

Why Do We . . . ?

by Bill Crews

Please read Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1 and 1 Peter 3:15. We are to weigh everything by the Scriptures and hold fast only what we have proved thereby. We are not to be gullible, easily influenced. We are to put all teachers and all teaching to the test. We are to be able and ready to give an answer, to make a defense in regard to what we believe and teach and practice and why we have the hope of eternal life.

Why do we refer to our preachers as preachers, as evangelists, as ministers of the gospel, but steadfastly refuse to call them “pastors” or to address them with the title “The Reverend”?

The word “*preacher*” appears only three times in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11 of Paul, and in 2 Peter 2:5 of Noah. It means “proclaimer, publisher.” The gospel was to be preached (verb form of preacher) in all the world (Matt. 24:14; 26:13; Mk. 16:15); it still is. The apostles (Mk. 16:20), Philip (Acts 8:5), Timothy (2 Tim. 4:2) preached (verb form of preacher). All first century preachers did not speak by inspiration; some did. Those who did were given what to preach by the Holy Spirit; those who did not had to preach what they learned from others who were guided by the Holy Spirit (see 2 Tim. 2:2; 3:14). Romans 10:14-15 refers to that time when the inspired word had not been written, but was to be found in those preachers who spoke by inspiration. Needed today are those who will learn and preach the will of God that has been revealed in the Scriptures.

“Evangelist” is from a transliteration of a New Testament Greek word. It is applied to Philip (Acts 21:8 — the same Philip of Acts 8:5), Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5; remember he is told to “*preach*” in vs. 2), and others (Eph. 4:11). The word means “one who brings good news” or “one who brings the gospel.” The noun “*gospel*” appears 76 times in the New Testament. The word means “good news” The verb (“to give, deliver, bring good news” or “to preach the gospel” appears 51 times. It is used of the apostles (Acts 5:42), of Philip (Acts 8:12, 35, 40), and of Peter and John (Acts 8:25).

As for the expression “*minister of the gospel*,” Paul uses it of himself in Colossians 1:23 and Ephesians 3:6-7. The word for “minister” here is from the Greek word **DIAKONOS**, the same word being found in the expression “*minister of Christ*” in 1 Timothy 4:6. The word “*minister*” in the New Testament is not used in its popular sense today of a man being “the minister of a church,” and having entered “the ministry” by virtue of being licensed and ordained by some religious body. More than one Greek word for “minister” is used of all Christians. See Matthew 20:26; 25:44; Hebrews 6:10; 1 Peter 4:7-9,10-11.

In the New Testament no one man is ever described as “the pastor of a church.” The word “*pastor*” is found but one time in the New Testament in the various English translations of the Bible — Ephesians 4:11 (please read it). There it is translated from a Greek word (**POIMEN**) which everywhere else is translated “*shepherd*” (17 out of the 18 times it appears; in at least eight of those instances it is used of a literal shepherd of literal sheep). “*Pastor*” is from a Latin word which means “shepherd” Christ is a “*Shepherd*” in a metaphorical or spiritual sense (Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25), but who are the “*shepherds*” (or “*pastors*”) of Ephesians 4:11? To answer that question please read Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. In those passages we can learn that the “*elders*” of a church and the “*overseers*” of a church are one and the same, and that it is these men that are to “*tend*” or “*feed*” or, better, “*shepherd*” the “*flock*” among them or the “*flock*” in which they have been made “*overseers*.”

In the New Testament, “*elders*” (or “*presbyters*,” appointed older men), “*overseers*” (or “*bishops*,” — “**bishop**” is from a Latin word meaning “overseer”), and “*pastors*” (or “*shepherds*”) all refer to the same men. Each congregation had a plurality (Acts 14:23;

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