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The Purpose of Teaching and Preaching

By Bryan Hodge

What is the objective? What is it that we are trying to accomplish in our Bible classes and from the pulpit?

Some specialize in the trivial. What man had twelve fingers and twelve toes? What tribe was filled with left-handers? What is the longest name in the Bible? What are the longest and shortest chapters in the Bible? There is nothing wrong with knowing these things. However, is learning such our end goal? I think not.

Some teach objective facts, such as; the approximate number of writers and years involved in producing the Bible, the names of the first man and first woman, who lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, etc. Such information is valuable to every student. However, is such the ultimate goal? I think not.

Some teach about the history of people and places in the Bible. No doubt understanding such can enrich one's appreciation of things. It can even build faith. However, is learning history and geography the ultimate goal? I think not.

Some spend their time in meaningless speculation. Philip Schaff, in his history of the Christian church describes certain scholars in the middle ages. "Albert Mangus asked whether it was harder for God to create the universe than to create man and whether the understanding of angels is brighter in the morning or in the evening... Alexander of Hales attempted to settle the hour of the day at which Adam sinned and, after a long discussion, concluded it was at the ninth hour... Bonaventura debated whether several angels can be in one place at the same time, (and) whether one angel can be in several places at the same time... Anselm, in his work on the Trinity, asked whether God could have taken on the female sex and why the Holy Spirit did not become incarnate... Another curious but far-reaching question occupied the minds of Albert Magnus, Bonaventura, Thomas Aquinas and other schoolmen. Does a mouse, in eating the consecrated host, actually partake of its consecrated substance? Duns Scotus took up the similar question, what occurs to an ass drinking water consecrated for baptism..." (History of the Christian Church Vol. 5, pp. 593-594, 718-719). Is such on what we should spend our time? Surely not.

Some teach things that are not the subject of Bible teaching. Such things include: potty-training (while the Bible has much to say about parenting it does not specifically teach the how of potty-training); weight-loss plans (while we are instructed to be good stewards, the Bible doesn't specify a diet); financial planning (while the Bible says a great deal about money, it does not specify which money-market account or mutual fund to invest, or the percentage of one's investment which should be in stocks, bonds, and gold or silver). Hadden Robinson remarked, "A preacher can proclaim anything in a stained-glass voice, at 11:30 on Sunday morning, following the singing of hymns. Yet when a preacher fails to preach the scriptures, he abandons his authority. He confronts his hearers no longer with a word from God but only another word from men" (Biblical Preaching, p. 18).

Here is the objective: *“Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith”* (1st Timothy 1:5).

1. Love

A preacher should seek to develop a love of God within man. It was the greatest commandment in the Old Testament (Mark 12:28-31), and no doubt is under the New Testament as well. This love prompts obedience (1 John 5:2-3; John 14:15, 21, 23-24).

A preacher should seek to develop a love for man within man. Jesus listed this as the second greatest of all commandments under the Old Testament (Mark 12:28-31). Jesus told his disciples, “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Love motivates us to follow God’s commandments (Romans 13:8-10; 1 John 5:2; 2 John 5-6). Spiritually we are nothing without love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Notice this love is to be from a pure heart (1 Timothy 1:5 cf. Romans 12:9; 1 Peter 1:22).

2. A Good Conscience

“The ‘good conscience,’ in the ideal sense, is the mental disposition that is at peace with divine revelation” (Wayne Jackson, *Before I Die*, p. 31). The sacrifices of the Old Testament could not provide a good conscience (Hebrews 9:6-9). This is the case because there was reminder every year on the Day of Atonement (Hebrews 10:1-4). However, Jesus came to cleanse this consciousness of sin (Hebrews 9:11-14). He promised under the New Testament to remember sins no more (Hebrews 10:16-18 cf. Jeremiah 31).

A preacher should tell men how to have a good conscience before God. He teaches baptism, “an appeal to God for a good conscience” (1 Peter 3:21 NASB). He teaches the “second law of pardon” (1 John 1:7; Acts 8:22). His aim is to help men be saved.

3. Faith

A preacher should develop trust and confidence in God, Jesus, and the word. This means that a preacher will spend time in presenting the word and not mere entertaining stories (Romans 10:17; Luke 8:11-12; John 5:45-47; 17:20; 20:30-31; Acts 17:11-12; 18:8; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 1:10).

Notice it says, “Sincere faith,” literally not acted faith. Some claim to be Christians but really, they are acting a part, or perhaps have inherited a belief system. They are “Christians” because of family (mom or dad, son or daughter, husband or wife) or perhaps for image in the community. However, in reality they have no rock solid faith of their own. God wants more. The goal of preaching is to develop the individuals trust in God, Jesus, and the word.