounter into a public humiliation designed to demonstrate His superiority. He dealt truthfully with the woman and continued directing her toward spiritual understanding. This provides an important correction to both extremes found in modern witnessing. Some Christians avoid mentioning sin altogether, as though sinners can appreciate salvation without understanding their need. Others appear determined to discover every shameful detail of a stranger's life before offering an explanation of the gospel. Neither approach is required. Biblical truth exposes sin because sin makes salvation necessary, not because the evangelist enjoys conducting a personal investigation. The preacher was sent to bring sinners to Christ, not to audition for the position of prosecuting attorney over every stranger he meets.

The woman eventually raised the dispute concerning the proper place of worship. Jesus answered by distinguishing the historical position of the Jews and explaining that true worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth. John 4:22 records His statement, “salvation is of the Jews,” a truth that must not be erased by pretending Israel's historical and covenantal distinctions never existed. When she spoke of the coming Messiah, Christ answered, “I that speak unto thee am he.” The conversation had moved from an ordinary request for water to the identity of the promised Christ. The woman subsequently went into the city and told others about Him, and John 4:39 records that many Samaritans believed because of her testimony. Her witness directed attention toward Jesus rather than toward herself. The example demonstrates that biblical evangelism combines truthful confrontation, patient explanation, and a clear presentation of Christ. The individual matters, but the Saviour remains the center.

6. The Philippian Jailer Heard a Clear Answer Instead of a Religious Sales Pitch

Acts 16:25–34 records a dramatically different personal encounter. Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi after being beaten, yet they prayed and sang praises unto God at midnight. An earthquake shook the prison, opened the doors, and loosened the prisoners' bands. When the keeper of the prison awoke and saw the doors open, he supposed the prisoners had escaped and prepared to kill himself. Paul cried out, “Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.” The jailer then called for a light, entered trembling, and fell before Paul and Silas. He brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The circumstances were extraordinary, but the answer did not require a complicated theological performance. The jailer had reached the point of asking the most important question a sinner can ask. Paul did not waste the opportunity with a collection of religious anecdotes.

Acts 16:31 provides the answer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” That statement is clear, direct, and centered upon the Saviour. Paul did not

instruct the jailer to earn forgiveness through religious service, purchase entrance into the church, or complete a program of moral improvement before God would receive him. The command was to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 32 then records that Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. That detail matters because it demonstrates that the brief command was accompanied by further instruction. Neither should the reference to the jailer's household be turned into a doctrine that one person's faith automatically regenerates every relative. The household heard the word, and the narrative records their response. Salvation is personal, not inherited through family membership. A saved father cannot believe on behalf of an unbelieving son.

The jailer's subsequent actions demonstrated a changed attitude toward the men he had been guarding. He washed their stripes, received baptism with his household, and rejoiced in believing in God. The historical account records these events together, but their relationship must not be rearranged to contradict salvation by grace through faith. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is God's gift, not the reward of works, while Romans 4:5 identifies faith apart from meritorious labor as the basis of justification. The jailer's care for Paul and Silas was consistent with the change occurring in his life; it was not a payment purchasing Christ's redemption. Likewise, the account does not establish that every person must experience an earthquake, emotional crisis, or spectacular conversion before genuine salvation becomes possible. The gospel remains the same regardless of the circumstances. The jailer asked how to be saved, and Paul answered with Jesus Christ. Modern religion could eliminate a remarkable amount of confusion by learning to answer the same question with the same clarity.

7. Soul-Winning Is Not a Contest to Manufacture the Most Professions

There is a serious difference between helping someone understand the gospel and pressuring that person into repeating words he does not understand. A preacher may persuade a listener to bow his head, raise his hand, repeat a prayer, or sign a card without establishing that the individual has believed on Jesus Christ. None of those outward actions possesses saving power independently of faith. Romans 10:9–10 connects confession with believing in the heart, and Ephesians 1:13 describes believers hearing the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, and trusting Christ. A sincere prayer may express genuine faith, but repeating a sentence is not a magical religious operation. The evangelist must never confuse his ability to obtain verbal agreement with the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration. People can agree merely to end an uncomfortable conversation. Others may sincerely misunderstand what they have been asked to believe. A profession that satisfies the preacher is not necessarily a conversion that has occurred in the sinner.

Jude 22–23 provides another important consideration: “And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” The immediate context concerns the danger of corrupt teaching and the responsibility to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints. The passage does not establish two mechanical soul-winning techniques or authorize evangelists to frighten every confused person into a hurried decision. It recognizes the need for discernment, compassion, seriousness, and moral caution when dealing with those endangered by error. Some individuals require patient instruction because they are confused and uncertain. Others require unmistakable warning concerning the consequences of rejecting truth. The same gospel must be proclaimed, but wise communication considers the actual spiritual condition of the listener. Compassion without truth leaves people in danger, while warning without compassion can turn an opportunity for ministry into an exhibition of religious harshness.

Personal evangelism should also recognize the responsibility of helping new believers become established in sound doctrine. Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian concludes with the eunuch going on his way rejoicing, and Scripture does not provide a detailed account of his subsequent life. We should not invent one. Other passages, however, demonstrate the importance of continued instruction. Acts 14:21–22 records Paul and Barnabas returning to strengthen disciples after preaching the gospel and teaching many. First Thessalonians 2:7–12 describes Paul's tender care and earnest exhortation toward believers. Ephesians 4:11–16 identifies the strengthening and maturing of the church as a purpose of Christ's ministerial gifts. An evangelist cannot personally supervise every convert for the remainder of his life, but he should recognize the value of sound churches, continued Bible study, and proper instruction. A newly saved person needs more than a congratulatory handshake and a place in somebody's statistical report. The work of reaching sinners should lead naturally toward the work of establishing believers, not toward abandoning them as soon as their names have been counted.

Conclusion

The biblical accounts of Philip, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the Philippian jailer demonstrate that personal evangelism is not an inferior substitute for large public meetings. It is a legitimate and necessary part of communicating the truth concerning Jesus Christ. Philip encountered one Ethiopian traveler and explained Isaiah 53. Jesus confronted Nicodemus with the necessity of the new birth and revealed Himself to a Samaritan woman who needed living water. Paul and Silas answered the Philippian jailer's question concerning salvation with the command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Each encounter occurred within its own historical circumstances, and faithful interpretation

must preserve those distinctions. Yet every account demonstrates that the individual listener matters and that biblical truth must be communicated in a manner addressing the actual need. The evangelist is not called merely to assemble audiences. He is called to proclaim Christ. And sometimes the most significant opportunity before him may involve one person who has never received a clear explanation of the gospel.

This should challenge the modern obsession with numbers, publicity, and impressive evangelistic reports. There is nothing wrong with rejoicing when large numbers of people hear the gospel or when many genuinely believe. Acts itself records substantial responses to preaching, and Scripture never suggests that reaching a multitude is undesirable. The error arises when numbers become more important than truth or when the pressure to produce visible results encourages shallow explanations and manufactured professions. An evangelist must never lower the standard of biblical clarity merely to improve the appearance of success. He should be willing to spend time answering one sincere question, explaining one difficult passage, or correcting one misunderstanding concerning salvation. He should recognize when a listener needs further instruction rather than an immediate demand for a decision. He should also accept that some people will reject the message despite his faithfulness. The preacher can deliver the truth, but he cannot manufacture belief through personality, pressure, or statistics. God never commanded His servants to make the gospel appear successful by changing the meaning of success.

The final lesson is simple enough for every Christian to understand and serious enough for every evangelist to examine. A sinner is not an attendance figure, a potential donor, an advertising opportunity, or a name to be entered into a ministry report. He is a person who needs to hear the truth concerning sin, judgment, and the saving work of Jesus Christ. The evangelist must know the Scriptures, listen carefully, answer honestly, explain salvation clearly, and refuse to substitute religious performance for genuine faith. He should possess the same concern for one individual that he demonstrates before a crowded congregation. Philip did not require thousands of listeners before opening Isaiah and preaching Jesus. Paul did not demand a public meeting before answering the jailer's question. Jesus Christ did not consider a nighttime conversation with Nicodemus or a discussion beside a Samaritan well beneath His attention. Those examples expose the poverty of any ministry that values crowds more than souls. A thousand names entered into a preacher's notebook cannot guarantee that one sinner has been saved. One sinner who genuinely believes on the Lord Jesus Christ possesses everlasting life. The evangelist was not called to manufacture numbers, collect professions, or build a monument to his own success. He was called to preach the gospel. And if there is only one person listening, that is still a soul worth reaching.

6 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – Serving the Churches Without Becoming Their Master

Key Passage: Ephesians 4:11–12 (KJV)

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

Introduction

There is something terribly wrong with an evangelist who arrives at a local church claiming to serve Jesus Christ and immediately begins behaving as though the congregation has been temporarily transferred into his personal possession. He has barely unloaded his suitcase before he is criticizing the pastor, rearranging the ministry, collecting private admirers, and explaining how much better everything would operate if somebody would simply recognize his superior judgment. By the time the meeting concludes, the church has acquired three unnecessary controversies, several offended members, and a collection of impressive stories about the visiting preacher. The gospel may have received considerably less attention than his reputation, but at least everybody knows where to send the next offering. That is not the work of an evangelist. That is religious ambition wearing a ministerial title. Jesus Christ did not give evangelists to His church so they could establish temporary dictatorships wherever somebody offered them a pulpit. He gave them to strengthen His people, proclaim His truth, and contribute to the work of the ministry.

Ephesians 4:11–12 establishes the matter plainly. Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ. The passage does not describe a collection of competing religious personalities fighting for authority over the same congregation. It describes ministerial gifts provided by the risen Lord for the benefit of His people. The evangelist therefore enters the picture as a servant, not an owner. His ministry should contribute to the spiritual health of the assembly rather than undermine the men responsible for its regular oversight. At the same time, local churches must not reduce evangelists to hired entertainers whose purpose is to fill an annual meeting with amusing stories and familiar sermon illustrations. A church can dishonor evangelistic ministry just as thoroughly by refusing its biblical purpose as an evangelist can dishonor it by abusing his influence. The relationship requires truth, humility, discernment, cooperation, and recognition of the authority of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament supplies a considerably better pattern than the religious power struggles that occasionally travel under the respectable name of ministry. Acts 13

demonstrates the relationship between gospel workers and the church at Antioch. Acts 14 records the continuation of their labor and their subsequent report concerning what God had accomplished. First Corinthians 3 corrects the tendency to organize believers into competing factions around individual ministers. Second Corinthians 4:5 establishes the proper confession of every faithful servant: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” Third John commends the faithful reception and assistance of brethren who went forth for the Lord's name. These passages do not establish a bureaucratic system in which every minister becomes the employee of a religious corporation. Neither do they authorize self-appointed spiritual monarchs who refuse correction and recognize no responsibility toward the churches they serve. The evangelist is not the master of the church, the pastor is not the owner of the church, and the congregation is not anybody's private collection. The church belongs to Jesus Christ.

1. Christ Gave Evangelists to Build His Church, Not Their Own Kingdoms

The first thing an evangelist must understand about Ephesians 4:11 is the identity of the Giver. The verse begins, “And he gave.” The immediate context identifies Jesus Christ, who ascended on high and gave gifts unto men. The evangelist's ministry therefore originates in Christ's provision rather than in the preacher's personal ambition. A church may recognize his calling, examine his doctrine, provide opportunities, and assist his labor, but none of those activities makes the congregation the inventor of his ministry. More importantly, the evangelist does not become the inventor of his own authority. The distinction is essential because religious men have an astonishing ability to confuse possession of a gift with possession of everybody who benefits from it. A talented preacher may possess unusual ability to communicate Scripture, but that ability does not grant him ownership of the believers listening. A gift from Christ is an assignment to serve, not a certificate authorizing a man to build himself a throne.

Ephesians 4:12 gives the purpose of these ministerial gifts: “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Notice the direction of the passage. Everything moves toward the strengthening of the saints and the building up of Christ's body. The evangelist should therefore leave believers better instructed, better equipped, and more firmly established in biblical truth than he found them. His preaching should clarify the gospel, confront doctrinal error, encourage obedience, and strengthen the church's concern for lost sinners. The passage does not require every minister to perform an identical function, nor does it abolish the distinction between evangelists and pastors. Christ provided different gifts for the benefit of one body. The evangelist who resents a pastor's responsibilities has misunderstood the arrangement, and the pastor who

resents every gifted evangelist has misunderstood it just as badly. Christ did not establish ministerial differences to provide Christians with another excuse for jealousy.

The following verses make the objective even clearer. Ephesians 4:13 speaks of coming "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God," while verse 14 warns against being carried about with every wind of doctrine. Verse 15 directs believers to speak the truth in love and grow up into Christ, who is the Head. This is the standard against which evangelistic ministry must be measured. Does the preaching strengthen sound doctrine or create confusion? Does it direct believers toward Christ or make them dependent upon the visiting personality? Does it encourage maturity or cultivate perpetual excitement without understanding? The evangelist who leaves a congregation intoxicated with his personality but indifferent toward its Bible has accomplished the opposite of what Ephesians describes. A strong church does not require a celebrity preacher to visit every six months and remind its members that he is indispensable. The purpose of biblical ministry is to produce Christians who stand upon the truth, not admirers who collapse whenever their favorite preacher leaves town.

2. Antioch Demonstrates Gospel Workers Cooperating With a Local Church

Acts 13:1 introduces the church at Antioch and identifies certain prophets and teachers serving there, including Barnabas and Saul. Verse 2 records that while they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." The language deserves careful attention. The work originated in the calling of God, while the local church participated through fasting, prayer, and laying hands upon the men before sending them away. Verse 4 specifically states that they were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost." These details provide a biblical example of cooperation between gospel workers and an established congregation without confusing divine calling with human ownership. Antioch did not purchase Barnabas and Saul as traveling employees, and the missionaries did not treat the church as an inconvenient collection of people who should simply finance their ambitions. Their relationship reflected prayerful participation in a work that belonged to God.

The historical setting must also be respected. Barnabas and Saul were involved in apostolic missionary labor during the early expansion of the church, and Acts 13 includes events that cannot simply be transferred into a mandatory formula for every present-day evangelist. Paul possessed apostolic authority that a modern traveling preacher cannot manufacture by borrowing his methods or adopting his titles. Nevertheless, the account establishes sound principles concerning preparation, recognition, cooperation, and responsibility. A church should know what kind of ministry it is supporting, and a minister should possess sufficient integrity to explain what he is doing. The preacher who demands

unquestioning financial assistance while refusing to discuss his doctrine or actual work has not discovered a deeper level of faith. He has discovered a convenient arrangement for avoiding accountability. There is nothing spiritual about expecting other Christians to support a ministry they are forbidden to examine. A genuine calling from God never requires a man to become dishonest with the people helping him fulfill it.

Acts 14:26–27 records the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, from which they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work they fulfilled. They gathered the church together and rehearsed "all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." Notice whose accomplishments received the emphasis. They reported what God had done. Their testimony was not a celebration of their superior abilities or an advertisement declaring that the church should now recognize their extraordinary importance. They had preached, endured opposition, instructed disciples, and witnessed the advancement of the gospel among the Gentiles. The congregation that had participated in their departure now heard what had occurred. This demonstrates the value of honest communication between gospel workers and supporting churches. An evangelist should be able to speak plainly about his labor without exaggerating its results. A ministry report should describe the work, not turn ordinary obedience into a heroic adventure starring the preacher himself.

3. Paul Planted, Apollos Watered, but God Gave the Increase

First Corinthians 3:5 asks, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" Paul addressed a congregation troubled by divisions and misplaced allegiance to individual ministers. Some had identified themselves with Paul, others with Apollos, and earlier in the epistle other factions had appeared. The Corinthians were treating faithful servants as competing standards of spiritual superiority. Paul's correction was devastating to that foolishness because he reduced the celebrated names to their proper biblical description: ministers through whom people believed. The servants were instruments, not the source of salvation. Their usefulness originated in the Lord's provision, and their preaching should have directed believers toward Jesus Christ rather than toward rival personalities. Modern churches have not completely escaped Corinth's disease. They have merely developed better printing equipment for advertising their favorite personalities. A minister who becomes the reason Christians divide has allowed his name to compete with the name he was supposed to proclaim.

Paul continued in verse 6, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." The distinction is both simple and profound. Different servants performed different tasks, but neither possessed the power to produce spiritual life. Paul planted through his foundational gospel labor among the Corinthians, while Apollos contributed through

subsequent ministry. Their efforts were complementary rather than competitive. This principle should govern the relationship between evangelists, pastors, and teachers today. An evangelist may preach the gospel in a community where a local pastor has labored faithfully for years. A pastor may continue teaching and discipling people who first heard the gospel through a visiting evangelist. Other believers may contribute through personal testimony, hospitality, prayer, and ordinary acts of service. None of these activities requires competition over who deserves the greatest recognition. The farmer who plants the seed and the worker who waters the field are fools if they spend the harvest arguing about whose bucket was more impressive.

Verse 9 provides the proper conclusion: “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.” The repeated emphasis upon God destroys the illusion that a particular minister possesses exclusive rights over the people who benefit from his labor. The Corinthians belonged to God, not to Paul or Apollos. Likewise, an evangelist does not acquire ownership over every sinner who believes after hearing his preaching. He cannot reasonably demand that new believers ignore their local church, reject pastoral instruction, or maintain permanent personal allegiance to him because he happened to deliver the first gospel message they understood. Gratitude toward faithful ministers is appropriate, but spiritual dependency upon personalities is dangerous. The evangelist should rejoice when believers become established under sound biblical teaching, even when another minister receives the privilege of helping them grow. The man who needs his name engraved upon every spiritual accomplishment has forgotten that God owns the field, supplies the increase, and receives the glory.

4. The Visiting Evangelist Must Respect the Pastor Without Excusing False Doctrine

Acts 20:28 records Paul's instruction to the elders of the church at Ephesus: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” The passage establishes the seriousness of pastoral oversight. The church belongs to God, and its overseers carry responsibility for feeding and guarding the flock. First Peter 5:2 likewise commands elders to feed the flock of God and exercise oversight willingly, while verse 3 warns against acting as lords over God's heritage. A visiting evangelist must recognize this biblical arrangement. He has not been invited to replace the pastor, seize control of the congregation, or establish competing lines of authority. His preaching should strengthen the church's commitment to Scripture and encourage believers to honor legitimate pastoral responsibility. An invitation to preach is not an invitation to take command.

This principle has immediate practical consequences. An evangelist should not use private conversations to undermine a faithful pastor, recruit discontented members, or encourage divisions over matters that do not involve genuine scriptural wrongdoing. He should not exploit the temporary enthusiasm of a special meeting to persuade people that their regular church lacks spiritual power because it does not resemble his traveling ministry. A man who visits for three evenings cannot presume to understand every pastoral responsibility, family situation, disciplinary matter, or long-standing difficulty in that congregation. Pastors spend ordinary weeks teaching Scripture, visiting the sick, counseling families, correcting error, and carrying responsibilities the visiting preacher may never see. The evangelist should appreciate that labor rather than treat it with contempt. There is something remarkably convenient about criticizing a pastor's ministry after enjoying his hospitality, preaching to his congregation, receiving an offering, and departing before the difficult work resumes. It takes considerably less character to inspect another man's field for three days than to cultivate it faithfully for thirty years.

Respect for pastoral responsibility, however, must never become permission to protect false doctrine, financial dishonesty, moral corruption, or abusive conduct. Acts 20:29–30 warns that grievous wolves would enter among the flock and that men would arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples. Titus 1:9 requires sound doctrine and the ability to convince gainsayers. Even Peter was publicly corrected by Paul in Galatians 2:11–14 when his conduct contradicted the truth of the gospel. No pastor possesses authority above Scripture, and no evangelist should be pressured to endorse error merely because the person teaching it occupies a respected position. Biblical correction must be based upon evidence, handled according to Scripture, and directed toward truth rather than personal ambition. The evangelist must distinguish between confronting genuine wrongdoing and manufacturing disagreements to gain influence. Submission to biblical church order does not require submission to unbiblical teaching, but opposition to error does not authorize a preacher to become a self-appointed dictator.

5. Revival Meetings Should Strengthen Churches, Not Showcase Religious Performers

There is nothing inherently wrong with a church arranging special evangelistic meetings, inviting a traveling preacher, or dedicating several days to concentrated biblical instruction and gospel proclamation. Scripture does not require every congregation to follow an identical annual schedule, but it certainly establishes the legitimacy of preaching, exhortation, teaching, and cooperation among faithful ministers. Second Timothy 4:2 commands preaching with reproof, rebuke, exhortation, longsuffering, and doctrine. Acts 14:21–22 records Paul and Barnabas preaching the gospel and subsequently confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith. Those activities provide a

better measure of spiritual usefulness than the emotional excitement surrounding a carefully advertised meeting. A genuine evangelistic campaign should make the gospel clearer, sound doctrine stronger, and believers more willing to obey Scripture. If the only lasting result is that everybody remembers how loudly the visiting preacher shouted, the meeting has produced considerable sound without necessarily producing much spiritual substance.

The modern expression “revival meeting” can describe something worthwhile, but the name itself does not guarantee the presence of biblical revival. A church may advertise revival for Monday through Friday without possessing any authority to schedule the Holy Ghost's work according to its printed calendar. Meetings can be scheduled; genuine spiritual results cannot be manufactured. An evangelist may preach with extraordinary energy, employ moving illustrations, and lead the congregation through emotional appeals, but none of those activities establishes that God has approved his doctrine or methods. The proper question is whether the word of God has been faithfully proclaimed and obeyed. Psalm 119:25 records the prayer, “quicken thou me according to thy word,” while John 17:17 declares, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Spiritual renewal cannot be separated from divine truth. A preacher can schedule a meeting, print a banner, and advertise revival, but he cannot command God to attend his performance.

The relationship between the evangelist and the local church should continue beyond the excitement of a special service. When sinners believe the gospel, they need sound instruction concerning their position in Christ, their walk with God, and the responsibilities of Christian fellowship. Ephesians 4:14 warns against remaining children carried about with every wind of doctrine. Second Timothy 2:2 emphasizes the transmission of sound teaching to faithful men who can teach others also. The evangelist should therefore cooperate with legitimate efforts to establish new believers rather than abandon them after obtaining impressive professions. At the same time, the pastor should not invite an evangelist merely to provide an entertaining interruption in the ordinary church calendar. The meeting should serve a definite biblical purpose. A faithful preacher should be able to depart knowing that the congregation has heard Scripture, received needed correction, and been encouraged toward obedience. The value of an evangelistic meeting is not measured by how excited the people become while the visitor is present, but by whether the truth continues working after he leaves.

6. Churches Should Support Faithful Evangelists Without Financing Religious Ambition

Third John 5–8 provides an important example of believers assisting faithful gospel workers. John commended Gaius for his faithfulness toward brethren and strangers who had

testified concerning his charity. Verse 7 explains that these men went forth for the Lord's name, taking nothing of the Gentiles, and verse 8 declares, “We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.” The passage concerns the support of faithful servants engaged in the work of the Lord, and its principles apply naturally to the relationship between churches and legitimate gospel laborers. Hospitality, financial assistance, encouragement, and practical cooperation can contribute to the advancement of biblical ministry. The believer who provides necessary support is not purchasing the preacher's spiritual services. He is participating in the work through legitimate assistance. Not everybody who helps carry the gospel must occupy the pulpit; sometimes the person furnishing the journey is helping the message travel farther than his own feet ever will.

First Corinthians 9:14 states, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” Paul established the legitimacy of material support for gospel labor while also explaining circumstances in which he voluntarily declined to exercise that right. The principle destroys two opposite errors. One assumes that receiving financial support automatically makes a preacher corrupt. The other assumes that a preacher's calling entitles him to unlimited financial assistance without ordinary honesty or restraint. Scripture supports neither extreme. Second Corinthians 8:20–21 demonstrates Paul's concern to avoid blame in financial administration and provide things honest before God and men. Churches should support faithful evangelists according to their ability and judgment, while evangelists should handle that assistance with integrity. Travel expenses, lodging, necessary resources, and reasonable support are legitimate considerations. But generosity is not permission for manipulation. A congregation's offering is not a prize awarded to whichever visiting preacher can produce the most emotional appeal.

The danger becomes obvious when money begins determining the evangelist's convictions or the churches he considers worthy of visiting. A preacher who enthusiastically accepts large invitations while consistently ignoring smaller congregations should examine his motives. So should the minister who manufactures financial emergencies, exaggerates ministry accomplishments, or implies that withholding a particular donation demonstrates rebellion against God. First Timothy 6:5 warns concerning corrupt men who suppose that gain is godliness, and verse 10 identifies the love of money as the root of all evil. The Bible does not condemn legitimate financial provision; it condemns covetousness and corruption. Third John also records Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence and rejected faithful brethren. His conduct demonstrates how personal ambition can obstruct legitimate Christian hospitality and cooperation. Churches must exercise discernment, refusing to support false teaching while assisting faithful workers. The pulpit is not a cash register, the congregation is not a customer list, and gospel ministry must never become a business in which the souls of men are treated as opportunities for revenue.

7. We Preach Not Ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord

Second Corinthians 4:5 contains one of the strongest corrections to personality-centered ministry anywhere in the New Testament: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” The immediate context concerns Paul's explanation of his ministry, his rejection of dishonesty, and his commitment to manifesting truth before God. Verse 2 declares that he had renounced hidden things of dishonesty and refused to handle the word of God deceitfully. Those statements belong together. A faithful minister does not manipulate Scripture to promote himself, nor does he conceal dishonest conduct behind the appearance of spiritual authority. He preaches Jesus Christ as Lord and recognizes himself as a servant. The distinction is essential because a preacher can use the name of Christ while directing nearly all the attention toward his own importance. If every sermon somehow ends with the congregation admiring the messenger more than the Saviour, somebody has reversed the direction of the ministry.

This danger is especially serious when an evangelist begins cultivating personal followers inside churches he visits. He may privately suggest that the local pastor lacks sufficient spiritual understanding, that the congregation needs his continual guidance, or that genuine blessing depends upon maintaining special access to his ministry. Such behavior contradicts the servant relationship described in 2 Corinthians 4:5. First Corinthians 1:12–13 exposes the foolishness of Christians dividing themselves according to ministerial personalities. Paul asked, “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” The questions expose the absurdity of treating servants as though they possess the rights of the Saviour. No evangelist died for the sins of the congregation, purchased the church with his blood, or possesses authority to replace Jesus Christ as its Head. Personal admiration becomes spiritually dangerous when it produces unquestioning loyalty. The preacher who needs disciples bearing his name has forgotten that he was commanded to make Christ known, not establish another religious family with himself at the top.

The proper ambition of an evangelist should be faithfulness rather than indispensability. He ought to rejoice when people understand the gospel, grow in sound doctrine, respect biblical leadership, and become increasingly capable of studying Scripture for themselves. His departure should not leave a congregation confused about whom it belongs to or unable to function without his personality. Paul demonstrated this spirit in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, describing his willingness to impart not only the gospel of God but his own soul because the believers were dear to him. His concern was sincere service rather than personal ownership. Likewise, Philippians 1:15–18 records Paul's rejoicing that Christ was preached even amid the mixed motives of certain preachers. Their improper motives were

not approved, but Christ's proclamation remained the central concern. A faithful evangelist should welcome the success of other sound ministers without jealousy. The servant who rejoices only when God uses him has confused devotion to Christ with devotion to his own importance.

Conclusion

The biblical relationship between evangelists and local churches is established upon service, cooperation, sound doctrine, and the authority of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4 identifies evangelists among the ministerial gifts Christ provided for the strengthening of His body. Acts 13 demonstrates the relationship between gospel workers and the church at Antioch, while Acts 14 records their return and testimony concerning what God had accomplished. First Corinthians 3 destroys the foolishness of dividing believers into competing factions around individual ministers. Second Corinthians 4:5 establishes that faithful servants preach Christ rather than themselves, and Third John commends the assistance given to brethren laboring for the Lord's name. These passages provide a consistent biblical picture. The evangelist is neither an independent spiritual monarch nor a religious entertainer employed to amuse congregations. He is a servant entrusted with responsibilities that should benefit the churches and advance the gospel. His authority remains subordinate to Scripture, his ministry remains accountable to Christ, and his relationship with believers must reflect the humility appropriate to one who serves another Master.

The churches themselves must recognize their responsibilities. They should examine doctrine carefully, provide reasonable opportunities for faithful evangelistic ministry, support legitimate gospel labor, and encourage cooperation without compromising biblical convictions. Pastors should not resent evangelists merely because God has equipped different men for different forms of service. Evangelists should not resent pastors because their continuing responsibilities involve authority that a temporary visitor does not possess. Neither party should protect false teaching, excuse dishonesty, or confuse personal preference with biblical command. A faithful pastor will welcome sound preaching that strengthens his congregation, while a faithful evangelist will respect legitimate oversight and refuse to manufacture division. The relationship should produce clearer gospel proclamation, stronger believers, and greater concern for the lost. There is enough genuine work in the ministry without ambitious men inventing additional battles over who deserves the largest portion of the spotlight. When servants begin fighting over which one owns the Master's household, they have forgotten that the Master is still alive and has never surrendered the deed.

The final accounting of an evangelist's ministry will not be determined by the number of churches that invited him, the size of his offerings, the prestige of his accommodations, or the influence he managed to accumulate among admiring congregations. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds believers that they must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Those truths should govern every evangelist's conduct from the moment he accepts an invitation until the moment he departs. He must preach the gospel faithfully, handle Scripture accurately, respect biblical church order, refuse personal manipulation, maintain financial integrity, and leave Christ's people stronger rather than divided. The church was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ, not with the evangelist's travel expenses, preaching ability, or accumulated reputation. Its Head is in heaven, and its ministers remain accountable to Him. The evangelist was never called to become the master of the churches he serves. He was called to strengthen the saints, preach Jesus Christ, and faithfully accomplish the work entrusted to him. The pulpit is not his throne, the congregation is not his kingdom, and the pastor is not his competition. The church belongs to Jesus Christ, and every man who enters its pulpit had better remember whose house he is standing in.

7 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – Carrying the Gospel Beyond the Comfortable Pulpit

Key Passage: Acts 8:40 (KJV)

“But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.”

Introduction

There is a peculiar species of modern evangelist who has traveled thousands of miles, preached in hundreds of churches, accumulated enough photographs to fill a museum, and somehow managed to spend most of his ministry speaking to people who were already saved before he arrived. He has an itinerary that would exhaust a commercial airline pilot, a collection of familiar sermons that could practically preach themselves, and an impressive list of congregations willing to invite him back next year. Yet ask how many lost people he has personally reached outside those comfortable church meetings, and the conversation may become surprisingly quiet. There is nothing wrong with traveling between sound churches, preaching biblical truth, or encouraging believers. Those are legitimate activities when performed faithfully. But the evangelist must never forget that his work includes

carrying the gospel to people who have not heard it. A preacher can travel around the world without advancing the gospel beyond the same comfortable religious circle. Mileage is not ministry, a calendar is not a commission, and a full itinerary is not necessarily evidence of a fulfilled calling.

The New Testament provides a considerably more substantial picture of gospel labor. Acts 8 records Philip preaching Christ in Samaria, responding to divine direction toward a desert road, explaining Scripture to an Ethiopian traveler, and subsequently preaching through additional cities until he arrived at Caesarea. His ministry was not confined to one type of audience or one convenient arrangement. Paul likewise demonstrated an earnest desire to proclaim Christ where He had not been named, as Romans 15:20 declares. Acts 16 records the apostolic missionary company being prevented from entering certain regions before receiving direction toward Macedonia. Third John commends believers who assisted faithful servants traveling for the Lord's name. Together, these passages demonstrate movement, preparation, cooperation, discernment, and perseverance in gospel ministry. They do not establish that every evangelist must follow an identical route or receive the same extraordinary guidance recorded in Acts. They establish something more enduring: the gospel must be proclaimed wherever God provides legitimate opportunities, and the preacher's personal comfort must never become the boundary of his obedience.

This subject requires more than a romantic picture of missionaries crossing oceans and preaching beneath unfamiliar skies. Biblical outreach involves practical responsibilities that some enthusiastic preachers would prefer to leave outside the sermon. There are families to consider, churches to cooperate with, financial obligations to handle honestly, journeys to prepare for, and people who require continued instruction after hearing the gospel. There is also the danger of mistaking unnecessary hardship for spiritual achievement or treating every unplanned inconvenience as divine direction. The evangelist needs courage, but he also needs biblical judgment. He must know when to travel, when to remain, when to enter a new field, and when to recognize an opportunity already standing in front of him. A man may be genuinely called to carry the gospel into distant places, while another may accomplish important evangelistic work within a comparatively small geographical area. The essential question is not how far the preacher has traveled. It is whether his travels, his preaching, and his opportunities are accomplishing the work of Jesus Christ.

1. The Scattered Believers Carried the Word Beyond Jerusalem

Acts 8:4 declares, “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” The immediate setting concerns the persecution that followed Stephen's death. Acts 8:1 records that Saul was consenting unto his death and that a great persecution

arose against the church at Jerusalem. Believers were scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria, while the apostles remained at Jerusalem. The resulting movement of gospel testimony was not produced by an impressive promotional campaign or a collection of favorable speaking invitations. Persecution disrupted the believers' circumstances, but it did not silence their testimony. As they scattered, they carried the word into other places. The historical events belong to the early expansion of the church described in Acts, and their relationship to Acts 1:8 must be recognized. Yet the practical lesson remains unmistakable. The word of God was not intended to become the permanent possession of one congregation in Jerusalem. The persecutors scattered the Christians, but the Christians carried the gospel with them. That was an unfortunate arrangement for the enemies of the truth.

Acts 8:5 continues, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.” Philip did not establish his ministry by announcing his personal greatness or offering the Samaritans a religious improvement program. He preached Christ. The Samaritan setting was significant because of the historical separation between Jews and Samaritans, a division acknowledged in John 4:9. Philip entered a community outside the familiar religious surroundings of Jerusalem and proclaimed the Messiah. The chapter records miracles, public attention, and considerable joy among the people. These signs must be understood within the transitional setting of Acts rather than converted into compulsory demonstrations for every modern evangelist. The evangelist's enduring responsibility is not to reproduce every extraordinary circumstance recorded during the apostolic period. It is to proclaim the biblical message faithfully. Philip did not carry a collection of religious novelties into Samaria. He carried the truth concerning Jesus Christ, and the people heard it.

The movement from Jerusalem into Samaria also confronts a weakness that can develop in otherwise sound churches. Believers may become so comfortable among people who already understand their doctrinal vocabulary that they rarely communicate with anyone outside their own religious circle. Their meetings remain active, their fellowship remains pleasant, and their theological discussions become increasingly detailed, but meaningful contact with unbelievers gradually disappears. There is nothing wrong with strong fellowship or careful doctrinal instruction. Both are necessary. The problem arises when the church begins treating the preservation of its own comfortable environment as the entire purpose of ministry. Second Corinthians 5:20 identifies believers as ambassadors for Christ, while Romans 10:14 emphasizes the necessity of hearing the message. The gospel must reach people who do not yet understand it. A church that spends all its time congratulating itself for possessing the truth while making little effort to proclaim that truth has confused guarding the treasure with burying it.

2. The Desert Road Proves That One Soul Is Worth the Journey

Acts 8:26 records an angel of the Lord directing Philip toward the road descending from Jerusalem unto Gaza, “which is desert.” The contrast with his ministry in Samaria is striking. Philip had been preaching where multitudes heard him, yet the narrative next places him on a road where he encounters one Ethiopian eunuch. The man held considerable authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians and had traveled to Jerusalem to worship. He was returning in his chariot while reading Isaiah. The account does not suggest that Philip regarded the individual assignment as inferior to his earlier public ministry. Verse 27 states simply, “And he arose and went.” That is obedience without an elaborate negotiation over the size of the prospective audience. Modern religious calculations might have questioned the wisdom of leaving a successful public ministry for an uncertain encounter on a desert road. Philip's conduct demonstrates that an opportunity involving one person can possess enormous spiritual significance.

Acts 8:29 records the Spirit directing Philip to join himself to the chariot, and verse 30 shows him approaching the traveler and asking, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” The Ethiopian acknowledged his need for guidance and invited Philip to explain the passage. He was reading Isaiah 53, which speaks prophetically of the suffering servant. Acts 8:35 declares, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” There is the substance of personal evangelism. Philip did not need an auditorium, a musical introduction, an advertising committee, or a collection of impressive testimonials. He needed the Scripture, an interested listener, and the ability to explain Jesus Christ. The historical circumstances included extraordinary divine direction, which should not be transformed into a universal promise of audible guidance for every witness today. Nevertheless, the principle of readiness remains. A preacher who refuses to explain salvation to one person because the opportunity lacks publicity has mistaken an audience for the actual work.

The Ethiopian's question also demonstrates the importance of biblical preparation. Philip could not have helped the man merely by announcing that he was an evangelist or describing the size of his recent meetings in Samaria. He needed to understand Isaiah and explain how the passage testified concerning Christ. The evangelist who intends to carry the gospel into unfamiliar places must therefore prepare himself through serious study. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the word of truth. First Corinthians 15:1–4 establishes the gospel of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares salvation by grace through faith apart from works. An evangelist who possesses these truths can explain salvation in a church, beside a road, across a kitchen table, or in a distant community. Circumstances may change, but the message

remains unchanged. The gospel does not become less powerful when delivered to one listener, and a soul does not become less valuable because nobody is present to count it.

3. Philip Continued Preaching Through the Cities Instead of Settling Into Comfort

Acts 8:40 provides a remarkable conclusion to Philip's recorded journey: “But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.” After the encounter with the Ethiopian, the narrative records the Spirit of the Lord catching Philip away, and the Ethiopian continuing his journey rejoicing. The miraculous manner of Philip's departure belongs to that historical event and should not be used to establish ordinary expectations for present-day transportation. What deserves attention is the continuation of Philip's ministry. He was found at Azotus, and as he passed through the cities, he preached. The passage does not describe him retreating from evangelistic responsibility because he had already accomplished something important. His ministry continued into additional communities. Philip did not treat one successful encounter as permission to spend the remainder of his life polishing the testimony of how successful that encounter had been. He kept preaching.

The geographical movement deserves recognition without inventing details Scripture does not provide. Azotus corresponds to the ancient Philistine city of Ashdod, while Caesarea was an important coastal center. Acts 8:40 does not supply an exhaustive list of Philip's stops, the exact duration of his travels, or the number of people who believed through his preaching. We should not pretend to possess information the Holy Ghost did not record. The statement that Philip preached in all the cities through which he passed nevertheless demonstrates continuing evangelistic labor across multiple communities. His movement was not presented as religious tourism or a personal adventure. The emphasis remained upon preaching. This distinction should challenge traveling evangelists who can provide extensive descriptions of their journeys but remarkably little explanation of the biblical work accomplished. Travel may create opportunities, but travel itself does not fulfill the ministry. A man can visit every famous city in the world and still accomplish nothing more spiritually significant than a determined tourist with better religious vocabulary.

Acts 21:8 later identifies Philip as “the evangelist,” residing at Caesarea, and recalls that he was one of the seven. This later reference is important because it demonstrates that Philip's recognized ministry was not dependent upon perpetual movement. Scripture does not establish that he spent every day traveling or that remaining in one city would have disqualified him from being an evangelist. His earlier movement and later residence belong to the same biblical record. That should prevent us from constructing an artificial requirement that an evangelist must always be on the road. Some ministries may involve extensive travel, others sustained labor in a particular region, and still others a

combination of both. The calling is measured by faithful work rather than uninterrupted transportation. A man who remains in one community preaching the gospel for decades may accomplish more lasting good than someone who visits fifty communities without meaningfully explaining salvation. Movement is valuable when it advances the message; otherwise, it is merely motion with religious luggage.

4. Paul's Missionary Ambition Was to Preach Where Christ Was Not Named

Romans 15:20 reveals a remarkable feature of Paul's missionary labor: “Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.” The apostle was explaining the character and geographical direction of his ministry among the Gentiles. Earlier in the chapter, Romans 15:16 identifies his particular service as a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, while verses 18–19 describe what Christ accomplished through him in word and deed, including the signs associated with his apostolic ministry. Those details matter. Paul possessed a distinctive apostolic commission, and his particular responsibility cannot be mechanically transferred to every evangelist in the present Church Age. Nevertheless, the missionary principle is unmistakable. Paul was concerned with carrying the gospel into places where Christ had not been proclaimed. His ambition was not merely to become another familiar speaker among established congregations.

Paul's statement concerning another man's foundation should also be read alongside 1 Corinthians 3:10–11, where he describes his foundational labor and identifies Jesus Christ as the only legitimate foundation. Paul was not condemning every minister who teaches believers previously reached by somebody else. He himself instructed established churches, corrected their errors, and encouraged their perseverance. His statement in Romans concerns the distinctive direction of his pioneering apostolic ministry. The application to evangelists is therefore one of proper priorities rather than an absolute prohibition against preaching where churches already exist. Traveling among sound churches can strengthen believers, clarify doctrine, and encourage gospel outreach. But a preacher should examine whether those familiar meetings have become a convenient substitute for reaching people outside the established religious circuit. A man may spend forty years moving between congregations that already know the gospel and still never develop the courage to explain it to someone who does not.

Romans 15:21 continues with a quotation concerning those who had not been told seeing and those who had not heard understanding. Paul drew upon the prophetic language of Isaiah 52:15 in explaining his mission. His concern was not geographical novelty for its own sake but the extension of the knowledge of Christ. Verse 24 records his intention to journey toward Spain and his expectation of receiving assistance from the Roman believers. These

plans reveal both ambition and dependence upon practical cooperation. Paul recognized that his work extended beyond communities already familiar to him, but he did not pretend that travel required no resources or assistance. The missionary vision was substantial, yet it remained grounded in the actual proclamation of Christ. Modern evangelists should learn that reaching neglected fields requires more than advertising an ambitious destination. It requires knowing the gospel, preparing for the work, cooperating with faithful believers, and being willing to minister where the conveniences of established church life may be absent.

5. The Closed Doors in Asia and the Call to Macedonia Required Discernment

Acts 16:6–10 records an important episode in Paul's missionary travels. The apostolic company passed through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. When they attempted to enter Bithynia, “the Spirit suffered them not.” They subsequently came to Troas, where Paul received a vision of a man of Macedonia asking him to come over and help. The company concluded that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel there. These events demonstrate divine direction in the historical missionary expansion of Acts. They also caution against the assumption that every worthwhile destination must be pursued immediately simply because the preacher finds it attractive. The biblical record distinguishes the desire to preach from the Lord's direction concerning the place and timing. A man can possess a genuine burden for gospel ministry and still need enough discernment to recognize that every opportunity is not necessarily his assignment.

The extraordinary guidance recorded in Acts 16 must not become an excuse for modern ministers to invent revelations whenever their plans encounter difficulty. Paul received a vision in the historical narrative, but Scripture does not command every evangelist to wait for a Macedonian man to appear in a dream before making ordinary decisions. God has given His people the written word, and James 1:5 directs believers to seek wisdom from Him. Proverbs 15:22 establishes the value of counsel, while Colossians 4:3 records Paul's request that God would open a door of utterance. Such principles permit prayerful planning, careful judgment, and recognition of legitimate opportunities. They do not justify treating every canceled meeting as satanic opposition or every unexpected invitation as an unquestionable command from heaven. Sometimes a door closes because a preacher failed to prepare, ignored responsibilities, or made arrangements that could not reasonably succeed. Calling poor planning spiritual warfare may sound impressive, but it will not make the unpaid bill disappear.

The Macedonian episode also exposes the weakness of ministers who demand ideal circumstances before beginning useful work. Paul and his companions encountered

restrictions and changed direction, but they did not abandon their responsibility to preach. Acts 16 continues with their arrival at Philippi, where the Lord opened Lydia's heart, opposition arose, Paul and Silas were imprisoned, and the Philippian jailer later heard the message of salvation. Their obedience did not guarantee comfortable accommodations or universal approval. An evangelist must therefore understand that a difficult assignment is not automatically an incorrect assignment, just as an attractive opportunity is not automatically a divine appointment. Discernment considers Scripture, legitimate responsibilities, available means, and the actual opportunities before the minister. Courage must be governed by truth, and perseverance must not become stubborn refusal to acknowledge reality. The objective is faithful gospel proclamation, not the construction of a dramatic personal narrative in which every inconvenience becomes a supernatural event.

6. Faithful Gospel Travel Requires Supporting Churches and Honest Stewardship

Third John 5–8 supplies valuable instruction concerning believers who assisted traveling servants of Christ. John commended Gaius for his faithful conduct toward brethren and strangers who had testified of his charity. Verse 7 explains, “Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.” Verse 8 continues, “We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.” The passage establishes the legitimacy and spiritual significance of practical assistance given to faithful workers. Providing hospitality, necessary financial support, transportation, and other legitimate help can contribute directly to the advancement of the gospel. Not everyone will travel to distant communities, but believers who assist sound gospel labor may participate meaningfully in its accomplishment. The supporting Christian is not purchasing a spiritual reward through a financial transaction. He is helping a faithful servant carry the truth where it needs to be heard.

The responsibility of support must be matched by the responsibility of stewardship. First Corinthians 9:14 declares that those who preach the gospel may live of the gospel, while Paul also explained circumstances in which he declined to exercise that right. Second Corinthians 8:20–21 demonstrates the importance of honest financial administration. Traveling evangelists must consider transportation, lodging, food, equipment, ministry materials, and other legitimate expenses without turning those needs into an excuse for manipulation. Churches should be willing to support faithful labor, but ministers should be able to explain how assistance is being used. A preacher who spends thousands of dollars traveling to a distant location ought to possess something more substantial than a collection of sightseeing photographs and an enthusiastic claim that the trip was extraordinary. Financial accountability does not diminish faith. It protects the integrity of

the work. God never required gospel workers to become financial magicians who make accountability disappear whenever somebody mentions the offering.

Family responsibilities must also be considered before romanticizing constant travel. First Timothy 5:8 warns concerning failure to provide for one's own household, while Ephesians 5:25 establishes the husband's responsibility to love his wife. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These obligations do not prohibit legitimate missionary or evangelistic journeys, nor do they establish that every family must follow identical arrangements. They do prohibit treating personal ambition as an excuse for persistent neglect. A preacher should consider the effects of travel upon his wife, children, financial stability, and ordinary household responsibilities. Wise planning may require shorter journeys, cooperation with other workers, periods at home, or adjustments in ministry commitments. A man who tells everybody that God has called him to reach the world while consistently abandoning responsibilities explicitly established in Scripture has created a contradiction worth examining. A ministry that reaches strangers while neglecting the people God has already entrusted to the preacher is not automatically faithful simply because the travel photographs are impressive.

7. The Measure of Evangelistic Success Is Gospel Faithfulness, Not Distance Traveled

One of the great temptations of modern itinerant ministry is to measure accomplishment through external activity. A preacher may count the number of states visited, countries entered, meetings conducted, miles traveled, and audiences addressed. Such information can be useful when honestly reported, but none of it establishes that the gospel has been faithfully proclaimed. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” The requirement is faithfulness, not publicity. A man may preach to a large congregation and accomplish valuable biblical work. Another may spend years reaching a neglected community with little public recognition. A third may travel extensively while repeatedly addressing believers who already understand the gospel. The circumstances differ, and the Lord will judge the service according to His perfect knowledge. The evangelist should therefore examine the actual substance of his labor rather than the appearance of his schedule. An airline ticket proves that a man traveled. It does not prove that he preached the gospel when he arrived.

The responsibility to reach neglected communities must not become an excuse for neglecting the lost people nearby. Paul expressed a desire to preach where Christ had not been named, but the New Testament also records gospel witness occurring in homes, marketplaces, cities, and ordinary personal encounters. Acts 20:20 describes Paul's public and house-to-house teaching, while Acts 16 records the Philippian jailer and his household

hearing the word of the Lord. There are opportunities for evangelism in neighborhoods, workplaces, communities, and personal relationships that require no international journey. A man may genuinely possess a calling to distant missionary labor, and that work deserves support. But distance is not what makes gospel proclamation spiritual. The same Jesus Christ who saves sinners across an ocean saves sinners across the street. A preacher who can cross five national borders but cannot cross his own driveway to speak with a lost neighbor should reconsider whether he loves missionary work or merely enjoys missionary travel.

The evangelist must also consider what happens after the initial proclamation. Acts 14:21–23 records Paul and Barnabas preaching the gospel, teaching many, and returning to strengthen disciples, exhort them to continue in the faith, and establish elders in the churches. That account concerns their particular missionary work, including apostolic responsibilities, and should not be transformed into a requirement that every evangelist personally establish and oversee every congregation. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that reaching sinners and strengthening believers belong together within the broader work of gospel ministry. A faithful evangelist should cooperate with sound local churches, help new believers receive biblical instruction, and avoid leaving confusion behind merely because another engagement is approaching. The objective is not to accumulate impressive professions while neglecting the people who need continued teaching. Ephesians 4:11–16 establishes the edification and maturity of Christ's body as a central purpose of ministerial gifts. The work is not measured merely by how many people hear the preacher before he leaves, but by whether the truth he preached continues bearing fruit after his departure.

Conclusion

The New Testament presents gospel ministry as work that must move beyond the comfortable boundaries of familiar religious gatherings. Philip preached Christ in Samaria, traveled to the Ethiopian on the desert road, and continued proclaiming the message through additional cities until he reached Caesarea. Paul pursued missionary opportunities among people who had not heard the gospel, encountered divine direction concerning the places he should enter, and cooperated with churches that assisted his labor. Third John commends believers who supported faithful servants traveling for the Lord's name. These examples establish the legitimacy of traveling, missionary, pioneering, and cooperative evangelistic ministry without requiring every preacher to follow an identical itinerary. The essential responsibility remains the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Some evangelists will travel extensively, others will labor within a particular region, and still others will combine public meetings with personal evangelism and local church assistance. Their ministries

should be examined according to Scripture rather than measured by geographical distance.

This responsibility requires courage, preparation, discernment, and honesty. The evangelist must know the gospel well enough to explain it clearly, possess the judgment necessary to recognize legitimate opportunities, and maintain integrity concerning the support entrusted to him. He must not use travel as an excuse for neglecting his family, manipulate churches through exaggerated financial appeals, or confuse unnecessary hardship with biblical sacrifice. Neither should he hide permanently inside comfortable religious circles while pretending that an endless succession of familiar engagements constitutes the whole of evangelistic ministry. Churches should encourage and support sound gospel labor that reaches beyond their immediate assemblies, while evangelists should strengthen the churches that cooperate with them. The preacher's personal reputation must remain subordinate to the message he carries. His schedule, resources, and opportunities are tools for service, not monuments to his importance. The question is whether sinners are hearing the truth concerning Jesus Christ and whether believers are being strengthened through faithful instruction.

The final accounting will belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares that believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, where their service will be examined. No minister will be able to substitute a travel itinerary for faithfulness, a collection of photographs for sound doctrine, or an impressive financial report for genuine obedience. The evangelist who has traveled far must answer for what he accomplished with those opportunities, and the evangelist who has remained near home must answer for the opportunities entrusted to him. The Lord has never required every servant to possess the same geographical assignment, but He has required faithfulness in the work He gives. Philip did not remain forever in Samaria because the crowds were favorable. Paul did not abandon missionary labor because his plans encountered obstacles. Faithful believers assisted those who went forth for the Lord's name, and the gospel continued moving into new communities. That is the example worth following. The gospel was not given to decorate a pulpit, fill a preacher's calendar, or spend its entire existence inside a briefcase. It was given to be believed, preached, carried, and explained. The world does not need another traveling religious celebrity collecting invitations. It needs faithful servants who will carry the message of Jesus Christ wherever legitimate opportunities exist. The miles are not the ministry. The message is. And a preacher who remembers that will never mistake a comfortable pulpit for the outer boundary of his calling.

8 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – Enduring Hardness When the Crowd Turns Against You

Key Passage: 2 Timothy 4:5 (KJV)

“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

Introduction

The same crowd that laughs at an evangelist's stories on Monday night may decide by Wednesday that it has heard quite enough of his doctrine. Everybody enjoys a preacher who can tell an amusing illustration, deliver an encouraging message, and dismiss the congregation before anybody becomes uncomfortable. The trouble begins when he opens the Bible to a passage that exposes sin, corrects false teaching, or contradicts something the congregation has believed for twenty years. Suddenly, the enthusiasm cools, the smiles disappear, and the fellow who was considered a tremendous preacher yesterday becomes a dangerous troublemaker today. Nothing about his calling necessarily changed. Nothing about the authority of Scripture changed. The only thing that changed was the audience's willingness to hear what God said. An evangelist who expects universal approval has entered the wrong occupation. The gospel was never commissioned to win popularity contests, and the man entrusted with proclaiming it had better settle that matter before his first serious opposition arrives. A preacher whose convictions last only as long as the congregation applauds has rented his backbone from the audience.

Paul did not conceal the difficulties of ministry when he instructed Timothy. Second Timothy 2:3 declares, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” Later, in 2 Timothy 4:5, the apostle commands him to watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of his ministry. Those instructions are not decorative expressions designed for religious banners. They are commands addressed to a servant of Christ who would encounter opposition, discouragement, doctrinal corruption, and the temptation to abandon difficult responsibilities. Paul understood these matters through personal experience. He had been imprisoned, beaten, threatened, rejected, betrayed, and opposed by enemies who wanted his preaching silenced. He also knew that some of the most painful opposition could come from people who professed religious devotion. His instructions to Timothy were therefore grounded in the reality of service, not the fantasy that faithful preachers will always enjoy comfortable circumstances.

Nevertheless, the Bible makes an important distinction that modern religious personalities frequently overlook. Suffering does not automatically prove faithfulness, opposition does not automatically establish righteousness, and an angry audience does not necessarily

mean the preacher has delivered an exceptionally powerful sermon. Some men suffer because they tell the truth. Others suffer because they lie, manipulate, insult, exaggerate, or behave like fools. Scripture does not place those categories together merely because both produce unpleasant consequences. The evangelist must therefore examine the cause of his difficulties rather than immediately announce that every disagreement is persecution from the devil. Genuine gospel ministry may involve rejection, physical hardship, financial sacrifice, spiritual conflict, and considerable weariness. But the preacher's responsibility remains faithfulness to Jesus Christ, not the manufacture of dramatic experiences. The question is not whether a man can accumulate an impressive collection of hardships. It is whether he continues obeying Scripture when obedience becomes costly.

1. The Evangelist Must Endure Hardness as a Good Soldier of Jesus Christ

Second Timothy 2:1 begins with Paul's instruction, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” That opening is important because the command to endure hardness does not rest upon human stubbornness, ministerial pride, or the preacher's ability to convince himself that he is unusually tough. His strength is to be found in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Paul then instructs Timothy to commit the things he has heard among many witnesses to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. The surrounding context therefore concerns doctrinal preservation, faithful instruction, and continuing ministry across succeeding generations. Hardness must be endured because the work matters, not because suffering makes a preacher impressive. The evangelist is entrusted with truth that must be proclaimed and preserved. He cannot abandon that responsibility simply because people dislike his teaching or because the circumstances become less pleasant than he anticipated.

Verse 3 supplies the military comparison: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” A soldier does not join an army on the understanding that every assignment will resemble a comfortable vacation. He expects discipline, responsibility, inconvenience, and circumstances requiring perseverance. The comparison does not authorize preachers to treat congregations like enemy territory or conduct themselves as self-appointed military commanders. It concerns the character of faithful service under the authority of Jesus Christ. A good soldier obeys legitimate commands and remains attentive to the responsibilities assigned to him. The evangelist must therefore prepare himself for rejection without becoming bitter, criticism without becoming dishonest, and hardship without surrendering biblical convictions. The world may find the gospel offensive, but its displeasure cannot repeal the preacher's commission. The Christian soldier does not receive permission to desert because somebody complained about the uniform.

Second Timothy 2:4 continues, “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” The issue is divided allegiance and unnecessary entanglement. The evangelist must not become so occupied with personal advancement, financial ambition, religious competition, or worldly recognition that his central responsibilities disappear beneath those concerns. This does not abolish family obligations, ordinary employment when necessary, or legitimate practical responsibilities. Paul himself worked with his hands, and Scripture expressly commands men to provide for their households. The warning concerns becoming entangled in matters that compromise faithful service. An evangelist who spends more time cultivating his reputation than studying Scripture has misplaced his priorities. A preacher who alters doctrine to protect lucrative invitations has permitted the affairs of this life to govern his ministry. The soldier's responsibility is to please the One who enlisted him, not negotiate his orders with everybody watching the battlefield.

2. Paul Warned Timothy That Godly Living Would Produce Opposition

Second Timothy 3:10–11 reminds Timothy of Paul's doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, and afflictions. Paul specifically mentions what happened to him at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, locations associated with severe opposition during his missionary journeys. Acts 13 records resistance to Paul's preaching at Antioch in Pisidia, while Acts 14 describes hostility at Iconium and the stoning of Paul at Lystra. These were not harmless disagreements between preachers over insignificant religious preferences. The apostle encountered determined opposition to the message he proclaimed. Yet his testimony in 2 Timothy 3:11 concludes, “but out of them all the Lord delivered me.” Deliverance did not mean that Paul avoided every blow or escaped every unpleasant experience. It meant that the Lord preserved and sustained him through the circumstances recorded in his ministry.

Verse 12 establishes a general principle: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” The wording deserves careful attention. Paul does not say every believer will experience identical forms of suffering, or that every faithful Christian must be imprisoned, beaten, or expelled from a community. He establishes that godliness in Christ Jesus brings believers into conflict with a world opposed to righteousness. The form and intensity of that opposition may vary according to circumstances. One Christian may experience ridicule within his family, another may face exclusion because of biblical convictions, and another may encounter direct hostility while proclaiming the gospel. The promise of opposition is not an invitation to invent persecution where none exists. It is a warning that obedience to Christ cannot be made dependent upon universal acceptance.

The Christian who intends to remain faithful only while everybody agrees with him has established a condition the Bible never promised to satisfy.

The passage also prevents a serious doctrinal error concerning Christian suffering. Persecution does not mean that God has abandoned a believer, withdrawn salvation, or failed to keep His promises. Romans 8:35 asks whether tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword can separate believers from the love of Christ. The following verses declare that none of these things can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The believer's eternal security rests upon the saving work and promises of Jesus Christ, not upon the absence of earthly difficulty. Paul was writing to Timothy concerning faithfulness in the present Church Age, and these truths must not be confused with Israel's national covenant promises or the judgments associated with future prophetic events. The evangelist may suffer considerably while remaining perfectly secure in Christ. A prison door can close upon the preacher without closing the door of heaven against the child of God.

3. Persecution Scattered the Jerusalem Believers but Did Not Silence the Gospel

Acts 8:1 records that Saul consented unto Stephen's death and that great persecution arose against the church at Jerusalem. The believers were scattered abroad throughout Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. Verse 3 describes Saul entering houses and committing men and women to prison. This was genuine persecution involving physical danger, disruption of households, imprisonment, and the violent suppression of Christian testimony. The historical setting belongs to the early expansion of the church following Pentecost, and the events must be understood within the unfolding narrative of Acts. The persecution was not a disagreement over church decorations or an argument concerning somebody's favorite preaching style. Believers were suffering because of their identification with Jesus Christ and the testimony concerning Him. Their circumstances were serious, and Scripture does not require us to minimize the cost of that suffering.

Then comes the remarkable statement in Acts 8:4: “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” The persecution displaced the believers, but their testimony continued. They did not conclude that the absence of comfortable conditions cancelled their responsibility to make Christ known. Philip went into Samaria and preached Christ, demonstrating how gospel proclamation continued beyond Jerusalem. This does not mean persecution is desirable or that churches should deliberately seek dangerous circumstances to create opportunities for ministry. It means the gospel remains worthy of proclamation even when circumstances become difficult. The adversaries attempted to suppress the testimony, yet the word traveled with those they

scattered. The persecutors succeeded in disturbing the congregation's location, but they failed to persuade the Christians that the gospel belonged permanently inside Jerusalem.

We must also recognize the human cost behind that historical account. Families were disrupted, believers lost familiar surroundings, and people faced uncertainty concerning their safety and future. Scripture does not require Christians to pretend such circumstances are pleasant or to condemn every reasonable effort to avoid unnecessary danger. Acts 9:25 records disciples helping Saul escape Damascus by lowering him through the wall in a basket. Acts 12 records believers praying while Peter was imprisoned. Biblical courage can coexist with lawful escape, practical wisdom, prayer, and concern for those affected by persecution. The evangelist should not romanticize hardships that other Christians must actually endure. Neither should he consider ordinary comforts sinful merely because faithful believers elsewhere lack them. His responsibility is to remain obedient while exercising discernment. Faithfulness is not measured by how much suffering a preacher can arrange for himself, but by whether he refuses to abandon the truth when suffering arrives without an invitation.

4. Paul and Silas Were Beaten in Philippi but Continued Praising God

Acts 16:19–25 records one of the clearest examples of opposition arising from faithful ministry. Paul had commanded a spirit of divination to come out of a damsel whose masters had profited from her soothsaying. When those masters realized that their hope of financial gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and brought them before the authorities. The accusation presented publicly concerned disturbing the city and teaching unlawful customs, but the narrative identifies the loss of financial profit as the immediate occasion of their anger. That distinction deserves attention. Religious opposition sometimes conceals a financial interest beneath respectable language about public order and community protection. The men were not primarily concerned about defending sound doctrine. Their profitable arrangement had been interrupted. Apparently, a miraculous deliverance becomes less impressive to certain businessmen when the bookkeeping department discovers that the income has disappeared.

The magistrates commanded Paul and Silas to be beaten, and Acts 16:23 records that many stripes were laid upon them before they were cast into prison. The jailer placed them in the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks. These were not imaginary injuries invented for a dramatic ministry report. The men had suffered physical punishment and imprisonment during their apostolic missionary work. Yet Acts 16:25 declares, “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” Their circumstances did not become comfortable merely because they prayed. Their backs still bore the consequences of the beating, and the prison remained a prison.

Nevertheless, their testimony continued. They were not praising their own courage or demanding an audience to admire their endurance. They were directing their attention toward God. A man who can praise the Lord with his feet in the stocks has learned something about faithfulness that cannot be purchased with a comfortable preaching engagement.

The remainder of Acts 16 also provides a necessary correction to the idea that faithful suffering requires surrendering every lawful protection. Following the earthquake, the conversion of the jailer, and the events of that night, Paul revealed that he and Silas were Roman citizens who had been beaten publicly without condemnation. Acts 16:37 records Paul's objection to the unlawful treatment, and the magistrates subsequently came and besought them before requesting their departure. Paul did not pretend the injustice was acceptable merely because he had endured it patiently. He exercised legitimate legal standing without abandoning his testimony. That example deserves consideration whenever a preacher claims that appealing to lawful rights demonstrates insufficient faith. Scripture does not command Christians to manufacture additional suffering by refusing every available protection. The evangelist must distinguish enduring unavoidable affliction from needlessly inviting injury. Paul knew how to sing in prison, but he also knew when to remind the authorities that beating Roman citizens without trial was not exactly an admirable exercise of Roman justice.

5. Paul's Catalogue of Suffering Was a Record of Service, Not an Advertisement for Sympathy

Second Corinthians 11:23–28 contains Paul's extraordinary account of suffering during his apostolic ministry. He describes receiving stripes, being beaten with rods, suffering stoning, enduring shipwrecks, encountering dangers during journeys, and experiencing hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness. The passage occurs within Paul's defense of his apostolic ministry against false apostles and deceptive workers who were influencing the Corinthian believers. His catalogue of suffering was not presented as proof that every Christian minister must experience identical circumstances. Paul occupied a distinctive apostolic position, and the miraculous signs associated with that ministry cannot simply be transferred to modern evangelists. Nevertheless, his experience establishes that genuine service to Christ may involve substantial sacrifice. The apostle's hardships were not evidence that the gospel lacked power. They demonstrated the cost of proclaiming truth in a hostile world.

Particularly revealing is Paul's description of dangers arising from different sources. He mentions perils of waters, robbers, his own countrymen, the heathen, cities, wilderness, sea, and false brethren. The inclusion of false brethren is important because opposition

does not always arrive wearing the obvious uniform of unbelief. Religious men may oppose sound doctrine, manipulate believers, or attempt to discredit faithful ministers while claiming to serve God. Paul had experienced resistance from people who possessed religious language but lacked fidelity to the truth. This reality requires discernment rather than universal suspicion. An evangelist should not assume everyone who questions him is a false brother, yet neither should he imagine that every person carrying a Bible necessarily loves sound doctrine. Galatians 2:4 records false brethren attempting to bring believers into bondage, demonstrating that doctrinal corruption can accompany religious association. The most dangerous opposition is not always the man openly rejecting Scripture; sometimes it is the fellow carrying a Bible while quietly trying to replace what it teaches.

Second Corinthians 11:28 adds something frequently overlooked: “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” Paul carried concern for believers and congregations alongside the external hardships of missionary labor. His suffering was not limited to physical violence or uncomfortable travel. The continuing responsibilities of ministry weighed upon him. Modern evangelists should recognize that faithful gospel labor can involve spiritual concern, difficult decisions, repeated questions, financial uncertainty, and physical exhaustion. Such burdens must be handled responsibly rather than exaggerated into evidence of extraordinary holiness. Paul did not present his hardships to establish that neglecting health, family, or ordinary obligations was a ministerial virtue. His testimony concerned actual sacrifices made in fulfilling his apostolic calling. A preacher does not become more spiritual by destroying himself through needless disorder, but neither should he expect biblical ministry to operate forever at the convenience of his personal comfort.

6. Not Every Angry Listener Is Persecuting the Preacher for Righteousness

First Peter 2:20 asks, “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?” The verse then contrasts suffering for wrongdoing with suffering while doing well. That distinction should be printed in large letters and placed where every preacher can read it before announcing that somebody has persecuted him. The historical audience consisted of believers receiving instruction concerning their conduct under difficult circumstances, and Peter's principle remains plainly applicable. Suffering for personal misconduct is not the same thing as suffering for righteousness. A preacher who lies about his accomplishments, mistreats people, mishandles money, or behaves arrogantly should not claim the crown of persecution when others object. The Bible does not transform dishonesty into holiness because the dishonest man possesses a ministerial

title. If a preacher creates his own trouble through foolishness, he ought to repent of the foolishness rather than ask the congregation to admire the trouble.

First Peter 3:15–17 supplies the proper manner of Christian testimony. Believers are instructed to sanctify the Lord God in their hearts and be ready to give an answer concerning their hope “with meekness and fear.” Peter also emphasizes having a good conscience so that false accusations may be exposed by honorable conduct. Verse 17 declares that suffering for well doing, if the will of God be so, is better than suffering for evil doing. The evangelist must therefore examine not only what he says but how he conducts himself. Biblical boldness does not require personal insults, needless provocation, dishonest accusations, or contemptuous treatment of sincere questions. There is a difference between condemning false doctrine and making an enemy through unnecessary rudeness. The message of the cross may offend unbelievers, but the preacher should not become an additional stumbling block through conduct that Scripture itself condemns.

First Peter 4:15–16 makes the distinction even sharper by warning believers against suffering as murderers, thieves, evildoers, or busybodies in other men's matters. Peter then contrasts such conduct with suffering as a Christian. The passage does not give every preacher permission to claim persecution whenever somebody criticizes him. He must first determine whether the criticism concerns his faithful testimony or his improper behavior. An evangelist should be willing to hear legitimate correction and acknowledge actual mistakes. Proverbs 15:1 declares, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” Colossians 4:6 commands speech with grace, seasoned with salt. These instructions do not weaken biblical conviction. They prevent the preacher's flesh from masquerading as spiritual courage. The world may hate the gospel without any assistance from the evangelist's bad manners. There is no biblical requirement that the preacher help the opposition develop additional reasons to dislike him.

7. Faithfulness Must Continue When Invitations, Finances, and Encouragement Disappear

Second Timothy 4:3–4 warns that a time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine but will gather teachers according to their own lusts, having itching ears. They will turn away from truth and be turned unto fables. Paul immediately follows that warning with the command to Timothy to watch, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of his ministry. The connection is unmistakable. Timothy was to remain faithful precisely when the religious environment became increasingly hostile toward sound doctrine. The preacher cannot determine his message according to which subjects preserve invitations or which convictions generate the largest offerings. Galatians 1:10 asks whether Paul sought to please men or God and declares that serving human approval

would contradict his service to Christ. A preacher who sells his doctrine to preserve his income has discovered a profitable occupation, but he has abandoned the responsibility of a faithful steward.

The pressure may be especially difficult when an evangelist depends upon the hospitality and support of churches. A pastor may decline another invitation because the preacher addressed an unpopular passage. A congregation may prefer someone who offers encouraging stories without confronting doctrinal error. Financial support may decrease, travel arrangements may become uncertain, and familiar opportunities may disappear. These possibilities require wisdom and honesty, not bitterness. An evangelist should examine whether opposition results from faithful preaching or from mistakes he needs to correct. He should also avoid interpreting every canceled meeting as evidence that the host church has rejected God. Circumstances change, churches face legitimate financial limitations, and ministers sometimes disagree without either party becoming an enemy of Christ. Nevertheless, a preacher must not surrender salvation by grace, the authority of Scripture, or necessary biblical distinctions merely to remain popular. When the offering plate becomes the final authority, the preacher's convictions are only as secure as the next congregation's generosity.

Faithful endurance also requires attention to spiritual and practical responsibilities. Paul instructed Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16 to take heed to himself and to the doctrine, and he warned in 2 Timothy 2:16 against profane and vain babblings. The evangelist must guard his teaching while maintaining his own walk with God. He should pray, study, seek sound fellowship, fulfill family obligations, and recognize the legitimate need for rest. Even Paul experienced periods of difficulty and concern, as 2 Corinthians 7:5 describes troubles without and fears within. Scripture does not require preachers to pretend that exhaustion is imaginary or that every burden can be solved by shouting another sermon. Neither should temporary discouragement become an excuse for abandoning the ministry. Second Timothy 4:7 records Paul's testimony: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” The objective is not merely to begin with enthusiasm but to finish faithfully. The preacher who burns every responsibility to maintain his reputation may leave an impressive flame, but the Lord commanded him to finish his course, not set his household on fire.

Conclusion

The New Testament does not conceal the difficulties associated with faithful gospel ministry. Paul commanded Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ and warned that godly living would encounter persecution. Acts 8 records believers scattered through persecution while continuing to proclaim the word. Acts 16

demonstrates Paul and Silas enduring unjust punishment without abandoning their testimony. Second Corinthians 11 reveals the extraordinary hardships of Paul's apostolic labor, including physical danger, material deprivation, opposition, and continuing concern for the churches. These passages establish that faithfulness cannot be measured by the absence of difficulty. They also establish that suffering must be interpreted honestly, with proper attention to its cause and biblical setting. Not every evangelist will experience imprisonment, violent persecution, or the particular hardships associated with Paul's apostleship. Nevertheless, every faithful servant must recognize that the gospel's authority does not depend upon the world's approval, and the responsibility to proclaim Christ does not disappear when circumstances become unpleasant.

This truth requires courage governed by Scripture rather than personal pride. The evangelist must not soften the gospel to preserve popularity, but neither should he manufacture enemies through arrogance or unnecessary confrontation. He must be willing to lose invitations rather than corrupt sound doctrine, while remaining humble enough to recognize legitimate correction. He should accept reasonable financial sacrifice without manipulating congregations, maintain family responsibilities without pretending that ministry requires their abandonment, and endure discouragement without converting every disappointment into a dramatic spiritual battle. The preacher's integrity matters just as much when he is opposed as when he is applauded. An honest man does not become dishonest because criticism becomes painful, and a faithful servant does not acquire permission to mistreat others because he believes his ministry is important. The Lord who commanded Timothy to endure afflictions also commanded him to preach with longsuffering and doctrine. Those instructions belong together. Biblical courage is not the absence of difficulty, the enjoyment of controversy, or the stubborn defense of personal mistakes. It is obedience to Jesus Christ when obedience costs more than the preacher expected to pay.

The final measure of an evangelist's ministry will not be the number of hardships he endured, the enemies he accumulated, or the emotional effect of his most dramatic persecution stories. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds believers that their service will be examined at the judgment seat of Christ. The preacher will answer for the message he delivered, the doctrine he taught, the responsibilities he fulfilled, and the manner in which he conducted himself under favorable and unfavorable circumstances. The crowd may applaud him one day and reject him the next. Churches may welcome him for years before disagreements arise. Financial support may increase or decrease, opportunities may open or close, and physical strength may diminish with time. None of those changes can alter the authority of the written word or the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Paul did not tell

Timothy to become popular, manufacture sympathy, or preserve his reputation at any cost. He told him to endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of his ministry. The man who preaches only while the crowd agrees with him has never discovered whether he serves Christ or his audience. The man who remains faithful when applause becomes opposition has learned that the gospel belongs to a Master greater than the congregation. The crowd may turn against the preacher, but the preacher must never turn against the Book. Endure hardness. Preach the Word. Finish the work.

9 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – Preaching Without Turning the Gospel Into a Business

Key Passage: 2 Corinthians 2:17 (KJV)

“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”

Introduction

There is nothing wrong with a church supporting a faithful preacher, but there is something terribly wrong when the preacher begins treating the churches as a collection of customers. Somewhere between preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ and calculating the financial potential of the next meeting, a man can lose sight of why he entered the ministry in the first place. He may begin with a Bible, a burden for souls, and an honest desire to serve Jesus Christ, only to discover that religious people will sometimes reward a polished performance more generously than faithful exposition. Before long, the sermon becomes a sales presentation, the invitation becomes a fundraising opportunity, and the congregation becomes a room full of potential contributors. The same fellow who once preached that salvation was freely given through Jesus Christ now behaves as though spiritual blessing must pass through his personal collection plate. When the preacher starts looking at souls and seeing dollar signs, something has gone terribly wrong between the pulpit and the treasury.

The apostle Paul understood both sides of this matter, which is precisely why modern preachers ought to pay attention to what he actually wrote. He defended the legitimate right of gospel ministers to receive material support in 1 Corinthians 9, yet he also warned against corrupting the word of God in 2 Corinthians 2:17. He rejected flattering words and the cloak of covetousness in 1 Thessalonians 2, while insisting upon financial arrangements that avoided legitimate accusations of dishonesty in 2 Corinthians 8. Those

are not contradictory positions. They are different parts of the same biblical standard. A faithful preacher may receive assistance without becoming a profiteer, and a faithful church may provide financial support without purchasing control over the man's doctrine. The problem is neither money itself nor the ordinary expenses associated with gospel ministry. The problem begins when money becomes the preacher's master, the message becomes a commodity, and financial advantage determines what he says, where he goes, and whom he considers worthy of his attention.

This subject must be handled carefully because religious corruption thrives wherever biblical distinctions are ignored. Some people assume that every preacher receiving an offering must be dishonest, while others believe that questioning a minister's financial conduct demonstrates rebellion against God. Both positions are foolish. Scripture authorizes legitimate support while condemning covetousness, deception, manipulation, and the exploitation of believers. The evangelist must therefore understand the difference between receiving assistance for the work and using the work as an excuse to accumulate wealth through religious pressure. We must examine what the Bible teaches concerning the preacher's right to support, his responsibility to handle that support honestly, the dangers of extravagant ambition, and the corruption that results when spiritual promises are attached to financial demands. There is a biblical standard for all of it, and the standard does not disappear because somebody has acquired an impressive title. The gospel is not merchandise, the pulpit is not a cash register, and the souls of men are not entries on a fundraising spreadsheet.

1. Corrupting the Word of God Is More Serious Than Corrupting the Collection Plate

Second Corinthians 2:17 contains a warning that ought to make every gospel preacher examine his ministry: “For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” Paul distinguished his ministry from those who corrupted God's word, and he identified sincerity and accountability before God as essential characteristics of his preaching. The immediate context concerns the proclamation of Christ and the effect of that testimony upon those who receive or reject it. In verses 15–16, Paul describes the ministry's different consequences among those being saved and those perishing. His concern was not simply whether a preacher could produce an impressive public response. It was whether he faithfully delivered the message entrusted to him. A man who changes the gospel to satisfy financial supporters has not merely made an unfortunate business decision. He has tampered with divine revelation.

The corruption may begin so gradually that the preacher barely notices the change. At first, he avoids an unpopular subject because the congregation seems uncomfortable. Later, he

discovers that certain doctrines reduce invitations, that certain warnings discourage donations, and that certain wealthy supporters prefer a preacher who knows when to remain silent. Soon the financial consequences become part of his sermon preparation. He still quotes Scripture, still talks about Jesus Christ, and still insists that his ministry is biblical, but the message has acquired an invisible editor. That editor does not carry a Bible. He carries a checkbook. Galatians 1:10 asks, “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?” Paul understood that serving Christ and becoming a servant of human approval are competing obligations when men's demands contradict the truth. The moment a donor's preferences become more authoritative than Scripture, the preacher has sold something he never owned.

Paul's statement that he spoke “in the sight of God” places the entire ministry under an authority no financial contributor can purchase. The preacher may deceive a congregation concerning his motives, exaggerate his accomplishments before supporters, or conceal the influence money exercises over his doctrine. He cannot conceal those things from God. Hebrews 4:13 declares that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. The evangelist must therefore examine not only whether his sermons contain correct statements but whether his financial ambitions have begun controlling which truths he is willing to proclaim. A man can preach a technically accurate message while deliberately avoiding everything that might jeopardize the offering. Such calculated silence may preserve his popularity, but it cannot satisfy the responsibility described in Acts 20:27, where Paul declared that he had not shunned to declare all the counsel of God. The preacher who permits money to govern his message has already begun corrupting the ministry, even before anybody discovers a missing dollar.

2. We Preach Not Ourselves, and We Must Not Handle the Word Deceitfully

Second Corinthians 4:1–2 develops the matter further. Paul writes that having received the ministry, he and his fellowlaborers fainted not, but had renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. He specifically rejected walking in craftiness and handling the word of God deceitfully, choosing instead the manifestation of truth before God and the conscience of men. Those statements establish a standard reaching beyond the sermon itself. The preacher must not build his ministry upon concealed arrangements, deceptive presentations, or calculated manipulation. He should not claim accomplishments that never occurred, present exaggerated figures as verified results, or manufacture stories designed to extract money from sympathetic listeners. The truth does not need dishonesty to finance its proclamation. If a ministry cannot explain what it does without exaggerating, concealing, or manipulating, its problem is not insufficient public relations. Its problem is

insufficient integrity. A dishonest man does not become honest by placing a Bible beneath the hand that is reaching for the offering.

Verse 5 provides the governing principle: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” That declaration destroys the notion that evangelistic ministry exists primarily to advance the preacher's reputation, income, or influence. Jesus Christ is the subject of the proclamation, and the preacher is a servant acting for His sake. The evangelist should therefore be willing to explain the gospel to someone who cannot afford a book, provide biblical instruction to a congregation with limited resources, and treat poorer believers with the same respect extended to wealthy supporters. James 2:1–4 warns against showing partiality according to outward wealth and appearance. Although the passage concerns conduct within the assembly, its condemnation of favoritism supplies an obvious warning to ministers. A preacher who suddenly becomes attentive when an expensive automobile enters the parking lot may need less instruction about fundraising and considerably more instruction about the fear of God.

The temptation to preach oneself becomes especially dangerous when religious branding replaces biblical substance. There is nothing inherently wrong with identifying a ministry, publishing sound teaching, maintaining a website, or distributing books and study materials. Such activities may serve legitimate purposes and involve real production expenses. The corruption begins when every sermon becomes an advertisement, every testimony becomes a promotional opportunity, and every spiritual conversation eventually leads to another request for money. Colossians 1:18 declares that Christ must have the preeminence. First Corinthians 3:5 identifies Paul and Apollos as ministers through whom others believed, while God remained the source of the increase. The evangelist is not building a private kingdom beneath a Christian label. He is serving the Lord who purchased the church with His blood. A ministry may have a recognizable name, but the name that matters most is Jesus Christ. When the messenger becomes the merchandise, the message has already been pushed toward the back of the store.

3. Paul Rejected Flattering Words and the Cloak of Covetousness

First Thessalonians 2:3–4 establishes the character of Paul's gospel ministry. He declared that his exhortation did not arise from deceit, uncleanness, or guile, and continued, “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.” The language of stewardship is unmistakable. Paul had been entrusted with the gospel, and his responsibility was to please the God who examined his heart. That principle must govern every evangelist receiving financial assistance for ministry. The preacher cannot claim to be a faithful

steward while manipulating the people supporting him. He must not preach what wealthy contributors prefer simply because their approval makes the ministry more comfortable. Truth must govern his message, and sincerity must govern his conduct. A minister who knows exactly which doctrines disappear whenever his largest supporter enters the room has allowed his financial arrangements to become part of his theology.

First Thessalonians 2:5 exposes the specific danger: “For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness.” Flattery and covetousness make an effective combination for a dishonest religious salesman. Flattery tells the listener what he wants to hear, while covetousness quietly calculates what might be obtained from him afterward. A preacher may praise a wealthy donor's exceptional spirituality, imply that generous contributions demonstrate superior faith, or suggest that financial assistance guarantees unusual favor from God. Such behavior turns spiritual language into an instrument of manipulation. Paul rejected it. The evangelist should appreciate legitimate generosity without turning appreciation into calculated praise designed to produce additional offerings. Likewise, he should be willing to correct an influential supporter when Scripture requires it. The man who rebukes poor church members with enthusiasm but approaches wealthy sinners with extraordinary diplomatic caution has developed a suspiciously expensive understanding of Christian kindness.

Paul's example becomes even more striking in 1 Thessalonians 2:6–9. He refused to seek glory from men, described his gentle care among the believers, and reminded them of his labor and travail. Verse 9 records that he labored night and day because he would not be chargeable unto them while preaching the gospel. Paul possessed a legitimate right to support, as he explained elsewhere, but he voluntarily limited that right in circumstances where doing so served the work. This was not a universal command requiring every preacher to maintain outside employment, nor was Paul suggesting that receiving support made a minister inferior. He was demonstrating that the gospel mattered more than his personal financial advantage. Sometimes a preacher must sacrifice a legitimate privilege to remove an unnecessary obstacle. A faithful servant may receive support without shame, but he should also possess enough integrity to continue serving when the circumstances do not produce the offering he hoped to receive.

4. Scripture Authorizes Financial Support Without Making the Preacher a Religious Merchant

First Corinthians 9:7–14 provides one of the strongest biblical defenses of legitimate ministerial support. Paul uses several practical comparisons, asking who goes to warfare at his own charges, who plants a vineyard without eating its fruit, and who feeds a flock without partaking of its milk. He then appeals to the law concerning the ox that treadeth

out the corn and applies the principle to those laboring in spiritual things. Verse 14 concludes, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” That statement cannot be dismissed merely because some preachers have abused financial support. God's provision remains legitimate even when dishonest men corrupt its practice. Travel costs money, food costs money, printed materials cost money, and a preacher's household possesses ordinary needs. Expecting a faithful evangelist to labor continually while refusing every form of assistance is not superior spirituality. It may simply be an unwillingness to participate responsibly in the work.

The immediate context, however, must be interpreted accurately. Paul was defending rights associated with his apostolic ministry, and his particular authority cannot automatically be transferred in every respect to every modern preacher. Nevertheless, the principle concerning legitimate material support for gospel labor remains clear. Galatians 6:6 directs those taught in the word to communicate unto those who teach in all good things. Philippians 4:15–18 records the Philippian believers assisting Paul's ministry, and Paul received their contribution with thanksgiving. These passages demonstrate that financial cooperation can be honorable and spiritually useful. A congregation may provide an evangelist with travel expenses, lodging, meals, an honorarium, or a love offering without turning his ministry into a business. The important considerations are honesty, propriety, and the purpose of the assistance. Money used to support faithful preaching is not necessarily filthy lucre. Money obtained through deceitful preaching is another matter entirely, regardless of how loudly somebody blesses the offering before collecting it.

Paul nevertheless chose not to exercise certain rights in particular circumstances. First Corinthians 9:15–18 explains his willingness to preach without charge rather than abuse his power in the gospel. Verse 18 speaks of making “the gospel of Christ without charge.” That statement concerns Paul's voluntary conduct and must not be twisted into a prohibition against selling legitimately produced books, receiving donations, or recovering the costs of educational materials. The gospel itself is not merchandise, but the physical resources used to distribute sound teaching may involve ordinary expenses. A printed Bible costs money to manufacture, yet the paper manufacturer does not thereby become the author of salvation. The issue is whether payment is being demanded as a condition of receiving God's saving grace or whether legitimate resources are being provided through honest transactions. A Christian may sell a Bible study workbook while still freely explaining salvation to a sinner. The finished work of Jesus Christ is not for sale, but the printer who produces the study material still expects to be paid. Biblical honesty understands the difference.

5. Financial Accountability Protects the Ministry From Legitimate Accusations

Second Corinthians 8:20–21 reveals Paul's concern for integrity in handling financial assistance intended for believers in need. He writes of “Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us,” and continues, “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” The immediate context concerns the collection being administered for the saints, not a modern evangelist's personal ministry budget. Nevertheless, Paul's principles of transparent administration and protection against reasonable accusations apply wherever Christian workers handle entrusted money. He did not announce that his apostolic calling made financial questions irrelevant. He arranged matters carefully because the integrity of the ministry deserved protection. That example ought to settle the strange idea that requesting ordinary accountability from a preacher demonstrates insufficient faith. Paul was an apostle, and he still took precautions concerning money. A modern evangelist who thinks himself too spiritual for accountability has apparently promoted himself above the apostle.

Responsible administration may include maintaining accurate records of contributions, distinguishing personal expenses from ministry expenditures, documenting travel costs, preserving receipts, and involving trustworthy individuals in appropriate oversight. The precise arrangements will differ according to the size and structure of the ministry, but honesty should never be optional. A small evangelistic operation may require relatively simple bookkeeping, while a larger organization handling substantial contributions should establish correspondingly careful procedures. Privacy must also be respected. Financial accountability does not require publicly exposing every donor's identity, private circumstances, or contribution amount. It requires that those responsible for the funds can demonstrate that money was handled according to its stated purpose. If contributions were designated for a particular project, those restrictions should be honored or honestly addressed when circumstances change. The preacher who claims that bookkeeping interferes with spiritual ministry may discover that proper bookkeeping would have prevented several of his most embarrassing ministry problems.

The same standard applies to ministry reports and fundraising statements. An evangelist should not announce that thousands were saved when the available information establishes only that thousands attended a meeting or viewed a presentation. He should not count the same profession repeatedly to inflate results or describe uncertain figures as verified accomplishments. Nor should he imply that every donated dollar produces a guaranteed number of conversions. First Corinthians 3:6 reminds us that God gives the increase. Ministers can report their work, opportunities, expenses, and known responses, but they cannot manufacture spiritual results through arithmetic. Second Corinthians 4:2 rejects dishonesty and deceitful handling of God's word, and that principle should govern how ministry accomplishments are presented. Donors deserve truthful communication,

not religious advertisements that become more dramatic every time another offering is needed. A faithful ministry report tells people what actually happened. A dishonest one tells them whatever makes the next financial appeal more successful.

6. The Love of Money Turns Godliness Into an Instrument of Gain

First Timothy 6:5 identifies corrupt men who suppose “that gain is godliness,” and commands, “from such withdraw thyself.” Paul was warning Timothy about false teaching, corrupt motives, and disputes associated with men who lacked the truth. The connection between religious profession and financial ambition is unmistakable. Some men confuse material prosperity with divine approval, treating wealth as evidence of spiritual superiority. Others exploit that confusion by promising extraordinary blessings to people willing to contribute money. Verse 6 immediately corrects the matter: “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” The contrast is deliberate. Genuine godliness is not a method for manufacturing financial wealth. It involves faithfulness to God and satisfaction with His provision. A preacher who teaches that financial prosperity proves God's approval must somehow explain why the apostle Paul endured hunger, hardship, and material deprivation during his ministry. Apparently, Paul's missionary accounts would not satisfy the prosperity preacher's advertising department.

First Timothy 6:9–10 warns that those determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, followed by the declaration, “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” Paul does not teach that possessing money is inherently sinful or that every financially successful Christian must be covetous. The warning concerns the desire for riches and the destructive consequences of making wealth the controlling ambition. The passage specifically notes that some have erred from the faith through covetousness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. An evangelist may begin with legitimate financial needs and gradually allow those needs to become an appetite that ordinary provision can never satisfy. A modest ministry budget becomes a demand for luxury. Necessary transportation becomes a symbol of status. Reasonable compensation becomes an entitlement to extraordinary wealth. Covetousness is a remarkably poor servant because it eventually decides that everything God has provided is insufficient and everything somebody else possesses ought to be transferred into its own account.

Acts 8:18–23 supplies a striking historical warning through Simon, who offered money in an attempt to obtain the power associated with the laying on of the apostles' hands. Peter rebuked him sharply, declaring, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” The event belongs to the transitional apostolic circumstances recorded in Acts, and its precise manifestations must not be treated as ordinary modern ministry procedures. Nevertheless, the principle condemning

the attempted purchase of divine gifts is unmistakable. Salvation cannot be bought, spiritual authority cannot be purchased, and God's favor is not merchandise controlled by religious entrepreneurs. An evangelist who promises healing, forgiveness, spiritual advancement, or guaranteed prosperity in exchange for a particular donation has entered dangerous territory. Giving may be an act of Christian obedience and generosity, but it is not a financial lever by which sinners force blessings from heaven. The Holy Ghost is not operating a heavenly vending machine, and the preacher has not been appointed to collect the coins.

7. The Evangelist Must Answer to Christ, Not to His Financial Appetite

First Corinthians 4:1–2 establishes the proper understanding of ministerial responsibility: “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” A steward manages what belongs to another. That principle destroys the illusion that the evangelist owns the gospel, the congregations he serves, or the contributions entrusted to his ministry. Christ is the Master, and the preacher's responsibility is faithful administration. This does not mean that every personal possession acquired through legitimate compensation remains the property of a contributing church. It means that a minister must conduct his work in recognition of divine accountability and ordinary financial honesty. He cannot excuse deceit because the money will supposedly advance a good cause. Stealing ten dollars to purchase gospel literature does not become righteousness when the thief writes “missionary expense” beside the amount.

The evangelist must also recognize that money can influence relationships even when no direct wrongdoing has yet occurred. A congregation offering substantial support should not receive superior doctrinal treatment, while a small church struggling financially should not be considered unworthy of serious preaching. James 2 warns believers against showing favoritism toward the wealthy, and 1 Thessalonians 2:6 records Paul's refusal to seek glory from men. These principles should govern the preacher's conduct whether he addresses a large congregation or a handful of believers meeting in modest surroundings. He should be grateful for generosity without becoming submissive to financial influence. Likewise, churches must not imagine that providing an offering gives them authority to require unscriptural preaching. Both sides must recognize that the gospel belongs to Jesus Christ. A wealthy donor may help pay the preacher's expenses, but he does not thereby purchase the right to edit the sermon. The man who accepts that arrangement has made the wrong person his employer.

Second Corinthians 5:10 declares that believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to the things done in the body. This judgment concerns

Christian service and reward, not a second attempt to earn salvation. First Corinthians 3:11–15 further explains the examination of work built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. The evangelist's ministry will ultimately be measured by the Lord who knows every motive, every compromise, every dishonest statement, and every faithful sacrifice. The public may never discover that an offering was manipulated or a ministry report exaggerated, but the absence of public exposure is not the same thing as divine approval. Conversely, an obscure preacher who faithfully proclaimed the gospel with limited resources may possess work of lasting value despite receiving little recognition. The judgment seat of Christ will not be impressed by a ministry's financial statements merely because the numbers are large. The Lord will examine what was actually done, why it was done, and whether the servant remained faithful.

Conclusion

The Bible establishes a clear distinction between supporting faithful gospel ministry and turning that ministry into a profitable religious enterprise. Second Corinthians 2:17 condemns corruption of God's word, while Second Corinthians 4 requires sincerity and rejects dishonesty. First Thessalonians 2 exposes the danger of flattering words and the cloak of covetousness. First Corinthians 9 establishes the legitimacy of material support for gospel labor while demonstrating Paul's willingness to surrender personal rights when circumstances required it. Second Corinthians 8 supplies principles of financial accountability, and First Timothy 6 warns against those who suppose that gain is godliness. These teachings are not difficult to reconcile unless a preacher has already decided that his financial ambitions deserve protection from Scripture. A faithful evangelist may receive offerings, assistance, compensation, and legitimate resources without dishonoring his calling. The corruption begins when those provisions become the controlling purpose of the ministry. Money may support the work of an evangelist, but it must never become the reason the evangelist performs the work.

Churches and individual believers likewise possess responsibilities concerning their financial participation in gospel ministry. They should support faithful labor when able, exercise discernment concerning the doctrine and conduct of those requesting assistance, and avoid the extremes of gullibility and unreasonable suspicion. A preacher is not automatically dishonest because he receives money, and a ministry is not automatically faithful because it advertises charitable intentions. Scripture requires examination rather than blind enthusiasm. Believers should recognize that honest ministry involves expenses, that financial contributions may advance legitimate work, and that responsible stewardship protects the integrity of the gospel's public testimony. At the same time, nobody should be manipulated into giving through manufactured guilt, promises of

guaranteed prosperity, or claims that refusing a particular appeal demonstrates disobedience to God. Second Corinthians 9:7 declares, “God loveth a cheerful giver,” not a frightened customer pressured into completing a religious transaction. Christian generosity should flow from willing obedience, not from a preacher's ability to frighten people into opening their wallets.

The evangelist must finally remember that his commission concerns the proclamation of Jesus Christ, not the accumulation of personal wealth through religious influence. He may travel extensively, distribute books, maintain a ministry website, receive donations, and employ legitimate means of supporting his work. None of those activities is inherently corrupt. The question is whether everything remains governed by truth, honesty, stewardship, and fidelity to the gospel. Paul preached Christ rather than himself, rejected covetousness, defended legitimate support, and took precautions concerning financial administration. That is the biblical balance worth preserving. A preacher should be able to explain his financial conduct without anger, justify his requests without manipulation, and continue preaching the truth even when doing so costs him financially. The Lord did not appoint evangelists to become merchants selling spiritual influence to the highest bidder. He entrusted them with a gospel purchased through the blood of Jesus Christ and offered to sinners by grace through faith. The cross was not a business opportunity, the resurrection was not a fundraising campaign, and eternal life is not a product waiting for the preacher to establish a price. The gospel is God's message, the ministry is Christ's work, and the evangelist is His servant. Let the churches support faithful labor, let the preacher handle every dollar honestly, and let nobody mistake the treasury for the throne of God. The pulpit is not for sale, the gospel is not merchandise, and the souls of men are worth infinitely more than the money a religious salesman hopes to collect from them.

10 of 10 – The Work of the Evangelist – Make Full Proof of Thy Ministry Before the Lord Returns

Key Passage: 2 Timothy 4:5 (KJV)

“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

Introduction

One day the evangelist will preach his last sermon, close his Bible for the final time, and discover that the opinions of the crowd were never the final measure of his ministry. The

conference invitations will cease, the speaking engagements will end, the ministry reports will be completed, and the collection plates will no longer require his attention. The impressive photographs, enthusiastic testimonials, expensive promotional materials, and carefully maintained reputation will remain behind with everything else belonging to this present world. Then comes the accounting that matters. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” That ought to sober every man who has ever stood behind a pulpit claiming to speak for Jesus Christ. The Lord will not require a denominational committee to explain whether the preacher was faithful, and He will not need to consult social media to determine whether the ministry was successful. A man may spend his entire life convincing people that he is a tremendous preacher, but the judgment seat of Christ will settle whether he was a faithful servant.

Paul understood this reality when he delivered his solemn charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1–8. He began by invoking the authority of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom. He commanded Timothy to preach the word, remain faithful in favorable and unfavorable circumstances, reprove, rebuke, exhort, endure afflictions, and perform the work of an evangelist. Then Paul spoke of his own approaching departure and declared, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Those statements were not the boasting of a religious celebrity preparing an impressive retirement announcement. They were the testimony of a servant who had endured the responsibilities of his calling and now stood near the conclusion of his earthly labor. The contrast with modern religious ambition is unmistakable. Paul was not counting how many people knew his name. He was concerned that he had completed the work entrusted to him by Jesus Christ.

This concluding examination gathers the responsibilities that belong to genuine evangelistic ministry. The preacher must proclaim the gospel without changing its message, handle Scripture according to its proper doctrinal setting, maintain personal integrity, endure opposition, serve the churches without attempting to rule them, carry the truth beyond comfortable audiences, and refuse to turn spiritual influence into financial merchandise. These responsibilities cannot be separated from the command to make full proof of the ministry. Nor must Christian service be confused with the means of obtaining salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith apart from works, while the judgment seat of Christ concerns the examination of the believer's service. The evangelist is not working to purchase eternal life. He is serving the Saviour who has already purchased his redemption. The gospel settles how a sinner is saved; the judgment seat will reveal how the saved servant used the life entrusted to him. Confuse those two matters, and the entire ministry begins operating upon the wrong foundation.

1. The Evangelist's Final Accountability Is to Jesus Christ

Second Timothy 4:1 begins with a charge delivered “before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.” Paul deliberately places Timothy's ministerial responsibility beneath divine authority before issuing the command to preach. The language concerning Christ's appearing and kingdom must be respected within the broader prophetic revelation rather than used to erase distinctions between the Church Age, the catching away of believers, the Second Advent, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom. Nevertheless, the immediate purpose of the charge is unmistakable. Timothy must conduct his ministry knowing that Jesus Christ is the final Judge. The preacher is not free to invent his own definition of success merely because the surrounding religious culture prefers something easier. God has established the requirements, and the servant must answer to Him. A preacher who fears losing an invitation more than he fears disobeying Scripture has permitted the wrong authority to govern his ministry.

The first command following that solemn introduction is remarkably direct: “Preach the word.” Paul did not tell Timothy to build a personal following, become a professional entertainer, manufacture spiritual excitement, or discover a collection of fashionable subjects guaranteed to please the congregation. He commanded the proclamation of God's written revelation. The remaining instructions concerning reproof, rebuke, exhortation, longsuffering, and doctrine explain how that responsibility must be exercised. The evangelist must teach truth accurately, confront error when necessary, and remain patient without surrendering conviction. Second Timothy 3:16–17 had already established that Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. The preacher's responsibility is therefore defined by the Bible rather than public expectation. He may possess considerable speaking ability, but that ability does not authorize him to replace exposition with performance. A magnificent sermon containing very little Scripture may impress the congregation, but impressive religious noise is not automatically obedience to the command to preach the word.

This accountability should govern every decision an evangelist makes concerning his ministry. Before accepting an invitation, he should consider whether the opportunity permits faithful proclamation. Before presenting a disputed doctrine, he should examine whether Scripture actually supports his interpretation. Before requesting financial assistance, he should determine whether his statements are truthful and his needs legitimate. Before criticizing another minister, he should consider whether he possesses the biblical evidence necessary to justify the accusation. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” The requirement is

faithfulness, not popularity, financial prosperity, or personal importance. A steward administers something belonging to another, and the evangelist has been entrusted with the message of Jesus Christ. He does not own the gospel, the churches, or the people who receive his preaching. The man who remembers that he is a steward will spend considerably less time defending his throne, because he knows he was never given one.

2. A Faithful Evangelist Must Finish With the Same Gospel He Began Preaching

The greatest responsibility of an evangelist remains the faithful proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:1–4 identifies that gospel through the death of Christ for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection the third day according to the Scriptures. Paul did not present salvation as a religious improvement program, a collection of ceremonies, or a partnership in which sinners contribute sufficient merit to complete Christ's redemption. Romans 4:5 declares that God justifies the ungodly who believe, while Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not of works. These truths must remain unchanged throughout the evangelist's ministry. A preacher may begin with sound doctrine and gradually become attracted to messages promising greater crowds, larger offerings, or more favorable publicity. But he has no authority to alter the gospel because another presentation appears financially or socially advantageous. The message that saves sinners does not become outdated merely because the preacher has become tired of repeating it.

Galatians 1:6–9 demonstrates the seriousness of this responsibility. Paul confronted those troubling believers by introducing another gospel, which he declared was not another legitimate message at all. The historical controversy involved the corruption of justification by grace through the introduction of requirements associated with the Mosaic law. Paul refused to tolerate that alteration, even declaring that an angel from heaven preaching a contrary gospel would be accursed. The evangelist must possess the same doctrinal firmness. Water baptism, religious ordinances, moral improvement, financial contributions, and obedience to the law must never be presented as competing requirements for obtaining justification in the present Church Age. Christian obedience has its proper place after salvation, but it cannot become the purchase price of eternal life. Ephesians 1:13 identifies believers as sealed with the Holy Spirit after hearing and believing the gospel. The evangelist who begins with grace and finishes by making salvation depend upon continued religious performance has abandoned the truth he was commissioned to proclaim.

Finishing faithfully also requires rightly dividing the word of truth. Second Timothy 2:15 commands study and proper division, establishing that every passage must be understood according to its audience, historical setting, and doctrinal purpose. The evangelist must

distinguish Israel from the Church, law from grace, and earthly covenant promises from the heavenly position of the body of Christ. He must not confuse the judgment seat of Christ with the great white throne or transform every passage concerning Christ's coming kingdom into an identical description of the believer's present circumstances. Sound doctrine protects the gospel from contradictions manufactured through careless interpretation. A preacher who knows how to produce excitement but cannot distinguish the dispensations may send sinners away more confused than when they arrived. The evangelist was never commissioned to throw every Bible verse into a theological blender and serve the resulting confusion as the whole counsel of God. He was commanded to study, rightly divide, and preach the truth.

3. Watch Thou in All Things Means the Preacher Must Examine Himself

Second Timothy 4:5 begins, “But watch thou in all things.” The command reaches beyond the delivery of sermons and requires continuing vigilance concerning the preacher's doctrine, conduct, responsibilities, and spiritual condition. Paul had already instructed Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them.” Those two responsibilities belong together. A man may defend sound doctrine publicly while allowing dishonesty, pride, bitterness, or immorality to corrupt his private life. Conversely, he may maintain a respectable public appearance while preaching serious doctrinal error. Neither condition constitutes faithful ministry. The evangelist must guard both what he teaches and how he lives. The Lord does not inspect only the polished portion of a man's life displayed behind the pulpit. A preacher who can identify everybody else's doctrinal errors but refuses to examine his own conduct has become an expert at inspecting windows while his own house is burning.

Personal holiness must be understood as the proper conduct of a saved man rather than a method of purchasing salvation. Ephesians 4:30 warns believers against grieving the Holy Spirit, while Ephesians 5:3–7 condemns fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, and corrupt conduct. First Thessalonians 4:3 declares, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” These instructions apply to Christians because they belong to Christ, not because their obedience must somehow complete His finished redemption. The evangelist is not exempt from them because his ministry appears successful. A crowded auditorium cannot sanctify an unclean life, and an impressive preaching schedule cannot excuse persistent dishonesty. He must be truthful with his family, faithful in his marriage, responsible in his personal obligations, and careful concerning his testimony before unbelievers. The preacher's public office does not place him above ordinary Christian obedience. It increases the seriousness of his responsibility to practice what he teaches.

Vigilance also requires the willingness to receive legitimate correction. Galatians 2:11–14 records Paul confronting Peter when his conduct contradicted the truth of the gospel. That example destroys the notion that ministerial importance establishes immunity from biblical examination. An evangelist should not become furious whenever somebody questions an interpretation, identifies an error, or requests an explanation of his conduct. Proverbs 12:1 declares that the man who hates reproof is brutish, and Proverbs 15:31–32 emphasizes the value of hearing correction. These principles do not require a preacher to surrender truth to every unreasonable critic. They require enough humility to distinguish sincere correction from malicious accusation. A minister who must always be right will eventually discover that the easiest way to maintain that illusion is to surround himself with people who never question him. The preacher who cannot be corrected by Scripture has not become spiritually mature. He has merely become difficult to teach.

4. Enduring Afflictions Means Remaining Faithful When Obedience Becomes Expensive

Paul's command to Timothy continues with the words, “endure afflictions.” Those instructions were not delivered by a man unfamiliar with suffering. Second Corinthians 11:23–28 records Paul's imprisonments, beatings, perils, deprivation, and continuing care for the churches. Acts 16 describes Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, while Acts 14 records Paul being stoned at Lystra. These events belong to Paul's distinctive apostolic and missionary ministry, and their extraordinary circumstances should not be transformed into a requirement that every modern evangelist must experience identical suffering. Nevertheless, they establish that genuine service to Christ may involve substantial hardship. The preacher must not conclude that opposition automatically demonstrates divine displeasure or that comfortable circumstances necessarily prove God's approval. If the absence of suffering were the measure of a successful ministry, somebody would have to explain why the apostle Paul spent so much time in prisons instead of luxury accommodations.

Second Timothy 3:12 declares, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” The statement concerns the opposition that accompanies faithful Christian living in a world hostile to righteousness. Such opposition may appear through ridicule, rejection, exclusion, financial loss, or more serious persecution. Yet Scripture also distinguishes genuine suffering for righteousness from consequences produced by personal wrongdoing. First Peter 4:15–16 warns believers against suffering as evildoers or busybodies while affirming the honor of suffering as Christians. The evangelist must not turn every disagreement into a persecution testimony. If he insults people unnecessarily, mishandles money, makes dishonest accusations, or behaves arrogantly, the resulting

criticism is not automatically an attack upon Jesus Christ. Biblical courage includes admitting mistakes and correcting conduct when Scripture requires it. A man who creates his own trouble through foolishness should repent of the foolishness instead of asking the congregation to admire the trouble.

The temptation to compromise becomes especially powerful when opposition threatens invitations, relationships, and financial support. Second Timothy 4:3–4 warns that people will not endure sound doctrine but will gather teachers according to their own lusts. A preacher may discover that certain truths reduce his popularity and that carefully avoiding those subjects protects his opportunities. Galatians 1:10 exposes the conflict between pleasing men and serving Christ. The evangelist must remain faithful without becoming needlessly combative, bitter, or careless concerning legitimate responsibilities. He should provide for his household, maintain practical wisdom, and recognize the need for rest without abandoning his calling. Paul instructed Timothy to endure afflictions, not manufacture them. The test of a preacher's convictions does not arrive when everybody agrees with him. It arrives when obedience threatens something he would prefer to keep. A conviction that disappears when the offering decreases was never worth very much.

5. Do the Work of an Evangelist Means Reaching Sinners and Strengthening Churches

The command to “do the work of an evangelist” identifies a responsibility that cannot be fulfilled merely by carrying the title. Ephesians 4:11–16 establishes that Christ gave evangelists and other ministers for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of His body. Acts 8 demonstrates Philip proclaiming Christ in Samaria, explaining Scripture to the Ethiopian eunuch, and continuing to preach through additional cities. Those passages reveal evangelistic labor directed toward the proclamation of Jesus Christ rather than the advancement of a religious personality. The evangelist must be able to explain the gospel to lost sinners, answer legitimate questions, and direct people toward salvation through faith in Christ. A man who spends decades entertaining established congregations while seldom making a serious effort to reach unbelievers should examine whether his ministry has drifted from its biblical purpose. A full calendar proves the preacher is busy. It does not necessarily prove he is doing the work assigned to him.

Acts 20:17–27 provides an additional example of ministerial responsibility through Paul's address to the elders of the church at Ephesus. The setting concerns his apostolic ministry and the oversight responsibilities of those elders, not an identical job description for every evangelist. Nevertheless, Paul's testimony establishes valuable principles. He reminded them of his humble service, trials, public teaching, and instruction from house to house. Verse 20 declares that he kept back nothing profitable, while verse 21 identifies his testimony concerning repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse

27 concludes, “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Paul had not limited his ministry to whatever subject happened to produce the most favorable reaction. He proclaimed what his hearers needed. The evangelist should likewise refuse to substitute fashionable entertainment for necessary truth. A preacher who knows what the congregation needs but deliberately withholds it to preserve popularity has confused keeping peace with keeping faith.

The work must also strengthen local churches rather than undermine them. First Corinthians 3:5–9 describes Paul and Apollos as ministers through whom believers received instruction, while God supplied the increase. The passage exposes the foolishness of creating competing factions around ministerial personalities. A visiting evangelist should respect legitimate pastoral oversight, cooperate with sound churches, encourage believers toward spiritual maturity, and refuse to recruit personal followers at the expense of the local assembly. Third John commends faithful assistance given to brethren serving for the Lord's name, demonstrating the value of cooperation in gospel labor. An evangelist may travel extensively or serve within a comparatively small geographical area, but distance is not the measure of his faithfulness. What matters is whether the message reaches sinners and strengthens believers. The church does not exist to provide an audience for the evangelist, and the evangelist does not exist to decorate the church calendar. Both exist under the authority of Jesus Christ, and neither has permission to replace His purposes with personal ambition.

6. A Faithful Steward Must Finish Without Selling His Ministry

First Corinthians 4:1–5 presents ministers as stewards of the mysteries of God and identifies faithfulness as the essential requirement. Paul also explains that the Lord will bring hidden things to light and make manifest the counsels of the hearts. That warning reaches the preacher's motives as well as his visible conduct. An evangelist may begin his ministry with sincere concern for souls and gradually allow financial ambition, personal recognition, or the desire for influence to become his controlling purpose. The transition may be so gradual that he continues using the correct religious language while pursuing an increasingly different objective. Second Corinthians 4:5 declares, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” That is the standard. The preacher is not the merchandise, and the congregation is not his collection of customers. A ministry becomes dangerously corrupt when the servant begins calculating how much the Master's business can contribute to his personal kingdom.

Financial integrity must remain a matter of biblical conviction rather than public relations. First Corinthians 9:14 establishes the legitimacy of material support for those preaching the gospel, while Second Corinthians 8:20–21 demonstrates Paul's concern for honest

administration of entrusted resources. These passages destroy both the accusation that every supported preacher is dishonest and the assumption that ministerial calling excuses financial misconduct. Evangelists may legitimately receive offerings, travel assistance, compensation, and support for necessary materials. They must also handle those resources honestly, represent their ministry accurately, and refuse manipulative fundraising practices. First Thessalonians 2:5 records Paul's rejection of flattering words and a cloak of covetousness. A preacher should not manufacture emergencies, exaggerate conversions, or promise divine favor in exchange for financial contributions. The man who begins by preaching a free gospel and finishes by selling spiritual privileges has not improved his ministry. He has converted it into a business that Scripture never authorized.

The final years of a ministry can expose dangers that were less obvious at its beginning. A preacher may become accustomed to recognition, resent younger servants receiving opportunities, or refuse to acknowledge that certain responsibilities should be entrusted to others. He may neglect his family while defending an unnecessary schedule or become so invested in maintaining his public reputation that honest correction appears threatening. Paul demonstrated a different concern in 2 Timothy 2:2 when he instructed Timothy to commit sound teaching to faithful men who would be able to teach others also. Faithful ministry should preserve the truth beyond one personality's lifetime. The evangelist must therefore prepare others, strengthen churches, maintain his household responsibilities, and accept the ordinary limitations of age and physical strength. A preacher who refuses to prepare anybody to continue the work because he cannot tolerate being replaced has forgotten that the ministry belongs to Christ. The gospel does not retire when the evangelist does.

7. The Judgment Seat of Christ Will Reveal What the Ministry Was Actually Worth

First Corinthians 3:11 establishes the foundation of Christian service: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Paul then describes different materials used in building upon that foundation, including gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. Verse 13 declares that every man's work shall be made manifest because the day will reveal it by fire. The passage concerns the testing of Christian work, not the purchase of eternal salvation. Verse 15 states that a man's work may be burned and that he may suffer loss, “but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” That distinction must never be erased. The believer's salvation rests upon Jesus Christ, while the quality of his service will determine reward or loss. A preacher may possess eternal life through Christ and still discover that much of the ministry he celebrated on earth amounted to combustible material when tested by the Lord.

Second Corinthians 5:9–11 reinforces the seriousness of this examination. Paul declared that his labor was directed toward being accepted of the Lord and immediately identified the coming judgment seat of Christ. This accountability concerns believers in the present Church Age and must be distinguished from the great white throne judgment described in Revelation 20:11–15. Neither should it be confused with Israel's national judgments or the future administration of Christ's earthly kingdom. The believer's justification is settled through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, as Romans 5:1 declares. Christian service, however, remains subject to divine examination. First Corinthians 4:5 warns against premature judgment because the Lord will reveal hidden things and the counsels of the hearts. The evangelist should therefore be more concerned with faithfulness than publicity. A ministry may look magnificent beneath earthly lighting and still contain a remarkable amount of wood, hay, and stubble waiting for the fire.

Philippians 2:14–16 supplies a fitting picture of the testimony believers should maintain while awaiting the day of Christ. Paul commands them to do all things without murmurings and disputings, to be blameless and harmless in a crooked and perverse nation, and to shine as lights in the world while holding forth the word of life. His immediate instruction addresses the Philippian believers generally, not evangelists exclusively, but its application to gospel ministry is unmistakable. The preacher must hold forth the word of life while maintaining conduct consistent with that message. Paul's desire was to rejoice in the day of Christ that he had not run or labored in vain. That should be the concern of every faithful servant. The final objective is not to finish with the largest following or the most impressive reputation. It is to finish with the word of God preserved, the gospel faithfully proclaimed, and the responsibilities of ministry fulfilled. The applause of men lasts a few moments. The judgment of Jesus Christ settles the matter permanently.

Conclusion

Paul's testimony in 2 Timothy 4:6–8 provides a fitting conclusion to the entire question of evangelistic responsibility. He declared, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” Then came the words that every faithful servant should desire to make truthfully applicable to his own completed work: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Paul did not claim that he had never encountered weakness, opposition, difficulty, or personal mistakes. The record of his ministry demonstrates otherwise. His testimony concerned the completion of the responsibilities entrusted to him and the preservation of the faith he had proclaimed. He continued by speaking of the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous judge, would give him at that day, and not to him only, but to all who love His appearing. The reward was not salvation purchased through suffering. It was the expectation of a faithful servant whose

salvation and service rested upon Jesus Christ. The greatest achievement of a preacher's life is not that he began with enthusiasm, but that he finished without abandoning the truth.

Every evangelist should examine his ministry before the final accounting makes further correction impossible. Has he proclaimed the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the gospel of salvation? Has he preserved justification by grace through faith without adding human works? Has he rightly divided Scripture, maintained personal holiness, treated his family responsibly, and conducted financial matters honestly? Has he reached beyond comfortable congregations to explain salvation to lost sinners? Has he strengthened churches rather than dividing them and endured opposition without becoming dishonest, bitter, or unnecessarily combative? Has he prepared faithful believers to continue the work rather than making everything dependent upon his personal influence? These questions are not settled by counting speaking engagements or measuring public recognition. First Corinthians 4:2 requires faithfulness in stewards, and Second Timothy 4:5 commands Timothy to make full proof of his ministry. The preacher who examines himself honestly while opportunities for correction remain demonstrates considerably more wisdom than the man who spends his final years defending every mistake he ever made. The time to correct an unfaithful ministry is before the books are closed, not after the servant stands before the Master.

The work of an evangelist begins with Christ, continues under Christ's authority, and must ultimately be answered for before Christ. The gospel is His message, the church is His body, the Scriptures are His revelation, and the servants entrusted with ministry remain accountable to Him. No preacher has authority to change the gospel, rule the churches as his personal possessions, manipulate believers for money, or abandon biblical truth to preserve popularity. He must preach the word, do the work, endure afflictions, and finish the course assigned to him. The world may remember a famous preacher for a generation, and a religious organization may preserve his name upon buildings, certificates, and commemorative publications long after his death. None of that determines the worth of his service before God. The judgment seat of Christ will reveal what the ministry was actually worth, and no earthly publicity campaign can improve the verdict. When the final sermon has been preached, the last offering counted, the last journey completed, and the last earthly audience dismissed, one question will remain: Was the servant faithful to the Lord who called him? The evangelist was not commissioned to become famous, wealthy, indispensable, or universally admired. He was commissioned to preach Jesus Christ. Fight the good fight. Finish the course. Keep the faith. Make full proof of thy ministry. And when the work is finished, leave the glory where it has always belonged—to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion – The Work of the Evangelist

Gospel Preaching in a Confused Age

When the final sermon has been preached, the last invitation accepted, the last gospel tract distributed, and the preacher's earthly work has come to an end, there will be one question that matters considerably more than anything the religious world ever thought about his ministry: Was he faithful to Jesus Christ? The answer will not be determined by the size of his congregations, the number of churches on his mailing list, the popularity of his sermons, or the amount of money that passed through his ministry account. Those things may describe activity, but activity is not necessarily obedience, and popularity is not necessarily evidence of God's approval. A man can spend forty years preaching to enthusiastic audiences, travel enough miles to circle the earth repeatedly, accumulate enough photographs to wallpaper a cathedral, and still neglect the very work Christ entrusted to him. Another man may labor quietly in small congregations, neglected neighborhoods, difficult communities, and personal conversations where hardly anybody recognizes his name, yet faithfully proclaim the gospel year after year. The religious world may celebrate the first and barely notice the second. But the Lord Jesus Christ is not conducting a popularity contest. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” **The evangelist's greatest accomplishment is not that the world remembers his name, but that he finishes his course without betraying the name he was commissioned to preach.**

Throughout this series, we have examined the biblical identity and responsibilities of the evangelist, beginning with the simple declaration of Ephesians 4:11 that Christ gave some evangelists to His church. That statement settles the question of ownership before the preacher ever steps behind a pulpit. The ministry belongs to Jesus Christ, not to the man carrying out its responsibilities. The evangelist is a servant entrusted with a message, not a spiritual monarch entitled to command every congregation that invites him. Acts 21:8 identifies Philip as an evangelist, while 2 Timothy 4:5 commands Timothy to do the work of an evangelist and make full proof of his ministry. The Scriptures provide the authority, the examples, and the responsibility. Everything else must submit to that foundation. A ministerial certificate may recognize a man, an institution may provide useful instruction, and a congregation may acknowledge his calling, but none of those things can replace biblical qualifications and faithful labor. The title itself accomplishes nothing. A fellow can print *Evangelist* in gold lettering across his stationery, introduce himself with a magnificent collection of credentials, and maintain a speaking schedule that would exhaust a traveling salesman. But if he is not faithfully proclaiming Jesus Christ, the religious decoration cannot rescue the ministry. **God did not call men to collect titles. He called them to**

perform the work associated with those titles, and the distinction will become painfully obvious when the work is examined.

The central responsibility remains the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that gospel has never required the assistance of religious imagination to become effective. First Corinthians 15:1–4 establishes the message Paul preached: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Romans 1:16 identifies the gospel as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, while Ephesians 2:8–9 declares that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. Those truths are sufficient to expose the entire machinery of religious systems that attempt to make human achievement necessary for justification. Water baptism cannot purchase salvation, religious ceremonies cannot complete the finished work of Calvary, obedience to Moses cannot provide the righteousness of Christ, and human sincerity cannot erase the guilt of sin. A sinner does not need another religious installment plan. He needs the Saviour who paid the debt. Galatians 1:6–9 warns against corrupting the gospel, and every evangelist must recognize the seriousness of that warning. The gospel is not his property to revise because a congregation prefers something more fashionable. **Jesus Christ did not shed His blood so that a preacher could establish additional conditions for receiving what God freely offers through faith. The Saviour finished redemption, and the evangelist's responsibility is to proclaim it without changing the message.**

That proclamation must rest upon the written word of God rather than the charisma, personal experiences, or reputation of the preacher. Second Timothy 3:16 declares, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and the following chapter commands Timothy to “Preach the word.” The evangelist is therefore responsible for knowing the Scriptures, believing their authority, rightly dividing their contents, and explaining their meaning accurately. He must distinguish Israel from the Church, law from grace, the earthly kingdom from the body of Christ, and the various judgments and prophetic events recorded throughout the Bible. He must not turn historical narratives into universal commands without examining their setting, nor borrow promises addressed to Israel and distribute them indiscriminately among Gentile congregations. The word of truth must be rightly divided, as 2 Timothy 2:15 commands. Philip began with Isaiah 53 and preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch, while the Bereans examined the Scriptures daily to determine whether Paul's teaching was true. Those examples leave no room for a preacher demanding unquestioning loyalty to his interpretations. A dramatic testimony cannot correct false doctrine, and a shouting preacher cannot make an unscriptural statement true by increasing the volume. **The Bible does not receive its authority from the man standing behind the pulpit. The man standing behind the pulpit receives his authority**

from the Bible. When the two disagree, the preacher is wrong, regardless of how impressive his reputation has become.

We have also established that the gospel was never intended to remain permanently confined to the comfortable surroundings of familiar church meetings. Acts 8:4 records believers scattered by persecution going everywhere preaching the word, while Acts 8:5 declares that Philip went into Samaria and preached Christ. Paul reasoned with people in synagogues and marketplaces, and Romans 15:20 records his desire to proclaim the gospel where Christ had not been named. These passages demonstrate the necessity of extending the message beyond congregations already familiar with salvation. There is legitimate value in special meetings, revival campaigns, itinerant preaching, and instruction among established believers. Churches need sound teaching, and faithful evangelists can contribute considerably to their spiritual growth. The problem begins when a man spends his entire ministry moving between friendly audiences while making little effort to reach unbelievers. He may know every pastor within five hundred miles, possess a suitcase full of familiar sermons, and receive enough invitations to keep his calendar occupied until the next millennium. Yet the lost people in the communities surrounding those congregations may never hear him explain salvation. **The evangelist was not commissioned merely to circulate among Christians who already know the gospel. He was commissioned to proclaim Christ, and that responsibility reaches considerably farther than the next comfortable pulpit.**

Nor does the value of gospel ministry depend upon the size of the audience. Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 remains one of the clearest demonstrations of personal evangelism in the New Testament. Philip approached one man reading Isaiah, asked whether he understood the passage, listened to his question, and began at the same Scripture to preach Jesus Christ. There was no auditorium, no conference advertisement, no collection plate, and no crowd waiting to celebrate the conclusion. There was one sinner who needed understanding and one faithful servant prepared to explain the truth. Jesus Christ likewise spoke personally with Nicodemus concerning the new birth and with the Samaritan woman concerning living water. Paul and Silas answered the Philippian jailer's question with the command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Those encounters demonstrate that individual souls must never be reduced to statistics. A preacher should not manipulate people into repeating words they do not understand merely to produce impressive conversion reports. Neither should he confuse tears, raised hands, signed cards, or emotional excitement with the saving faith described in Scripture. The message must be explained, the sinner must understand what he is being asked to believe, and genuine salvation must not be manufactured through religious pressure. **One sinner who truly believes the gospel possesses something more valuable than a thousand**

impressive figures entered into a preacher's notebook. God never commanded evangelists to manufacture numbers. He commanded them to proclaim the truth.

The relationship between evangelists and local churches must likewise remain governed by the authority of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4 establishes that Christ provided ministerial gifts for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of His body. Acts 13 and 14 demonstrate cooperation between gospel workers and the church at Antioch, while First Corinthians 3 corrects the foolishness of believers dividing themselves around favored ministers. Paul declared, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” Those words should settle a considerable amount of religious jealousy before it develops into another church controversy. The evangelist is not competing with the pastor, and the pastor should not regard every visiting preacher as a threat to his authority. Both are servants responsible to Christ, although their particular duties differ. The evangelist must not undermine legitimate pastoral leadership, recruit personal followers, or turn a special meeting into an opportunity to establish control over another congregation. Churches, meanwhile, should recognize the value of sound evangelistic ministry and cooperate with faithful workers rather than treating them as hired entertainers. Third John commends assistance given to brethren who went forth for the Lord's name. Such cooperation should strengthen biblical teaching and advance the gospel. **The local church is not a theater rented for the visiting evangelist's performance, and the pulpit is not a throne temporarily available to whichever preacher happens to occupy it. The church belongs to Jesus Christ, and every servant had better remember whose house he is working in.**

The responsibility to carry the gospel into additional communities must also be governed by wisdom rather than mere enthusiasm for travel. Philip preached through the cities until he reached Caesarea, while Paul pursued opportunities among Gentiles who had not heard the message. Acts 16 records the apostolic missionary company encountering divine restrictions concerning certain destinations before receiving direction toward Macedonia. Those historical events demonstrate that legitimate gospel labor involves discernment, planning, cooperation, and perseverance. They do not establish that every evangelist must travel constantly or receive miraculous instructions identical to those recorded during the apostolic period. Some men may labor faithfully across international boundaries, while others may accomplish important evangelistic work within a comparatively small region. The distance traveled does not determine the value of the ministry. Neither does the hardship involved automatically establish spiritual superiority. The evangelist must consider family responsibilities, available resources, legitimate expenses, supporting churches, and the needs of those he intends to reach. A man who can cross oceans to preach while neglecting the lost people living across his street ought to reconsider his understanding of the work. **An airline ticket proves that a preacher traveled. A passport**

proves that he crossed a border. Neither proves that he faithfully proclaimed Jesus Christ when he arrived. The miles are not the ministry. The message is.

Faithful gospel proclamation will sometimes bring opposition, and no evangelist should enter the ministry expecting universal approval. Paul instructed Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ and warned that those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Acts 8 records believers scattered through persecution, while Acts 16 describes Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned at Philippi. Second Corinthians 11 reveals the extraordinary hardships Paul endured during his apostolic ministry. Those circumstances should not be romanticized or converted into identical expectations for every present-day evangelist, but they establish that obedience may require genuine sacrifice. The preacher must be willing to proclaim uncomfortable truth when doing so threatens invitations, friendships, financial assistance, or public reputation. At the same time, Scripture distinguishes suffering for righteousness from trouble produced by arrogance, dishonesty, or unnecessary provocation. First Peter 4:15–16 warns against confusing the two. A man who insults people needlessly and then celebrates their anger as persecution has mistaken the consequences of foolishness for the sufferings of Christ. **The preacher does not prove courage by manufacturing enemies. He proves faithfulness by refusing to abandon the truth when genuine opposition arrives. A conviction that disappears when the offering decreases was never worth very much in the first place.**

Financial integrity remains another essential responsibility, because few things can corrupt a ministry more thoroughly than the love of money disguised as religious zeal. First Corinthians 9:14 establishes the legitimacy of material support for those preaching the gospel, while First Thessalonians 2:5 records Paul's rejection of flattering words and the cloak of covetousness. Second Corinthians 8:20–21 demonstrates his concern for honest financial administration, and First Timothy 6 warns against those who suppose that gain is godliness. Scripture neither condemns every supported preacher nor permits ministers to exploit congregations without accountability. Evangelists may receive offerings, travel assistance, compensation, and support for legitimate expenses, but those resources must be handled truthfully. Manufactured emergencies, inflated conversion figures, extravagant personal demands, and promises of divine prosperity in exchange for donations have no rightful place in gospel ministry. A preacher should not measure the worth of a congregation by the size of its offering or determine his doctrine according to the preferences of wealthy supporters. Nor should churches imagine that financial assistance gives them authority to dictate unscriptural preaching. **Money may support the work, but it must never become the reason for the work. The gospel is not merchandise, the**

congregation is not a customer list, and the preacher who turns salvation into a sales presentation has confused the ministry of reconciliation with the business of religion.

Personal character must accompany public doctrine, because the preacher who handles Scripture accurately while living dishonestly is still violating the truth he claims to defend. Paul instructed Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them.” Both responsibilities matter. The evangelist must guard his private conduct, maintain faithfulness in his household, fulfill ordinary obligations, and resist the temptation to believe that ministerial success excuses personal disobedience. A congregation may admire his sermons without knowing how he treats his family, handles money, responds to correction, or conducts himself when nobody is watching. God possesses no such limitation. Hebrews 4:13 declares that all things are naked and opened unto His eyes. The preacher must also recognize that genuine spiritual maturity includes the willingness to admit errors. Galatians 2 records Paul correcting Peter when his conduct contradicted the truth of the gospel. No modern evangelist possesses greater authority than the apostle Peter, and none should consider himself immune from biblical examination. **A preacher who can identify every false doctrine in the neighborhood but refuses to correct his own conduct has become a specialist in inspecting other men's houses while the termites are eating through his own floor.**

There is also the solemn matter of finishing faithfully rather than merely beginning enthusiastically. Many men have entered Christian ministry with sincere intentions, only to become distracted by personal ambition, financial concerns, doctrinal compromise, or the desire for recognition. Some become so accustomed to their own reputation that they can no longer distinguish the interests of Christ from the advancement of their personal ministry. Others become weary and gradually surrender convictions they once defended boldly. Still others refuse to prepare younger servants because they cannot tolerate the possibility of somebody else continuing the work without them. Paul demonstrated a different understanding in 2 Timothy 2:2 when he instructed Timothy to commit sound teaching to faithful men who would be able to teach others also. The ministry is greater than one man's personality, and the word of God does not cease being authoritative when a particular preacher leaves the scene. Philippians 2:16 expresses Paul's concern that he might rejoice in the day of Christ, knowing he had not run or labored in vain. That is the objective. **It is not enough for a preacher to begin with a Bible in his hand and enthusiasm in his heart. He must finish with the truth preserved, his responsibilities fulfilled, and his loyalty to Jesus Christ intact.**

Then comes the judgment seat of Christ, where the quality of Christian service will be revealed without the assistance of earthly publicity. First Corinthians 3:11 establishes

Jesus Christ as the only legitimate foundation, while the following verses describe work built upon that foundation being tested by fire. Gold, silver, and precious stones will endure, while wood, hay, and stubble will be consumed. Verse 15 makes clear that the loss of reward is not the loss of salvation, declaring that the man himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. The distinction between salvation and service must remain absolute. Eternal life is received through faith in Jesus Christ, not purchased through ministerial accomplishments. Nevertheless, the believer's labor will be examined. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares that all believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and First Corinthians 4:5 warns that the Lord will bring hidden things to light and reveal the counsels of the hearts. That means the evangelist's motives matter as well as his methods. A ministry may appear magnificent while being constructed from materials that will not survive divine examination. **The judgment seat of Christ will not be impressed by a preacher's promotional photographs, expensive advertisements, or public reputation. The Lord will examine the actual work, and no amount of religious publicity will improve the verdict.**

This truth should also challenge the churches that receive evangelistic ministry. Congregations should not judge a preacher merely by how loudly he shouts, how many amusing stories he tells, how much excitement he generates, or how impressive his biography appears. They should examine his doctrine, his conduct, his treatment of other believers, his financial integrity, and his faithfulness in proclaiming Jesus Christ. A preacher who entertains the congregation while neglecting the gospel is not necessarily accomplishing the work of an evangelist, regardless of how enthusiastic the closing applause becomes. Likewise, a faithful man should not be dismissed merely because he lacks celebrity recognition or sophisticated promotional materials. The Bereans were commended for searching the Scriptures, and that responsibility remains important wherever God's word is proclaimed. Churches should support sound evangelistic labor, encourage personal soul-winning, cooperate in carrying the gospel into neglected places, and help new believers become established in biblical truth. They should also refuse to make any minister indispensable to their spiritual survival. **The healthiest congregation is not the one most dependent upon a famous preacher. It is the one most firmly established in the written word of God and most willing to obey the Lord Jesus Christ.**

There is a final question that every evangelist ought to consider while he still possesses the opportunity to correct his course. If the Lord were to examine the ministry today, what would He find? Would He find a man preaching the gospel faithfully or a religious entertainer more concerned with keeping his audience comfortable? Would He find sound doctrine or a collection of popular interpretations chosen because they protect invitations? Would He find honest financial stewardship or an elaborate arrangement for extracting

money from sympathetic believers? Would He find genuine concern for lost souls or an endless procession of meetings designed primarily to maintain the preacher's public reputation? Would He find a servant strengthening the churches or a personality attempting to control them? Would He find a man who has guarded his household, kept his testimony clean, endured legitimate hardship, and remained accountable to Scripture? These are not questions that can be answered with photographs, attendance figures, or flattering testimonials. They concern the substance of Christian service. **The time to examine a ministry is while the preacher can still correct its direction. The judgment seat of Christ will reveal the truth, but it will not provide another lifetime in which to repair what was neglected.**

Paul's final testimony in 2 Timothy 4:7–8 should therefore stand before every evangelist as a solemn reminder of what faithful completion looks like: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” Those words were not spoken by a man celebrating an easy life or a comfortable ministry. Paul had endured opposition, suffered imprisonment, confronted false doctrine, strengthened churches, preached among the Gentiles, and remained faithful to the gospel entrusted to him. He did not claim to have accumulated the largest congregation or the greatest religious fortune. He testified that he had finished his course and kept the faith. The righteous Judge would determine the reward. That is the conclusion toward which every faithful evangelist should labor. **The preacher's objective is not to finish rich, famous, admired, or indispensable. It is to finish faithful. The applause of the crowd will eventually become silent, but the verdict of Jesus Christ will remain.**

The work of the evangelist is therefore far too serious to be reduced to a profession, a personality, a traveling performance, or a religious business. It is a biblical responsibility established by Jesus Christ, governed by His word, centered upon His gospel, and accountable to His judgment. The evangelist must preach salvation clearly, rightly divide the Scriptures, reach sinners personally and publicly, cooperate with sound churches, endure afflictions, maintain integrity, and continue faithfully until his work is complete. He must never forget that the message belongs to God, the power belongs to God, the church belongs to Christ, and the glory belongs to the Saviour. When the final chapter of his earthly ministry is written, it will not matter whether the religious world considered him important. It will matter whether he faithfully performed the assignment entrusted to him. **The evangelist was not called to make a name for himself. He was called to proclaim the name above every name. He was not sent to build a kingdom of admirers, but to preach the King of kings. He was not entrusted with merchandise to sell, but with the**

gospel of Jesus Christ to proclaim. Let the Book remain the authority, let the gospel remain unchanged, let the churches be strengthened, let the lost hear the truth, and let the servant finish his course without compromise. Preach the Word. Do the work. Endure the hardness. Keep the faith. Make full proof of thy ministry. And when the last sermon has ended and the final accounting begins, let the glory belong entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ.

