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The making of an evangelist

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The place of evangelism in the church

Pastors should do the work of evangelists, and so fulfil their ministry. In 2 Timothy 4:5b (a literal translation) says, ‘... do the work of an evangelist, thy service fully carry out’. Or it has been translated, 'make full proof of thy ministry'. This is a direct command to the pastors of the church and by implication to their flock to do the work of an evangelist. This is a direct statement to the pastor to make full proof of ministry, that is, I suggest, to round it off, or to declare the whole counsel of God. They should be pastor/evangelists.

Christ set an example in this way. Often Christ has been referred to as 'Christ the teacher' and so He was. However, although teaching and evangelism should be married in our thinking, we need to get our priorities right also. Christ, it seems to me, was first an evangelist. In Luke 19:10 (a literal translation) 'For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which has been lost', and emphasis placed on those words 'came' and lost shows very clearly that Jesus was an evangelist, with an evangelistic passion and mission. Indeed there is a priority here that is often overlooked. As His body, the Church, both pastor and people should share the Head of the Church’s mission.

The priority of evangelism

Again, Christ's teaching about an over-ripe harvest which needs reaping underlines this priority of evangelism. (See the texts in Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2 and John 4:35.) The main points to consider here it would seem, that we are not only to be sowers of the seed but reapers at the same time. We should note that:

1. There is a whitened, standing harvest, over-ripe and ready to take in.
2. The labourers (reapers) are few.
3. Christ is the Lord of the harvest, desirous to have it reaped immediately.
4. Christ will send us into a part of the harvest field suitable to our abilities.
5. Pray for workers, but make sure we ourselves volunteer for work.

This is not a priority but there is the pressure of a great need.

The pastor’s place in a church reaching out

He is the leader who must set the pace, be humanly responsible for awakening a burning desire to reap the harvest. He has been called by the Lord of the harvest to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5) and to see that others learn how to reap also. If there is a waiting harvest field, then part of it is in the local church, and the circle of responsibility surrounding that church, and so the church members should be taught how to evangelise (or get help to evangelise) the various departments of the church. A literal translation of Ephesians 4:11-12 says, 'He gave some apostles, and some
prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors (shepherds) and teachers with a view to the perfecting of the saints for work in the service, for building up the body of the Christ. They are to be taught how they may build up, both by winning people and discipling them so that the church of the Saviour may grow. God gave these gifts of leadership mentioned for that very purpose.

A literal translation of Matthew 4:19 shows how Jesus is willing to show pastor and people alike how to do the work of the evangelist. The Scripture reads, 'Come after me and I will make you (to become) fishers of men'. Therefore, we can ask the Saviour to teach us how to win the lost.

An old preacher, Bermidge (dealing with the problem of proclaiming the Gospel) was reported to teach, 'Study not to be a fine preacher. Jerichos are blown down with ram's horns. Look simply to Jesus for preaching food; and what is wanted will be given, will be blessed whether it be a barley grain or a wheaten loaf or a crust or a crumb'. In Isaiah 61, quoted by Jesus himself and his ministry on earth, it starts with the right emphasis, 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me'. If it is a fitting comment on this to quote the word of Spurgeon, 'If the anointing which we bear must come from the Lord of Hosts, and only in prayer can we obtain it let your fleece be on the threshing floor of supplication till it is wet with the dew of heaven'.