

The Ministry of Teaching

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A little over two centuries ago an English farm house caught fire. Two small boys waved frantically from the second story window. Fortunately two men nearby saw these boys and raced to their rescue. One man jumped upon the other man's shoulders and lifted the boys down safely. The identity of these boys is well known: they were John and Charles Wesley. Two boys were physically rescued from a fiery furnace and a terrible death. What we have seen here physically is also true spiritually in the work of a Christian teacher. It is the business of the Christian teacher to save young souls and young lives. By saving John and Charles Wesley the two men saved not merely two boys, but two wonderful lives, and two great ministries. So it is in the work of a Christian teacher. Christian teaching is a ministry just as preaching the gospel is a ministry.

D. L. Moody said, "If we can save one generation of children, we will put the devil out of business." Marian Lawrence, the great lay Christian educator, said, "The greatest need today in the church is for trained teachers who will put the whole mind into preparation, the whole soul into presentation, and the whole life into illustration." Here again there is forced upon us the tremendous importance of a teaching ministry. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to point out the nature and purpose of the teaching ministry, and what its relationship is to the preaching ministry.

I. THE PASTOR'S OFFICE

The office of the pastor or preacher seems very clear in the minds of people today. The Scriptures reveal a variety of names by which the preacher is known: minister (Matt. 20:25-28; I Tim. 4:6), shepherd (John 21:15-17), builder (I Cor. 3:10-15), elder (II John 1:1), father (I Cor. 4:14, 15), over-seer (I Tim. 3:1), pastor (Eph. 4:11), steward (I Cor. 4:1), and watchman (Heb. 13:17). In the New Testament sense, the pastor is a man who has an inner call from the Holy Ghost and an external call from the church to preach the gospel. His purpose is to address the minds and hearts of men with Scriptural truths for the salvation and spiritual profit of his hearers. The method which he uses is that of wit-

nessing to God's saving truths which includes interpreting, expounding, and exhorting; he has a message from God. In I Timothy 4:11-14, we read of three main public duties of the preacher: (1) to read publicly, followed by an address or a sermon; (2) to teach doctrine; and (3) to exhort the people. The Greek here for reading is *anagnosis*, which means a public reading, or a reading followed by a public address somewhat similar to a sermon. Teaching or doctrine (*didaskalia*) was an appeal to the mind. Exhortation or preaching was an appeal to the heart. It is to be noted that preaching *and* teaching were part of the pastor's duties.

Today much confusion prevails, however, with regard to the nature and purpose of the ministry of teaching, and as a result of the status of Christian education. The foundational principles of Christian education largely remain unrecognized even by those who devote themselves to the Lord's work. We need to know what the Scriptures teach relative to this matter. The liberals do not believe in the inspiration of the Bible, so they would not be interested in investigating Biblical roots. Even in orthodox ranks, however, methods have become more apparent than the *theological foundations* of the teaching ministry. Many Christian educators have assumed that Christian education has educational rather than theological foundations. Because of this erroneous viewpoint, many Evangelicals have minimized the importance of Christian education. Schools which have been strong in educational subjects are weak in Bible and theology. Teachers have been trained in methods, but not in content. In Bible schools, colleges, and theological seminaries, Christian education has become a secondary matter.

Then, too, failure to recognize the necessity of the teaching function to the church has resulted in a misconception of the ministry. As a result the task of the minister is conceived to be primarily that of preacher or pastor. Educational tasks are considered extra, and many pastors perform the educational tasks of the church, not because they want to, or consider them important, but because they *have to*. Under heavy pressure, educational duties are neglected. Even in theological seminaries, the curriculum is geared to theology, pastoral theology, and homiletics, to the neglect of Christian education. This is not a plea that the curriculum be geared to the field of Christian education; but the fact remains that there is uncertainty as to where Christian education belongs, not only in the seminary, but also in the church, particularly in the evangelistic church. It

becomes all the more necessary, therefore, that we investigate the roots of Christian education in the Scriptures.

II. PREACHING AND TEACHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In Old Testament times, the prophet was so important that teaching was in his shadow; but the persistence of a holy faith in Israel from generation to generation proves that teaching was done by unnumbered and unremembered Israelites. The great chapter of Deuteronomy 6 indicates the importance of teaching to the Jews. Two things are revealed among other things in this chapter: one, the love for God, and a teaching of the faith; and second, a failure to teach was a failure of love. Proverbs 1:8 shows that mother and father were included in the responsibility for teaching the children. Here we read, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." In fact, the perpetuation of Israel's religion depended on two things: (1) the prophet to proclaim it and to call the nation to repentance, and (2) teachers who would not rest until they saw a living faith in their children and neighbors. The rise and fall of the Jewish nation paralleled the stress placed on these two things. The prophets also taught. We find evidence of this in Isaiah 8:16; Jeremiah 50:10, 11; 57:1-3, and 66:5. After the exile, the scribe became dominant, and the prophet died away. In Nehemiah chapter 8, verses 1-8, we find the record of Ezra, the teacher, at work. This is a picture of the dawning era of the period in Jewish history when the prophet faded away and the scribe became dominant. During this time the people depended on the writings of the past, and became rather legalistic in their religion. If the prophet had been kept alive, along with the teacher or the scribe, the teaching would not have degenerated into legalism. The one lesson that we must learn from this is that we cannot divorce the ministry of the prophet from that of the teacher. The prophet keeps the message alive and vital, but the teacher helps to perpetuate and establish it. We must never allow the teaching function *apart from evangelism* to usurp the voice of the prophet.

III. PREACHING AND TEACHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

To properly understand the relationship between preaching and teaching in the New Testament, one must know both the language *and* the customs which were typical of the period. The synagogue idea was adopted by the early church. It was here that the

Sunday School really started, for the synagogue had Bible schools in connection with their programs of worship on the Sabbath. As evidence of this, we find Josephus commenting on the fact that since Moses' day it was customary to hear the law, and "to learn it accurately." Again, Philo called the synagogue "houses of instruction." The Talmud shows that a system of Bible schools was run in connection with the synagogue. Edersheim said, "No doubt such schools existed." The method of instruction was this—the teacher taught and listened, the pupils questioned the teachers, and shared in the discussion. If the pupil failed to understand, it was the teacher's fault. They had worship in the morning, and school in the afternoon of the Sabbath day.

It is hard to separate preaching and teaching in Jesus' ministry. As a boy of twelve we find Him in the temple (Luke 2:46-47). His presence there was not so surprising, but His knowledge of the word of God was. Later on, as we follow Him, we note that He was known more as a teacher than as a preacher, although He performed both ministries. Dr. Clarence Benson says, that sixty out of ninety times Jesus was addressed, He was called teacher. There was a prophetic element, however, in His preaching and teaching, but there are abundant evidences which point to the place which teaching had in His ministry. In all of the gospels, Jesus used the methods of a teacher. He taught by the wayside (Mark 6:6, 34), by the sea (Mark 2:13), in private homes (Matt. 13:36), in the temple court (Matt. 21:23-32), and in the synagogue (Matt. 13:54). What was His method? It was interlocutory. Such a method is not simply that of question and answer. It is that but more. Such a method implies informal discussion between pupil and teacher. As applied by the Jews the pupils did most of the questioning.

Matthew 4:23 teaches us that teaching and preaching were emphasized on a par in the early church. Our text (Acts 5:42) does the same. The apostles and prophets were preachers *and teachers*. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20) is a teaching commission. The apostles so interpreted it. Paul was both preacher and teacher. Careful study of Acts 17 reveals that Paul used both methods with neither method no more important than the other. In the first three verses of this chapter it is recorded that Paul "came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul *as his manner was*, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures". This is the manner of a teacher. At Berea (verses

10-11) the method was identical. At Athens (verse 17) he taught both in the synagogue and on the streets. At Corinth (chapter 18:1-11) Paul spent a period of eighteen months, first in the synagogue and then later in the house of Justus, “*teaching* the word of God among them” (verse 11). Still further, for two years Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus (19:1-10). The same length of time was devoted to similar duties during his stay in Rome (28:30, 31). In Timothy Paul lays great stress on teaching. A careful perusal of I Cor. 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 reveals that the teaching ministry was raised to the same level as that of the preaching ministry. In fact, the apostles were both preachers and teachers. “Daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to *teach and preach* Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). Notice here that emphasis was placed on teaching *and* preaching. Such was the experience with Paul and Barnabas at Antioch who “continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord” (Acts 15:35). These experiences and many others which could be cited point to the fact that it was a common experience in the early church, in following the example of Jesus, to preach and teach, both ministries equally important and exercised. In II Timothy 3:16, 17 we are taught that the *content* of that ministry is the Word of God. Here the word instruction in the Greek is *paideia* the rootage of which is *pais*, a child. The word means education begun in childhood. In other words, Christianity is *Christo-pedia*—with Christ from childhood.

At this point we may pause to summarize. The ministry of the Word requires two services: preaching and teaching. Both are equally necessary. The truth of the matter is that no pastor can be true to his calling without being a pastor-teacher. No church will carry out its God-given task without strong ministries of preaching and teaching.

IV. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PREACHING AND TEACHING

In the above we have considered some of the foundations of preaching and teaching as revealed in the Scriptures. It now remains for us to consider the distinction between preaching and teaching. The question is frequently asked, “What is the difference between preaching and teaching?” “Is one more important than the other?” To answer these questions it is a matter of *both and*, not either or. Good preaching is good teaching and good teaching has in it the note of the preached proclamation. Let us notice briefly,

however, how they are similar, and wherein they differ. They are alike in that they both serve the Word of God. Both were required in the Old Testament and New Testament. The *content* is the same. The *purposes* and *goals* are the same. The purpose and content of the Sunday School teacher is the same as that of the pastor or preacher.

How do they differ? Not in purpose or content, but in *method* lies the difference. Preaching is directed at the proclamation of the gospel to man in his sin and unbelief, telling him that there is a Saviour through repentance and faith. Teaching is concerned with that, too, but also with growth in grace and knowledge after conversion. Teaching can be and ought to be evangelistic. For example, Paul in Ephesus used Greek teaching methods of public disputation to evangelize the unbeliever. The primary difference is that teaching is informal in its setting in the classroom; preaching is more formal. Paul and Jesus taught in an informal manner in the synagogue. They also preached there, but they were more formal in their methods.

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As best we can, let us summarize the substance of this article. When teaching is over-emphasized, the church is in danger of becoming moralistic and legalistic. When preaching is over-emphasized, Christian character develop is neglected, and when the seed of preaching does spring up, very little attention is given to it. The laymen are not trained. The over-all conclusion, therefore, is that preaching and teaching are both necessary to an effective ministry. There is a ministry of preaching. There is a ministry of teaching. One is no more important than the other in the proclamation of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.