

Church Organization

The Local Preacher

The church of Jesus Christ is authorized to be organized locally. Within this organizational structure are elements such as elders, deacons, and saints (Phil. 1:1). This article shall examine the authority for the located preacher who is found in the equation of Philippians 1:1 as a saint of God. The preacher does not occupy an official office, as do the elder and deacon within the church; however, the NT (New Testament) reveals that just as members exist in the church so do preachers.

Who is the Preacher and What does He Do?

The word “preacher” (*kerux*) is defined as “A herald (one who proclaims important news)... one who made proclamation in the public assemblies... he gives notice, announce... to command publicly” (LS 432). The NT gives examples of preachers such as Jesus (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mk. 1:14, 39; Lk. 4:44; 8:1; 9:6) and all the apostles (Lk. 9:1-6), including Paul (I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1:11). Another identification of preachers in the NT is the word “*evangelist*” (*euaggelistes*). The evangelist is “the bringer of good tidings, an evangelist, a preacher of the gospel... one who brings good news” (LS 322). Examples of evangelists in the NT are Jesus (Lk. 4:43; 8:1), Timothy (II Tim. 4:5), and Philip (Acts 21:8). The preacher / evangelist is one who publicly proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ (truth) (Acts 13; 20:26-27; 26:1ff; I Cor. 15). Because some preach lies (Ezek. 13:17-19; II Pet. 2:1ff) and comfort sinners in their sin (Jer. 23:13-17; II Tim. 3:1ff), all teachers and preachers are to be put to the test (I Jn. 4:1-6).

The work of the gospel preacher includes studying (I Tim. 2:7; 4:13), preaching (I Cor. 4:6), challenging self and hearers to know God’s laws (Ezek. 22:26; II Tim. 2:15), and planting the seeds of the gospel to the lost (I Cor. 1:21; 3:6-7). The preacher will find himself edifying saints (Eph. 4:11-12), putting brethren in remembrance of their salvation (II Tim. 2:14), and charging, reproof, rebuking, and exhorting brethren with all longsuffering and patience (II Tim. 4:2). The preacher’s charge is to be a guardian of the truth (II Cor. 2:16-17; I Tim. 6:20).

Consequences of Preaching Said Message:

The fruit of the labor of a gospel preacher is that some will believe and become Christians (cf. Acts 2). The flip side to consequences of preaching truth in love is that some will oppose and give looks of hatred to the words of truth (Jer. 18:18-23; Ezek. 3:8-9; II Cor. 1:3-11; II Tim. 4:1-5). The Word of God instructs the preacher to endure such treatment (II Tim. 4:5). The Lord’s church needs men who will unashamedly expose sin, encourage the faithful, and do the work of an evangelist.

Are there Qualifications for the Preacher to Meet?

No different qualifications exist for the preacher than for any other faithful member who would teach a Bible study. The apostle Paul spoke of those who would be stewards of God’s Word saying that they must be “*found faithful*” (I Cor. 4:1-2). Such a one will preach truth in love that brethren may be edified (Eph. 4:15). Respect for truth and a love for the souls of men, the church, and Jesus will comprise the character of one who preaches the gospel.

What about the Preacher and Elder’s Relationship?

Some believe that a church cannot have both a preacher and eldership who work together. The NT commands just such an arrangement. Paul told the Ephesians that the Lord equipped the church with both evangelist and elders (along with other teachers) for the perfecting of the saints (cf. Eph. 4:11-12). We have an example of a church that had elders while a local preacher worked with them in the NT. The church in Ephesus had elders (Acts 20:17; I Tim. 5:17-22). While Timothy was in Ephesus, Paul told him, “*do the work of an evangelist*” even though elders were present (cf. II Tim. 4:5). Note that the elder has charge of the brethren with the word of God, and the evangelist is to be a guardian of truth. There is a clear distinction made between the two individuals’ work. When the elder uses the evangelist as a tool in the local church for edification, the church will certainly be strong. When, therefore, the elders choose a man to serve as an evangelist let them put the man to the most strenuous test (I Jn. 4:1, 6).

How Long should a Preacher Stay in One Location?

Should the preacher stay at one church for 3, 7, or 24 years? Consider the fact that Paul remained in Ephesus preaching for three years (Acts 20:31). Luke preached seven years in Philippi (AD 51 – 58; Acts 16:40; 20:6). Philip was the evangelist in Caesarea for 24 years (AD 34-58; Acts 8:40; 21:8). How long should the preacher stay? The answer to the question may very well be determined by whether or not the preacher continues in faith and preaches truth.

What should Brethren’s View toward Preachers Be?

Paul told the Thessalonians to pray for the success of his work (II Thess. 3:1-2). Though such thoughts of the preacher will be in the minds of brethren, we are commanded never to elevate such a one to a status of grandeur (I Cor. 1:12-16; 3:3-7; 4:6). Preachers are members of the church who are subject to the elders as all other members. Let us not elevate them any higher than the scriptures do.

Should the Preacher Receive Compensation for his Work?

While some preachers apparently labored for their support (Acts 18:3), there were others who did receive full compensation for their work (I Cor. 9:6-16; I Tim. 5:17-18). The preacher’s motivation for said labor is not fame and fortune but rather the souls of men (II Cor. 2:17; 11:9; II Thess. 3:8).

Conclusion

Paul charged Timothy to “*preach the word*” (publicly proclaim the gospel) with a spirit of “*urgency*” (II Tim. 4:1-2). Timothy was to preach “*in season and out of season*” (4:2). The preacher’s charge is to keep the truth in all its purity for the sake of men’s souls. Salvation will come through this saving message, and he is, therefore, to guard it and preach it (II Tim. 2:10). The preacher must therefore be a man of conviction and one who is not fearful of ungodly men (II Tim. 1:7-8). The preacher is one willing to take a stand against false teachers and their

doctrines (I Tim. 1:3). The preacher is a soldier of Christ, one willing to be subject to the world's scorn and brethren's looks of hatred (II Tim. 2:3). He will not be one that is swayed by any popular opinion that goes against truth (II Tim. 6:20). The Lord's church needs men who are willing to wage war against sin and help bring many to a hope of eternal salvation.