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"Do The Work Of An Evangelist"

by Richard Boone

The Apostle Paul wrote to the young evangelist Timothy these words found in 2 Timothy 4:5: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry". There are many things that we could learn from this verse but the one lesson I want to focus on at this time is the title of this article -- "do the work of an evangelist". We need to study this because 1) It is God's word, and 2) we will know and understand the responsibilities of an evangelist as found in the New Testament. When we properly understand and apply the Bible's teachings on it, we will have preserved it as God would have it to be, rather than move away from the Biblical standard as many of our religious friends have done with their "pastor system".

First of all, note that the verse speaks of the "work of an EVANGELIST". What is the work of an evangelist? Can we find out what it is? Yes, I think so. Let us simply look at the definition of the word as found in Thayer's *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* (entry #2099). Evangelist means "a bringer of good tidings". Romans 10:15 equates "glad tidings of good things" to "the gospel of peace", therefore the evangelist is a bringer of the gospel of peace. I believe we can further understand it if we will look at the responsibilities given to evangelists in three letters that Paul wrote: namely 1st Timothy, 2nd Timothy, and Titus, each of

which was written to an evangelist. I have read through these three short books, and as I read, I noted verses that deal with the responsibilities of an evangelist. As I studied each verse, I found that they fit rather well into six categories. Consider them as I have arranged them: 1) He charges Christians not to teach any other doctrine except that which is sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3; Titus 2:1). 2) He charges Christians not to give heed to fables which destroy rather than build up (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:16,23; Titus 3:9). 3) He labors and suffers afflictions as he is engaged in spiritual warfare (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3; 4:5). 4) He lives his life in such a way that others can see that he is a Christian by the things that he says and does (1 Tim. 4:12; 6:11-13,20; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:1,22; 3:14; Titus 2:7). 5) He is diligent and consistent in studying God's word so that he accurately knows its teaching and is therefore able to point out that which is false (1 Tim. 4:13,15; 2 Tim. 2:15). 6) He is a teacher, an exhorter, a reprover, and a rebuker (1 Tim. 4:6,11,16; 6:2,17; 2 Tim. 2:2,14; Titus 2:1,9,15; 3:1). As you can see, an evangelist has quite a few responsibilities. It is not a position that is to be taken lightly, but neither is it a position that is to be shunned because it has so many responsibilities. As one preacher from Arkansas told me about three years ago, "Preaching has it's share of headaches

and heartaches; but its rewards by far outweigh the problems".

Notice also that this verse says "do the WORK of an evangelist". Believe it or not, for the evangelist to do his job properly (and we are assuming in this article that the evangelist is trying his best to do his work properly), it takes a lot of hard work. Although I am a young evangelist and have not yet experienced many problem that older preachers have experienced, I think I can honestly say that it is not just a two-day per week (Sunday and Wednesday) job. It is truly a FULL-TIME job. Consider all the responsibilities given in the above passages. To faithfully meet these responsibilities, it takes many hours of studying and learning God's word to be able to teach God's truth effectively or refute false doctrines that men concoct. Also, although many brethren may not realize this, there are many hours of study and preparation that go into sermons for worship services of the church. I can attest to that fact. I know another young evangelist who told me once that he had worked on ONE SERMON for 18 HOURS! True enough, the subject under consideration in that sermon was one that needed serious and deep study to be handled correctly. But all the congregation saw was the final product of that labor, presented in its simple, logical, and polished form. Brethren may have thought, "Hey, that was so easy to understand, it couldn't have taken Bro. _____ too long to put that sermon together." Unfortunately, the brethren didn't consider that the preacher had to wade through all the information he had, study and meditate on it for hours, and finally arrange it logically to insure that his sermon was simple enough to understand and apply. A close friend of mine jokingly said to me one day, "Aw, you don't work, you just preach." It was taken as a joke because I know him well and we "cut up" a lot when we are together. However, this is too often the attitude of local members toward the local preacher. Many complain that he isn't doing this or that, instead of taking the time to see what he may be doing. Brothers and sisters in Christ, before any of us ever complains about anything, let us remember to do two things: 1) make sure that our complaint is legitimate and not

just something we dreamed up, and 2) make sure that we are doing all we can to solve the problem instead of being a part of the problem.

Not only does the local evangelist have the responsibility of teaching, whether it be in Bible classes or through the sermons he preaches, he also has the responsibilities that any other Christian has. He has the responsibilities to his family (Eph. 5:22-23; 6:4; 1 Tim. 5:8), to bear the burdens of the weak (Rom. 15:1; Gal. 6:1-5), to care for orphans and widows (James 1:27), to teach the gospel to those who are lost (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16), to pray (1 Tim. 2:1-4), to worship acceptably (John 4:23-24), and the list could go on and on. The point I am making, brethren, is this: the local preacher is a Christian just like every other member of the local congregation. He is a specialist ONLY in his responsibility to study God's word and teach it to the best of his ability. Other than that he has the responsibilities of any other Christian. Sadly, many have attempted to put responsibilities on the evangelist that are not exclusively his. For instance, he is not the replacement for oversight in the absence of qualified elders (the "pastor" according to our religious neighbors), he is not the public relations specialist when it comes to doing the personal work that all Christians have the responsibility of doing, and neither is he the professional hospital visitor when someone is ill because all Christians have that obligation, too.

We must realize that an evangelist has specific responsibilities because he has devoted his life to studying and teaching God's word (2 Tim. 4:2). He also works hard to fulfill his responsibilities. As Christians, we all have responsibilities that we must complete if we are going to make it to heaven. Remember these things so that we can work together to strengthen the Lord's church rather than destroy it from within.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Brother Boone has worked with us for the past two summers doing the work of an evangelist. Beginning February 1, he and Becky will be worshipping and working with the congregation at Sugar Creek, in Blount County. We wish them well.)

"Keep The Unity Of The Spirit"

by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." -- Eph. 4:1-3).

Both scripture and experience teach us that unity is so pleasant. (cf. Ps. 133:1). How great it would be if all the world were united in Christ. How great it would be if all who claim to be Christians were so united. How great it would be if all who put themselves forth as "churches of Christ" were so united. Those who are so united should endeavor to keep that unity.

The Ephesian Christians enjoyed a unity that they were admonished to keep or guard. They were not told to establish unity. It has already been established. They were to keep it.

We need to understand what they were to keep and how they were to keep it. What? The unity of the Spirit. How? First, by a walk worthy of their calling. Then, by a proper attitude toward one another. When either or both of these elements are missing, then "unity of the Spirit" is usually broken.

If it is broken by an unworthy walk. Then that walk must be restored before the unity of the Spirit can be restored. Oh, some other kind of unity might be worked out by the ingenuity of ambitious and well-meaning brethren, but it will not be the "unity of the Spirit" that had been lost.

If it is broken by ungodly attitudes: a lack of lowliness, longsuffering, forbearance, etc., then these attitudes must be restored.

Now, let us examine this "unity of the Spirit" that the Ephesians were to guard so diligently. This unity, the one brought about by the Spirit, is described in chapter 2. It is called "unity of the Spirit" in 4:3 because it is "by one Spirit" that those united through Christ have access to the Father. (2:18).

God "raised (Christ) from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places" and "gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His

body". (1:20-23). It is in the one body that all men are reconciled unto God. (2:16). Hence, "He himself is our peace". (2:14). When Christ came there was division. Both Jews and Gentiles were alienated from God. The Jews and Gentiles were alienated from each other.

They (Jews and Gentiles) were separated from God by sin. They were separated from each other by the "middle wall of division", the law of Moses, which had been given only to the Jews. Jesus' death on the cross eliminated the alienating causes of these divisions - sin and the law of Moses. "He came and preached peace to you who were afar off (Gentiles) and to those who were near (Jews)." (2:17). "So as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace." (2:15). Hence, the "unity of the Spirit" was accomplished. This is the unity that must be kept.

Should either party (Jew or Gentile) revert back to the "old man" then this peace or unity would be broken. If either went back into sin their peace with God would be broken. Likewise, if they tried to resurrection the "middle wall of division" (the law) unity would be destroyed. They might bemoan their division and make various efforts to fix it, but until they restored the "unity of the Spirit" by the guilty again forsaking sin and putting aside the dividing wall; they cannot please God.

The unity of the Spirit was not established by "eccumenical councils" nor by "unity discussions". It was established when each party (one by one) forsook his sin and error and became reconciled unto to God through Jesus Christ. When that unity is not kept, our efforts need to again focus upon getting each individual to forsake his sin and error and become reconciled unto God. When the emphasis shifts to reconciliation between men, then somehow reconciliation to God kind of gets lost in the background.

If we are not careful, we can let the "spectacle of division" and our desire and effort to remove it completely divert our attention away from correcting the fundamental causes of division.

Is It Necessary To Assemble?

by Carrol R. Sutton

Sometimes weak or uninformed Christians will try to justify their negligence in assembling with the saints by saying, "It is not necessary for Christians to assemble. One can worship God at home." Is this idea of faith? Can it be advocated by faith? Let us consider the following facts.

1. CHRISTIANS ARE COMMANDED TO ASSEMBLE. Hebrews 10:25 says: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." NOTE: Assembling involves a gathering together.

2. ACTS 4:31 INDICATES THERE WAS AN ASSEMBLY IN WHICH PREACHING AND PRAYING WERE ENGAGED IN.

3. ACTS 11:26 TELLS US "THAT A WHOLE YEAR THEY (Barnabas and Saul) ASSEMBLED THEMSELVES WITH THE CHURCH, AND TAUGHT MUCH PEOPLE."

4. ACTS 14:27 TELLS US THAT PAUL AND BARNABAS "GATHERED THE CHURCH TOGETHER," and "THEY REHEARSED ALL THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM..."

5. CHRISTIANS ARE TOLD NOT TO SHOW PARTIALITY TO THOSE WHO COME INTO THEIR ASSEMBLY DRESSED IN FINERY. (See James 2:1-4). NOTE: This necessarily implies that Christians were assembling and that Christians would assemble.

6. WE LEARN FROM ACTS 20:7 THAT "UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, WHEN THE DISCIPLES CAME TOGETHER TO BREAK BREAD, PAUL PREACHED UNTO THEM..." NOTE: We are commanded to partake of the Lord's Supper (see I

Corinthians 11:23-29) and Acts 20:7 shows us what day we should break bread.

7. IT IS CERTAINLY GOOD TO ASSEMBLE WITH THE SAINTS IN ORDER TO WORSHIP GOD. I am sure that no Christian would deny this. If we are able to assemble, and we have the opportunity to do so, and we simply do not, we have sinned. (See James 4:17).

No, the idea that "it is not necessary for Christians to assemble" is not of faith and cannot be advocated by faith! Obviously Satan would be pleased if you accepted such an idea!

A CHILD OF THE KING

Poor? No, of course not! Why, how could I be,

When Christ, the King, is taking care of me?

Tired? Sometimes - yes, more than tired; but then,

I know a place where I can rest again!

Longely? Ah, well I know the aching bright;

But now - I've Jesus with me day and night.

Burdens? I have them; oft they press me sore,

And then -- I lean the harder, trust the more.

Worthy? Oh, no! The marvel of it is

That I should know such boundless love as His!

And so, I'm rich; with Christ I am "joint heir,"

Since He once stooped my poverty to share.

--Edith Lillian Young.

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