
Words of Truth

Examining Evangelists Outside Of The Pulpit

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Very often, evangelists are judged based upon their sermon delivery or teaching skills. It is often thought that if a man preaches the truth that means he is a faithful preacher of God's word. What a man teaches certainly does need to be closely examined (Matthew 24:4, Acts 17:10-11, Ephesians 4:14, Ephesians 5:6-11, and I John 4:1-6). Is that it though? Can a man be considered a faithful preacher of God's word just based upon what he teaches publicly? We are going to consider that as we proceed in our study.

God says that you are to "know" them that labor among you, are over you in the Lord, and that admonish you (I Thessalonians 5:12). Evangelists qualify as those who labor among you (II Timothy 4:1-5). Evangelists qualify as those whom are "over you" in regard to the authority that comes with teaching (Titus 2:15). Evangelists certainly qualify as those that admonish [warn] you (Colossians 1:1; 28). Does knowing an evangelist begin and end with what he teaches?

When Paul, whom was inspired by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:1-13), told Timothy how to train future preachers of the Gospel; he wrote this: *"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"* (II Timothy 2:1-2). What does faithful mean? Is "faithful" limited to just what a person teaches?

By now, you should already have ideas about where this study is heading. What we are going to find is that evangelists are required not only to faithfully declare the truth, but also to live it. Once we establish that the Scriptures teach preachers are to live the truth they preach, we are going to also learn that such must be examined. So, let's get going in our study.

Evangelists Are Supposed To Live In Accordance With God's Word

Those who preach the Gospel of Christ are expected to live it faithfully (I Corinthians 9:27). To teach something and not live it amounts to the sin of hypocrisy (Matthew 7:1-5 and Romans 2:1-29). This was written to Timothy the evangelist and such sets the standard for evangelists today as well: *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which*

was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (I Timothy 4:12-16).

If you consider what Paul wrote to Timothy you learn many things about what an evangelist’s life should look like. Consider a few of those things. An evangelist must be a godly example that can be followed as a pattern of faithfulness to our Lord (I Corinthians 4:16-17, I Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:16-17, Philippians 4:9, and Titus 2:7-8). From what you read that Paul wrote to Timothy, that example is in conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity. That covers it all. There is no area of an evangelist’s life wherein he is authorized by God to be anything less than altogether righteous. An evangelist is supposed to be a student of the word of God. He is to “rightly divide the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:14-18). An evangelist should meditate continually on the truth and the benefit of such should be evident to others (Psalms 119:97-105). In other words, you should be able to see that an evangelist is first and foremost a continual student of the word of God. Then, and to our main point, an evangelist has to practice what he has learned and what he teaches (II Timothy 3:14-17). So, think about what you need to look at in the life of an evangelist.

Examine The Man

Here locally, we often talk about being “fruit inspectors”. That goes beyond looking at one’s words. Word’s can be deceptive (Psalms 12:2, Proverbs 26:24-26, etc.). Anyone can teach enough truth to appear to be a faithful preacher of God’s word. Thus, to really know someone, we have to look at their fruit. Jesus said: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matthew 7:15-20). What a person does reveals who they are (I John 3:8-10).

Conclusion

The word of God says that there will be many false teachers and they treat people deceptively (II Peter 2:1-3). They use good words and fair speeches to deceive those whom are naive (Romans 16:17-18). So brethren, whether it be me here and now or some other evangelist later down the road; you must examine the man. You cannot be content with just considering what he is teaching. You must also look at how he is living his life. If he is a hypocrite you cannot allow him to continue to be among you or to teach you. That fellowship will cause both you and he to be lost (II John 1:6-11).