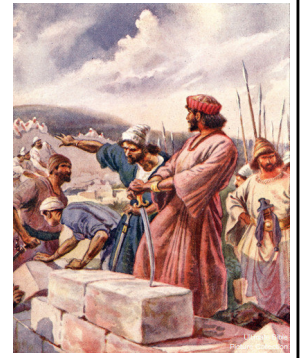


The Sword and The Trowel

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded (Nehemiah 4:17-18)

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“Are You The ...?”

I have been preaching for a little over thirty (30) years now. I am 100% certain that I have never been a reverend or a pastor for even one day in that period of time. Despite this there have been any number of people who are apparently sure I have been the whole time! I am forced to this conclusion by the number of times I have been addressed as one or the other either in conversation or in writing. I am understating it when I say that it gets a little tiresome.

Nevertheless, I think I understand why this happens. Let me relate a personal experience. We once had a man fired at work for missing too often (and he did). He filed unfair labor relation charges. There was a hearing. I was called to testify and I was under oath. The union lawyer asked me if I was a pastor. I paused and answered “No.” This was not the answer he desired. He conferenced with two others at his table and rephrased his question. He asked if I was a minister and I said “Yes.” This illustrates two points. There are those, like the lawyer, who don’t have a clue what a pastor is or isn’t. Then there are those, either or both of his advisors, who do know something about it. Unfortunately, there are more of the former than the latter.

Even though it might be totally incorrect, we have to admit that people refer to a preacher as pastor and/or reverend. There are also a goodly number of preachers who welcome such appellations. I want to point out that what some might so easily accept if really immaterial and does not mean it is necessarily accurate. What matters is what the Bible says on this subject.

What about pastor?

The English word pastor is found one time in the New Testament (Eph. 4:11) where it is listed along with apostles, evangelists, prophets, and teachers. It is surprising that this word, only found once, is so universally accepted as a title for preachers of the gospel.

The Greek word (POIMEN) means “a shepherd (literally or figuratively): -- a shepherd, pastor” (Strong). It is found eighteen times in the New Testament. It is found nine times in the literal sense (Matt. 9:36; 25:32; Mk. 6:34; Lk. 2:8, 15, 18, 20; Jn. 10:2, 12) and nine times in the figurative (or metaphorical) sense (Matt. 26:31; Mk. 14:27; Jn. 10:11 {twice}, 14, 16; Eph. 4:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25). So we can find the word pastor(s) in Ephesians 4:11, but who were they?

The pastors or shepherds in the New Testament church were the elders of a local congregation. Vine offers this good comment, “Compare Acts 20:28, which, with Acts 20:17, indicates that this was the service committed to elders (overseers or bishops); so also in 1 Peter 5:1-2).”

The terms (elder, bishop, pastor) are not referring to different positions as so many think. They actually describe the different functions of those who serve in this capacity.

1. Elder comes from a word meaning “older man.” Wisdom and experience are the keys.
2. Bishop comes from a word indicating that they are to “oversee” the congregation.
3. Pastor means, as noted earlier, “shepherd,” for their task is to care and feed the flock.

The New Testament always speaks of a plurality of elders (pastors or bishops) in a local congregation (viz., Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1). They had qualifica-

tions by which they were chosen to serve (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). These are what are to be used today.

Unfortunately, what is taught in the New Testament on this subject is unknown to the majority of the religious world. They think the preacher is the pastor despite the obvious problems:

1. He is the only one in the congregation.
2. He is likely a younger man.
3. He does not meet the qualifications.

At the same time they want the preacher to rule over the flock which is an idea totally foreign to the New Testament.

The Tuckerman church has, at this writing, three men serving as pastors of the flock. I am not one of them. I am the preacher (more on this later).

What about reverend?

A majority of the religious world freely uses “Reverend” as a title for their preachers. I do not know the history as far as this usage is concerned. I do know that there are those who insist on being addressed as such. Others feel compelled to use it as a common courtesy and proper etiquette when addressing a minister. This has *not* happened to me as often as the “pastor” thing. I usually try to politely make correction and request that I not be addressed as such. Sometimes folks are surprised, but usually comply with my request.

The word “reverend” is found one time in the KJV and also in the ASV (Psa. 111:9). There it is used as a description of God. It means “fearsome” (BDB) and is completely legitimate in its usage. It is translated in other versions as “awesome” (NKJV, NASB, NIV, ESV). (As humorous side note, I have to laugh to myself when I consider the possibility of being addressed as “Awesome Terry Sanders”

or “Fearsome Terry Sanders.” I don’t think so!).

It has always seemed odd to me that mere men would latch on to this word and use it as a title! And it is used and overused, for example:

1. Right Reverend...
2. The Very Right Reverend...
3. The Reverend Father...

Jesus spoke about those who love titles in Matthew 23:7-10. The scribes and Pharisees loved to be called “Rabbi.” However, Jesus told His disciples to avoid titles. Titles too often cause a little person to imagine he is much bigger than he actually is. Paul also cautioned, “...not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think...” (Rom. 12:3).

I am not a “reverend” as the world uses the designation. I am a preacher. Also, I am not “Preacher Terry Sanders” in some titled fashion. I am Terry Sanders who happens to be a preacher. It describes what I do and that is all.

What is a preacher?

I will give you the simple answer - - a preacher is one who preaches. You really can’t make it any simpler than that! The qualifications and duties of a preacher are recorded in 2 Timothy 4:1-5. It is my earnest hope and prayer that those verses would be read more often and read in depth. I think a lot of folks just might be surprised to find out what *is in* these verses as well as what *is not in* these verses.

Our friends in the denominational world hold that the preacher (or as they call him - - pastor or reverend) is the one who “marries us and buries us;” the one who does all the visiting; and is the CEO of the church. On the other hand, there are few in the church who will agree with this *verbally*, but expect him to do all of it *practically*.

As with elders, the preacher (Rom. 10:14) is known by other terms such as evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5) and minister (1 Tim. 4:16). Preacher (KERUX) means “herald, messenger, or proclaimer” (Jenkins). Evangelist comes from a word (EUAGGELISTES) that “describes a proclaimer of good news” (Jenkins). Notice that all descriptions are related to the same activity of proclaiming the word.

I have noticed in some Bibles and in some Bible commentaries how the letters to Timothy and Titus are called

“Pastoral Epistles.” This is because so many think Timothy and Titus were preachers (and wrongly call them “pastors”). Well they were preachers and so the letters ought to be called “Letters to Preachers.” In these letters are instructions and advice concerning the work of preachers. Let us consider some of the things found in these letters. The preacher (in relation to the congregation) is to:

1. Preach the word (2 Tim. 4:2).
2. Put the brethren in mind of the truth (1 Tim. 4:6).
3. Reprove sinners, including elders if necessary (1 Tim. 5:19-21).
4. Set in order, lead in appointing elders, teach qualifications (Titus 1:5).
5. Teaching and training other teachers (2 Tim. 2:2).
6. Teach against false doctrine and false teachers (1 Tim. 1:3-4; Titus 1:11, 13).
7. Set an example for the brethren (1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:7).
8. Give attention to reading, exhortation, teaching (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:15).

These are some of the things associated with the work of a preacher. As you can see, it is connected with the word of God. His work is first and foremost in preaching the word.

Pastors and preachers

In keeping with the general thrust of this article, we might observe the work of pastors and preachers. As elder (pastor) is to take heed to himself and *to the flock* (Acts 20:28). The preacher (evangelist) is to take heed to self and *to his teaching* (1 Tim. 4:16). There is some overlapping in these areas. It is not to say that elders have no concern about the teaching or that preachers are not to be concerned about the flock. This comparison only illustrates *primary* concern and the difference between the two in that regard.

Sometimes a notion develops that a preacher works for the elders or that the elders work for the preacher. Neither one has any scriptural validity. The ideal situation is that they should all work together. It should not be a *working for* issue; it should be a *working with* nature. Any situation that deviates from the latter arrangement is certainly ripe for much trouble and strife.

Preachers are to respect the oversight of the elders. It applies to them as much as to any other of the brethren (Heb. 13:17). Likewise Elders are not to “lord it over” any of the flock and preachers would be included in that (1 Peter 5:3).

Paul met at Miletus with the elders from Ephesus in Acts 20. The whole conversation mentions nothing about them working for him or he working for them. You do see how he discusses the work he did while there earlier and now he warns them of dangers to come. In all this we see his respect for them as overseers of God’s people.

Finally

There is no greater work than preaching the gospel of Christ. A lot of wrong ideas about a preacher’s work could seriously distract him from his real work. Everyone, the preacher, the elders, and the brethren ought to prevent such distraction. The church works best when everyone is doing what they are supposed to do.

We one time had a lady visit us in Evendale (she later obeyed the gospel). She was interested in learning more when she first came. Martha and I visited her. She had lots of questions. One of them was “What shall I call you?” I told her that I do real well with Terry and that that was good enough.

I am not a pastor. Neither am I a reverend. I have never had an intention or desire to be either one. Please extend to me a kindness and do not call me by either one or any other title. Once again, I am just Terry. That is what my parents named me and what Martha calls me. Most brethren I have worked with in the past have known that is who I am and that is good enough. I am someone who is fortunate enough to be able to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ and loves his work.

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