



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## The Need for Distinctive Preaching

- by Jim Deason

The role of the teacher is to hold back nothing profitable, but to teach the *whole* purpose of God (Acts 20:20,27). That is the key to faithfully fulfilling the work of an elder or evangelist, i.e., that we hold back nothing that is *profitable* to the people.

Preaching on the love of God is not going to help the young women of the congregation when they fail to hear a sermon directed toward their immodesty. Preaching on grace is good, but not if you fail to preach on how folks frequently absent themselves from worship in favor of their favorite sports or recreational activity. Preaching on mercy is wonderful, but sometimes people need to hear a lesson on social drinking or dancing (prom). Forgiveness is a grand theme, but sometimes brethren need to be warned of encroaching false doctrines and practices.

I believe there is a justifiable cause for concern today, not just because of *what is preached* from some pulpits, but even more because of *what is not being preached*! One of my heroes in the faith once observed, "If we *don't* preach on certain subjects, it won't be long before we *can't* preach on those subjects because people will not put up with it." He was right and, in my opinion, we are seeing the fruit of that in our time. Again, the key to faithfully fulfilling the work of an elder or evangelist is to hold back nothing that is profitable. It is not always easy to properly assess and preach to the needs of the people, but by all means do it!

The "old Jerusalem gospel" has a distinctive ring about it. It is a message flooded with Scripture and practical application. It is not always popular, but it is always right when presented with the best interest of the hearers in your heart and on your lips (Eph.4:15).

## Who Cares?

Dan S. Shipley

Did you ever think about who turns out the lights and locks the doors at the church building? It may seem a small thing, but it could create some problems if no one did it. The point is, **someone** accepts the responsibility that most members give very little thought to. The same could be said of cleaning and maintaining the building, parking lot, lawn, etc. Usually, some few willing souls will volunteer their services — and most others are perfectly willing to let them. Many Christians simply do not relate themselves to such work, and worse, may not appreciate those who do. But, in the absence of paid janitors and yardmen, why is any one member any more or less responsible than any other? What if no members cared about the appearance of a dirty building, or a weed-filled lawn or broken windows? Such neglect would soon become embarrassingly apparent.

On the other hand, other and more serious neglect is not so apparent. Take, for instance, the erring brother. Whose responsibility is he? Who cares? Must he finally embarrass the church like an unpainted door or a broken window to merit attention? God says, "ye which are spiritual" should restore such a one (Gal. 6:1). As none will admit to **not** being spiritual, that makes the erring member the business of **every** member! When Christians are motivated by genuine love and concern for each other; when they have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12:25); and when each looks to the needs of others (Phil. 2:4), little time will be wasted in trying to figure out who has to go and help "save a soul from death" (Jas. 5:20). What if no one in the whole church cared about the weak brother? It's bad when Christians don't care about unkempt meeting places; but it's far worse when they neglect the erring brother, one for whose sake Christ died.

Equally important is the responsibility **every** Christian has in regard to teaching the lost. The **faithful** are to be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). All are to be ready always to give answer concerning their hope (1 Pet. 3:15). To that extent they can teach others how to gain such hope. When the early Christians were scattered abroad, they went about preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Unscattered Christians can and should do the same. Paul writes of how most of the Roman brethren were bold to speak the word of God without fear (Phil. 1:14). The world urgently needs such bold brethren speaking that same word today! But who will do it? Those who turn out the light and lock the doors? Only those who preach from pulpits? God looks to His people — **all** of His people — to help others in the way of salvation. The blessings of truth and salvation are not to be hoarded, but shared — else, we risk losing them. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10). How can His followers **not** be interested and involved in the same work? How can they **not** care?

Shunned and shifted responsibility has hurt the Lord's church immeasurably. The slothful spirit of "doing-as-little-as-you-can-get-by-with" may suit the world, but it is grossly inappropriate for those who care — and those who have been blessed with God's best.

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## Bible Reading

Joe R. Price

"I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren." (1 Thess. 5:27).

Bible reading is essential to salvation from sins and living faithfully to the Lord. The Bible is the inspired word of God, His truth delivered in this last age by His Son, Jesus Christ (John 16:13; 17:17; Heb. 1:2; 2:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3). By it, faith is produced and strengthened in us (Rom. 10:17; Acts 20:32). Christians read the Bible! We read it to increase in knowledge of God's will and wisdom to apply it to our lives (Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-11). It is little wonder the apostle Paul closes his letter to the Thessalonians with a charge to read it to all the holy brethren. His writings are the "commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). Paul's "charge" ("to cause someone to swear," TDNT, V:462) put them under oath to do so. It was not optional but mandatory that they read his epistle. Even so, we are under oath to read the Scriptures. Public Bible reading and teaching please God and should please us (Neh. 8:1-3, 7-9; 1 Tim. 4:13). The saints circulated the apostolic letters for all to read (Col. 4:16). We should never think there is

"too much" Scripture in a gospel sermon. Private Bible reading allows quiet time for meditation, examination, and correction of personal spiritual needs (Acts 8:29-35; 1 Tim. 4:15-16; Phil. 4:8). The Holy Scriptures will make us "wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" when we read and learn them (2 Tim. 3:14-15; 2 Pet. 3:15-16). Have you read your Bible today?