

## The Work of Gospel Preachers

Acts 20:18-35

### Introduction:

1. Preachers are in the business of preaching to other people. Therefore, their opportunities to be preached to are more limited.
2. But I think preachers need to be preached to too. Often, someone will comment on a lesson and say, "I needed that. You were preaching to me." My response is that I was just preaching to myself, any benefit to you was merely a by-product.
3. As with all of us preachers need self-evaluation. The study tonight is just that—me preaching to myself about the work of gospel preachers. Anything you learn will be a by-product of the teaching that I am receiving.
4. Acts 20:18-35 records what Paul said to the elders at Ephesus. It was the last he expected to see them. Previously, he had spent three years with them (Acts 19:10; 20:31). Last words are often very carefully chosen and carry a certain level of special meaning. I think these do. I think they are especially instructive for preachers and elders and, by secondary consideration, congregations.
5. Reading of the text.
6. What is the work of gospel preachers?

### Discussion:

- I. To serve the Lord with humility and tears through the trials (20:19).
  - A. People preach for various reasons but not all do so to serve the Lord (Gal. 1:15-17; 1 Tim. 6:5).
    1. Preachers need to evaluate their motives for preaching.
    2. Are the motives self-centered?
  - B. Humility, tears and the enduring of trials help define motives.
    1. If motives are selfish this is incongruent with humility.
    2. Trials will not be easily accepted.
    3. Preachers place themselves in a position to be hurt. Not everyone receives the message with appreciation. See Acts 19:9, 23ff.
    4. This is particularly difficult when brethren do not receive the message.
    5. I remember an old preacher telling me when I was young, "You need to develop tough skin." My question was, "Why should I have to have tough skin to protect myself from my brethren?" Jesus prayed, "Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Sometimes brethren don't either. And sometimes preachers don't!!
- II. Declare everything that is profitable, teaching publically and from house to house (20:20).
  - A. People have their expectations, but these are not always profitable (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:3-7). Is it furthering the administration of God?
  - B. The work of teaching is public, but it is not limited to public teaching. Teaching is primary and whether public or private it is to be done.

1. Preachers need to work to be good teachers.
2. The attitude and approach (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

### III. Solemnly testifying to all of repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (20:21).

- A. I have listened to some of my sermons and thought, "I did not mean to come across as angry." But I do mean to come across with a powerful sense of the seriousness of responding to the Lord. Responding to the Lord must be taken seriously and with a sense of the urgency of responding appropriately NOW.
  1. And I confess. Sometimes I do feel angry when I think people are not responding appropriately.
  2. I see those that I have tried to teach who seem to give little or no attention to changes that they need to make. Later in their lives they then experience the consequences of their actions. I am both angry and sad that they are where they are. Cf. Heb. 13:17.
- B. The message needs to go to all—Jews and Greeks.
  1. Sometimes opportunity, cultural differences and geography hinder us. Sometimes it is fearfulness, but preachers need to cross these difficulties.
  2. Ex. congregation of primarily older people. Can't afford to leave the community in which they live. Young people cannot afford to live there. Who is able/willing to preach there?
- C. The message we are to preach is defined in this passage.
  1. Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (21).
  2. The gospel of God's grace (24).
  3. Preaching the kingdom (25).
  4. The whole purpose of God (27).

### IV. Bound by the Spirit (22-24).

- A. There are various senses in which a preacher needs to be bound by the Spirit.
  1. He needs to be bound by what the Spirit teaches (2 Tim. 3:14-17).
  2. He needs to be bound to do what the Spirit wants him to do, even if it involves giving up his life (22-24).
- B. If you don't have a message worth dying for, a message worth giving your life to, then you don't have a message to preach.
  1. Are we surprised when one is willing to make sacrifices to preach? One not willing to make sacrifices to preach should not be preaching.
  2. If I am not willing to preach where it is too hot, too cold, too difficult, too far away from my family and the conveniences I enjoy, what does that say about my message?
  3. Paul said, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself."
  4. If Jesus purchased us with His blood (Acts 20:28) should we not be willing to make sacrifices too? Cf. 20:33-35.

### V. Do not cease to admonish as time permits and when it no longer permits commend them to the grace of God (31-32).

Conclusion:

1. The work of gospel preachers is a noble work.
2. It is especially demanding.
3. It is a work that preachers should give themselves to.