

# christian

## WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

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## WE NEED STRONG PREACHERS!

Tom Moore

“Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). This should be the battle cry for every gospel preacher. But, sadly, there are many “sissy boy” preachers who lack courage and love for the truth. Too many of our preachers today are “hirelings” and do not truly care for the souls of man (John. 10:12). Too much of our preaching today is “conversational” wishy-washy mush. What has happened to the tried and true “fire and brimstone” preaching? To where has dynamic book, chapter, and verse preaching disappeared? I have been preaching now for 30 years, and sadly over the last several years I have seen weak pulpits developing all over our land. Great preachers of the past like Guy N. Woods, G. K. Wallace, Bill Jackson, Joe Gilmore, etc. would be appalled at the kind of preaching going on today. But, more importantly, what would Jesus think? Would He be pleased with the milquetoast preaching of today? I think not!

What is strong preaching? Notice two biblical examples. Consider the example of Peter. His method of preaching was bold and powerful. This can be seen by noticing his sermons in the book of Acts. In Acts 2, he sets forth the terms of redemption. During this sermon, he said unto the Jews that they “by wicked hands have crucified and slain” the sinless Son of God (Acts 2:23). When they heard the preaching of Peter they were pricked in their hearts (Acts 2:37). His preaching was bold, powerful, and to the point.

Paul’s preaching was clear and plain. He scorned the sophistries and verbal refinements of mere philosophers and orators in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2; yet he reveals a profound respect for the significance of genuine knowledge. The depth of his words was characterized by their simplicity. Paul studiously avoided obtuse rheto-

ric characteristic of those who considered themselves “somewhat.” He was even criticized for an absence of rhetorical flair (2 Cor. 10:10). He valued clear understanding of his message above all else (1 Cor. 14:18ff). The stakes were too high to squander precious time and limited opportunities to preach. He had no need to exalt himself or to indulge in silly self-promotion. Paul’s determination was to know one thing: Christ crucified the hope of glory (1 Cor. 2:2; Col. 1:27).

These were Jesus trained preachers. Preaching today must be bold, powerful, clear, and plain. We are required to preach the truth (John. 8:32; 2 Tim. 4:2). We are obligated to preach the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), and do

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# Editor

Cody Westbrook



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

## FAITH IS THE VICTORY!

Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him..." As it pertains to gospel preachers we might say, "But without faith it is impossible preach for Him." Faith truly is the victory that will help us to be the preachers God wants us to be (1 John 5:4). But, do we have the faith that is required of us?

We must have faith in the power of the message that we proclaim. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth..." (Rom. 1:16). Paul realized that if people were going to be saved it was going to be through the gospel because it is the exclusive means by which God makes men righteous (Rom. 1:17). He knew that the wisdom of men does not have the ability to save anyone, "for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:18-31). Preaching brethren, do we believe that today? It has long been a tragic mystery to me that many of us seem to believe that as the culture changes, our preaching should change along with it. It seems that so many of us are afraid that if we preach the truth we will be viewed as old fashioned and irrelevant and therefore the local congregation will shrink and die. But God said that the power to save is in the gospel message, and that His word will accomplish what it is intended to do (Isa. 55:8-9). Let us do away with open-ended articles and sermons that are full of pop-culture emptiness that leave people with more questions than answers, and have faith in the power of God's message to accomplish what He says it will.

We must have faith in the strength that God gives us. Second Corinthians 3-5 is a wonderful section of scripture for preachers to study and memorize. In chapter 3 Paul describes his sufficiency for ministry. He wrote, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5). Sufficiency suggests competence and capability,

thus it is God who makes us competent to do His work. In chapter 4 Paul explains his trust in difficulty. There will always be those who refuse to listen to the gospel (2 Cor. 4:1-6), instead they will cause trouble for the ones who proclaim it (2 Cor. 4:7-18). But, no matter, "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). Chapter 5 reveals Paul's hope for eternity. Our desire is to be with the Lord for eternity and therefore "we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him" (2 Cor. 5:9). The fact is that preaching is a difficult occupation, and, sadly, many preachers give up. But we have the greatest task (2 Cor. 3) and the greatest trust in the greatest God (2 Cor. 4) who has promised the greatest reward (2 Cor. 5). Though we may be troubled, perplexed, and persecuted for our preaching, we do not have to fear anything people may say or do to us because we are God's men preaching God's message.

We must have faith in God's provision. Every faithful gospel preacher knows what is it like to wonder how he will be able to provide for his family. Sometimes we are put in the position of having to choose between compromising the doctrine of Christ and being able to deposit a check in the bank. No doubt it is a frightening thing, but we must have faith in God's promise to take care of us. Jesus promised that if we will seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first, God will provide for our every need (Matt. 6:19-34). Preaching brethren, do we really believe it? Are we willing to trust Him completely to provide for us physically as well as spiritually?

CW

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## THE WORD OF GOD IS ABLE!

Richard Melson

The Apostle Paul, upon meeting with the elders of the Ephesian congregation, pointed out that which is valuable and necessary for the growth of the Lord's church and commended the brethren to the word of God (Acts 20:32).

As Paul comes to the end of his farewell address to these dear brethren, he reminds them of the dire necessity and gripping power of the pure word of God. Nothing else can build and strengthen our souls. No other message can provide the beautiful home of the soul.

Those who have chosen to proclaim the word of God (1 Pet. 4:11) by definition should be nourished by the word they preach. The gospel preacher must take heed to what he hears and what he says ... Preach the word (2 Tim. 4:2).

The Holy Spirit did not inspire Paul to say, nor Luke to pen, "I commend or commit" them to secular pursuits, worldly gains, or even the attainment of this world's knowledge – even though it is not inherently wrong to do those things. There is indeed value in these and we should not overlook them. But to be built up spiritually requires something altogether different – "the word of His grace".

The gospel preacher must love God's word, treasuring it in his heart (Matt. 6:21; Pro. 4:23; 23:7). The gospel preacher's worldview is to be distinctively biblical - that is his collection of pre-suppositions, convictions and values by which he makes sense out the world and life is the Bible, specifically the New Testament. He must learn to rightly divide the Word, making proper application. Gospel preachers must trust the Bible with their very life. Can you imagine anyone identifying themselves as a specific practitioner (medical doctor, lawyer, or dentist for example) who did not know the manual of his craft or practice? It was the late Johnny Ramsey in a sermon entitled "How to have a spiritual famine in the land" from Amos 8:11, who made the point that if we stop studying the Bible, we are heading for a spiritual famine in America.

Paul's message to the Ephesian elders provides the following for our consideration:

- God is able to provide for us when we remain faithful to Him and His word. When we abide in Him (John 8:31), God will prune us so that we can bear the fruit of righteousness (John 15:1-7). We

have to maintain the word of His grace in us and we in it, so that God may make us fit for His use.

- God is able to guide us through His word. Those who are lovers of truth as the prophet Jeremiah – who loved God's word (Jer. 15:16), such that he could not keep it to himself (Jer. 20: 23:29)—will be guided by divine instruction as they yield their will to it (Jas. 1:19-22). When we hide the word in our heart (Ps. 119:9-11) and meditate upon it, we will know how to respond to the challenges of this world (Jas. 1:12; Rom. 12:1-2). There is no divine guidance apart from the word of God (Heb. 1:1; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).
- God is able to make us wise through His word. God has been so gracious toward us in revealing His will to us in Holy Writ. The scriptures makes us wise to salvation (2 Tim 3:15 cf. Ps. 19:7). It is the scriptures which teach us about the Father (John 5:39) so that we might serve Him correctly. Gospel preachers have the opportunity to study, learn, and live in harmony with the divine precepts. May we learn not be like those who could have been wise but became foolish because "they have rejected the word of the Lord" (Jer. 8:9). The truly wise person is the one who having heard the gospel, obeyed and lives by the gospel (1 Cor.1:18-3; 15:1-2).
- God is able to deliver us. The gospel preacher is strengthened as he learns that God has delivered His servants, from the Old Testament prophets through His Son, therefore He will keep is promise to us as well (2 Tim. 1:8-12; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rom. 4:19-22).
- God is able to make us happy. Happiness, not as the world defines it, but as God does is promised and delivered by God to His people. Jesus wants us to experience the abundant life (John 10:10). Throughout the word of God it is emphasized that genuine happiness or blessedness is only found in the proper relationship with the Father (see Psalm 40:4; 128:4). "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord" (Jer. 17:7). Unlike the world's definition, God's happiness is not based upon the fickleness of man, but the unchanging character of a sovereign Creator and His inspired word (Acts 10:34; Matt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33).

Gospel preachers must pay attention to the word of God daily. They must give themselves to prayer and allow God to speak through them by rightly dividing the word (2 Tim 2:15). The apostle Peter also reminds us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18).

There will be no reaching the inheritance among all those who are sanctified (set apart by the obedience to the word of God, John 17:7) if we do not abide in the word of God (John 8:81-32).

Thank God for His word and its power (Heb. 4:12).

CW

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## EVERY AQUILA NEEDS HIS PRISCILLA

Carl McCann

A well-known phrase says, “Behind every great man there is a great woman.” While we may not agree wholeheartedly with the phrase, we can certainly agree with the sentiment. Scripture clearly reveals that “two are better than one...” (Eccl. 4:9-10), and “he who finds a wife finds a good thing” (Prov. 18:22). Every preacher with a genuine “helper” will wholeheartedly agree with the above verses, and will appreciate the wonderful contribution his spouse makes to his efforts in the Kingdom.

Aquila and Priscilla are referenced six times in scripture (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19). Within these contexts some notable traits of this **dynamic couple** are presented – hospitality, courage, evangelism, sacrifice, and scholarship. One other trait prominently presented is their **togetherness**, every reference identifies them together. Clearly, Aquila and Priscilla were a team, a united pair, devoted to God and each other. Preacher, can that be said about you and your spouse? If the answer is yes, have you thanked God for the joy your togetherness brings you and the glory God receives from it?

Preaching is the most rewarding work in the world. It is also the most exhausting; frustrating, and stressful job in the world at times, and no one understands this like the preacher’s wife. During the various stages of your preaching – you will need a confidant, counselor and a critic. That person ought to be your wife. Let us examine these areas.

Every Aquila Needs His Priscilla As A Confidant. As stated previously no one understands the exasperation and exhilaration of preaching, better than the preacher’s wife. In that role she will have opportunity to provide

trust, assurance and encouragement to her husband. Inevitably there will be times when her husband will need to confide in her, revealing personal difficulties, relating heavy burdens that he needs help carrying, and seeking in her reassurance that the Devil will not win! The preacher’s wife is “... far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain” (Prov. 31:10-11).

Every Aquila Needs His Priscilla As A Counselor. Preaching entails counseling. Many preachers have been formally trained and educated as counselors, and their efforts are truly appreciated. However, whether one has been formally trained or not, counseling is part of the preacher’s job. Preaching involves dealing with people, during their good days and their bad days. Our aim in counseling is to guide people to and through the word of God in an effort to help them with whatever trials or difficulties they are facing. An interesting question though is who counsels the preacher? Preachers are not immune from the problems and trials which life can present. Who counsels the preacher during a severe, possibly fatal illness? Who counsels the preacher during the loss of loved family members? Who counsels the preacher when the unimaginable happens in life? As a preacher I am thankful for members of the church, who have been wonderful counselors, but most of all I am thankful to my wife for all the wise and supportive counsel she has provided.

Every Aquila Needs His Priscilla As A Critic. Honest criticism is indispensable to the preacher. Well meaning brethren pass out of our assemblies, and thank the preacher for a good sermon. While I appreciate their kind words, I am thankful for the honest critic, who truly knows me and my capabilities, and is willing to lovingly assess the sermon or lesson just presented. The truth preacher, not every sermon is a “home run.” Some sermons which look so good on paper just don’t get off the ground! Our wives know us better than anyone and they want us to succeed more than anyone. Her criticism or evaluation of our efforts in the pulpit and out of it must be heeded. “A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel” (Prov. 1:5).

History has recorded the outstanding efforts of Aquila and Priscilla. I pray that today’s preachers and their wives may be as dynamic, resolute, and united serving the Lord.

CW

## WHAT PREACHERS NEED FROM ELDERS

Andy Baker

**P**reachers need elders who will exemplify the Golden Rule. It is one of the most fundamental of Christian principles, but often the Golden Rule is often the first thing to be sacrificed in elder/preacher relationships (Matt. 7:12). How many obstacles in the elder/preacher relationship might be removed if it were that the eldership treated the preacher the way they would like to be treated and vice versa? Preachers need elders who will be considerate of the man who sits across the desk from them and who works with them for the glory of God (Phil. 2:1-4).

**Preachers need elders who will shepherd.** The Bible will not scripturally support a “single-pastor” system; however, it is easy to see how it came to that. When people ask to speak to “THE pastor,” they want the one who visits, who teaches, who encourages, who cares in benevolent matters, and who shepherds and counsels people. If asked the question, “who does those things in your congregation,” who would that be? In many places, elders are resigned to being mere business managers and have turned over the role of “pastoring/shepherding” to the preacher. Therefore, many preachers are overworked, discouraged, disillusioned and overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task of preaching and shepherding. Elders must shepherd and let the preacher preach.

**Preachers need elders to give them clear direction.** The late Carl Garner, a wonderful friend of preachers and elders both, counseled all his preaching school classes to, “get it in writing.” He taught this preacher that one of the most terrifying phrases in a preacher’s job description is, “other duties as assigned.” Again, elders, the responsibility of the preacher is to preach (I Tim. 4:16; II Tim. 2:2; Tim. 4:1-5). When the eldership sees the preacher doing a work, repetitively, that does not fit his role, the preacher needs elders to stand up and assign the work to a deacon. Preachers need elders who give them clear direction and admonish (and rebuke) them when they deviate from that.

**Preachers need elders who will stand up for the preacher’s time.** Some preachers will work themselves into the grave if they were left unchecked. They neglect family, personal time, and even themselves in the service of the local body. Preachers need elders who will observe them and shepherd them with regard to use of their time (Eph. 5:15-16; Phil. 2:4). That includes “heading off at the pass” members who would monopolize the preacher’s

time in counseling, in just visiting, or in soliciting their help for another task. Elders must be keenly conscious of the preacher’s time, but not micromanagers of it.

**Preachers need elders to give them feedback about their work.** Again, consider the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12). Would a person like to work at a job year after year and never hear, “we appreciate the job you’re doing”? Would someone like to be in a perpetual state of wonder if they will get a cost of living increase this year? Will the church be best served if the elders never give the preacher any direction with regard to sermons, classes and teaching? Elders must hold up the hands of the preacher and let him know how much they appreciate him. It will make a difference in the enthusiasm of the classes he teaches and the sermons he preaches.

**Preachers need elders to have open and honest communication with them.** As the eldership ought to stand strongly for Biblical truth behind the preacher, so the preacher ought to be able to stand strongly behind the eldership when unpopular or unsettling decisions are coming. How can the preacher stand if there is little to no communication? The husband may be the head of the household, but there is vast wisdom in consulting the wife in matters for the good of the family (Eph. 5:22-6:4). In the “marriage” of an eldership and preacher, an eldership that unilaterally makes a decision for the flock without the honest feedback of a preacher may make a grievous error, and in the process, foster distrust, anger, and bitterness. Preachers need elders who will keep them in the loop and communicate openly and honestly.

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## IRON SHARPENS IRON

Jim Nash

**D**on’t be surprised, but **you need sharpening.** Just like there are certain physical realities we accept about ourselves in the here and now, like needing to brush our teeth if we want to keep them, there are spiritual realities that we also must accept. We understand that if we seek God’s approval, one thing we must do is spend time in His Word, learning to “rightly divide” it (2 Tim. 2:15). It takes time and diligence but we can understand the Will of the Lord (Eph. 5:17). God’s Word helps to make us what we need to be if we are going to please Him and be effective for His purpose on this earth and worthy of His presence in the hereafter (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

One spiritual reality is found in Proverbs 27:17, “Iron sharpeneth iron; So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” As a quick note of explanation, while countenance is a word that usually speaks to an expression on one’s face, it can also represent a person as a whole, and that seems to be the meaning in this passage. So the meaning is simply that friends make each other better, or sharper.

We knock the rough edges off of each other, we remove the rust, even prepare one another for battle. This world can be a difficult place and we need to choose the kind of friends that will strengthen, build, and sharpen us rather than remove us from our purpose. Our Heavenly Father, who gave us life and purpose, enlists us as soldiers of salt and light in His spiritual army (Ecc. 12:13, Matt. 5:13-14, Eph. 6). To this end, while we cannot choose the family of our birth, we must realize that friends are the family that we choose. Choose wisely.

We all need good iron sharpeners. Young people need friends that will not belittle them for their biblical convictions, but support them. Adults need to choose the kind of spouse that will sharpen them in the direction of heaven. When choosing a spouse, if that is not a top priority, you are doing it wrong (Matt. 6:33). Preachers especially need friends who will sharpen them to be better servants. We need encouragement and argument. We may at times need to be told we are not alone like Elijah when things are difficult and we feel we are at the end of our rope (1 Kings 19:9-18). And preachers, being asked difficult questions and needing to preach on difficult issues, need friends who can discuss scripture and argue a point to help us to “prove all things” (1 Thess. 5:21).

To fulfill Proverbs 27:17, one thing we must do is **allow ourselves to be sharpened**. We must allow the right people the right access to us. We cannot allow the wicked to have undue influence in our lives. We must be willing even to reprove them (Eph. 5:11). Rather than be conformed to this world we must be transformed “by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 21:2). Good friends will help us in this process, to make us better versions of ourselves. We just have to be humble enough and mature enough to allow the right ones, the right access.

Finally, be a good sharpener and **sharpen others**. Be salt and light. Be someone who helps others go to heaven. Be the kind of friend that is a blessing and not a burden. Be careful when you criticize to be constructive rather

than destructive. Be kind (Eph. 4:32). When rebuke is necessary be sure it comes from a place of concern not conquest, treating others the way you would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12). Remember that good friends provide not just camaraderie but also accountability, “faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Prov. 27:6). More than anything else, let Jesus be your friend (John 15:14).

Some people make enemies instead of friends because it is easier, but it is not better. Good friends, spouses, mentors are an investment in your future.

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## STRENGTH THROUGH SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

Bill Burk

**E**xercise is a must for good physical and mental health. Fitness experts have pointed out that a good walking program can help eliminate stress, lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels and even decrease depression. Whether you choose walking, running, weight lifting, cycling or some other form of activity, you can trust that regular exercise will provide greater health and physical strength.

Despite the effectiveness of physical exercise, not everyone participates in it. Some folks are completely disinterested when it comes to a bodily fitness regiment. A host of others are interested but can’t seem to find the necessary drive and motivation to get started. Last, there are those who exercise regularly and if they cannot find opportunity to do something physically they miss it and feel like something isn’t right.

As important as physical exercise is, the Bible points to a kind of discipline that’s much more important – spiritual exercise.

The apostle Paul, in writing to his young protégé Timothy said, “But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance” (1 Tim. 4:7-9).

Just as some people aren’t interested in physical exercise, some find no attraction to spiritual pursuits. However, everyone should. Your most valuable

commodity is your soul (Mk. 8:36-37). Understanding this should spur greater interest. If you need motivation and drive to exercise spiritually then reflect on the fact that the health of your soul determines the quality of your life now and the quality of it in the life to come. Nothing is more important than taking care of your soul, thus spiritual exercise should take precedence over everything else.

What kinds of things can a Christian employ in order to grow spiritually stronger and avoid soul sickness?

- **Prayer** (1 Tim. 2:1,2): Pray when you wake up, while you drive to work, when you catch your breath, before you eat, before you sleep and at any time when life's cares weigh upon you (1 Thes. 5:17). You can approach the Throne of God so take advantage of this privilege (Heb. 4:16); you will be stronger for having done so.
- **Reading/ studying** (1 Tim. 4:13,16): Scripture, when read, studied and applied can make you complete in the sight of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). You must know God's will before you can apply it. You must apply it in order to please Him (Jas. 1:22). Yet, if you consistently apply it you will enjoy the "life of God" (Jn. 10:10; Eph. 4:18) that he intends for you.
- **Meditation/ memorization** (1 Tim. 4:15); like a cow chewing its cud, feast on God's word and savor it (Job 23:12). Do so purposefully and thoughtfully. Memorize choice portions of Scripture so that when temptation rears its head you are armed and ready (Psa. 119:11).
- **Instructing/ serving** (1 Tim. 4:6): Take God's word and teach others with it. Allow it to motivate you to serve and do good (Gal. 6:10). The more you serve the more you become like Jesus and the stronger you will be spiritually (Mk. 10:45).
- **Worship/ Praise** (Jn. 4:24). If you want to be spiritually fit then worship God regularly with his people (Acts 2:42; 20:7). Yet at the same time, praise Him continually throughout the day (Ps. 34:1). Marvel at his creative genius (Ps. 19:1). Sing to Him with joy in your heart (Jas. 5:13).

If you never exercise physically your body will not be strong. More importantly if you do not exercise spiritually you will never enjoy strength of soul. If you are not presently involved in a spiritual exercise program will you agree to start today? So why not right now determine to do the following: Eat right (Mat. 4:4); Stretch (2 Pet. 3:18); Run (1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Tim. 4:6-8);

Lift some weights (Gal. 6:2); Allow God to lift some of yours (1 Peter 5:7). Also, be sure to check your progress (1 Tim. 4:15; 2 Cor. 13:5), you'll be surprised at the gains you'll enjoy. Once you start, if you ever quit, you'll miss it.

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so to the whole world (Matt. 28:19-20). We must preach without adding to or taking away from the truth of the Gospel (Rev. 22:18-19). Our preaching must be without self-glory (1 Cor. 9:16). It is our duty to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 27). "Thus says the Lord" must fill our preaching (the book of Amos).

Strong preaching is needed because we must keep the church free from every false way. To keep the church strong, preaching must

charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith. (1 Tim. 1:3-4)

The church needs strong preaching that will "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The church needs strong preaching because souls are at stake.

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. (Mk. 16:15-16)

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, *How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!* (Rom. 10:14-15)

Preachers, be bold, be courageous, be enthusiastic and dynamic, be clear, be loving, and always stay true to the word of God.

CW



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