

Scripture: Acts 17:16-31.

Topic: This is Preaching.

Text: Acts 17:18b... "He preached Jesus and the resurrection".

Proposition: Preaching is an important means of offering to people the good news of salvation through Christ and of calling them to action as Christians.

Date written: Sept. 19, 1964.

Sources: "The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible", Vol. 3, article on preaching.

Dates and places used:

Sept. 20, 1964, Montrose, Colo (8³⁰411)
June 20, 1965, Alamosa, Colo.
October 27, 1968 - Alamosa, Colo

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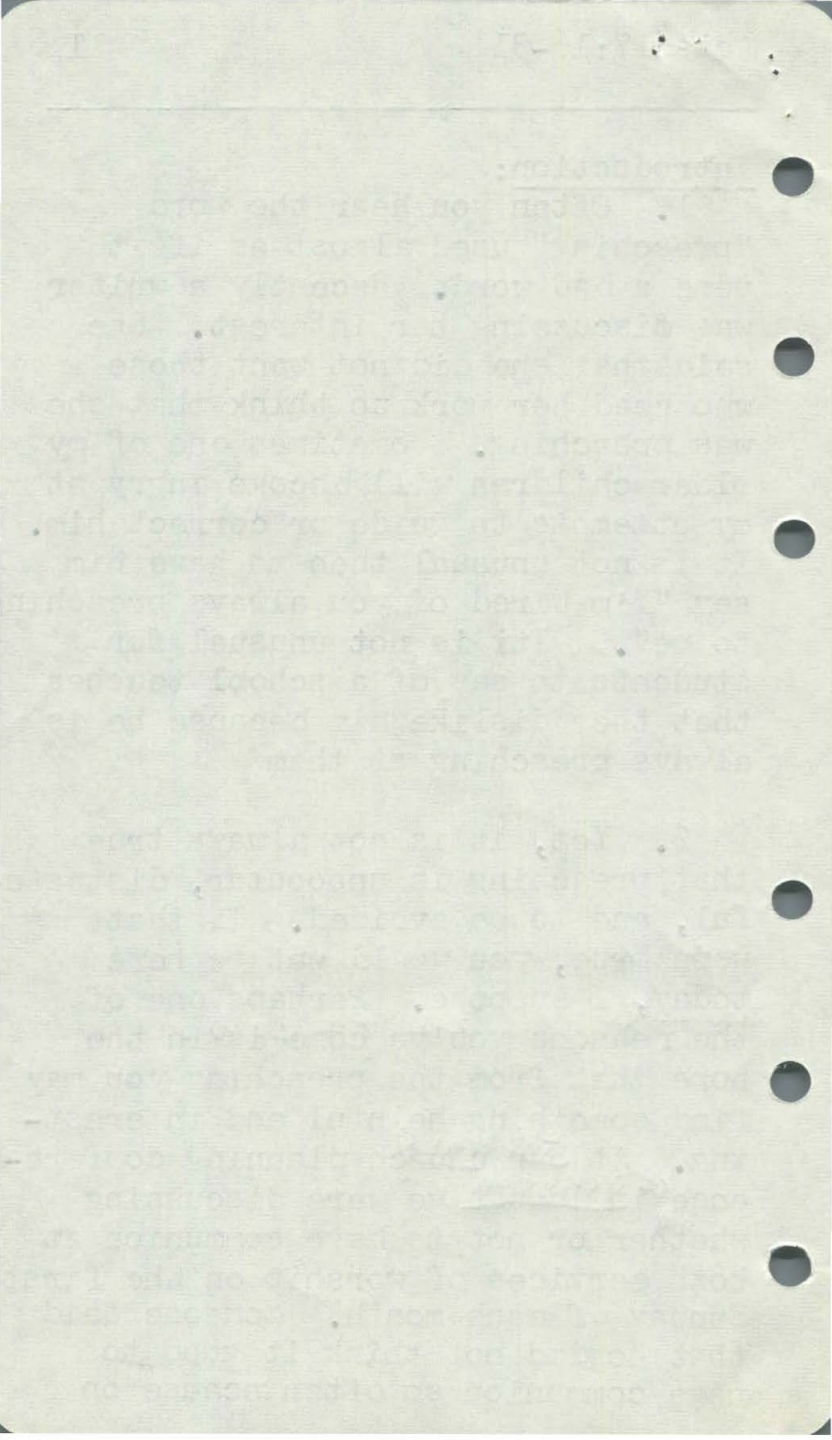
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Introduction:

1. Often you hear the word "preaching" used almost as if it were a bad word. Recently a writer was discussing her interest. She said that she did not want those who read her work to think that she was preaching. Sometimes one of my older children will become angry at my attempts to guide or correct him. It is not unusual then to have him say "I'm tired of you always preaching to me". It is not unusual for students to say of a school teacher that they dislike him because he is always preaching at them.

2. Yet, it is not always true that preaching is unpopular, distasteful, and to be avoided. If that were true, you would not be here today, I suppose. Perhaps one of the reasons you've come is in the hope that from the preaching you may find something helpful and interesting. At our church planning conference ^{the Sunday} ~~in August~~ ^{at the church} we were discussing whether or not to have communion at both services of worship on the first Sunday of each month. Someone said that he did not think it good to have communion so often because on



Communion Sunday there was not much time for a sermon, and many folks want to hear a sermon when they go to church. For some people, preaching is a wanted and needed item.

3. Here we see reflected two different attitudes toward preaching. There is a third attitude, of course, which is that of indifference. A lot of people never hear preaching in a church or anywhere else, and are simply indifferent to it.

Since you voluntarily are here today (we hope) in a situation where you know you will hear preaching, we can safely assume, I suppose, that you are not hostile nor indifferent to preaching. We can even hope that your experience with it has been such that you expect a great deal of good to come from it. Perhaps our appreciation of preaching can be greater if we examine its purposes and methods. The Bible can help us, as can reference to facts and illustrations from everyday life.

I. To announce, declare, proclaim the gospel of Christ is a prime

purpose of preaching.

1. From separate Greek words, having these three meanings -- announce, declare, proclaim -- are translated simply the word "preaching" in various parts of The New Testament.

2. One of these is found in Acts 17:23, which records the visit of Paul to Athens. This famous Greek city had at least one statue or shrine dedicated to each of the many gods worshipped by the Athenians. There was one altar on which was engraved the words "To The Unknown God". Paul ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ was taken almost forcibly to a place to speak in the middle of the forum. He began talking to the people there by saying, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown God'. What therefore you worship as an unknown, this I proclaim to you".

3. To "proclaim" is to "make known by announcing in a public place, to publish abroad", according

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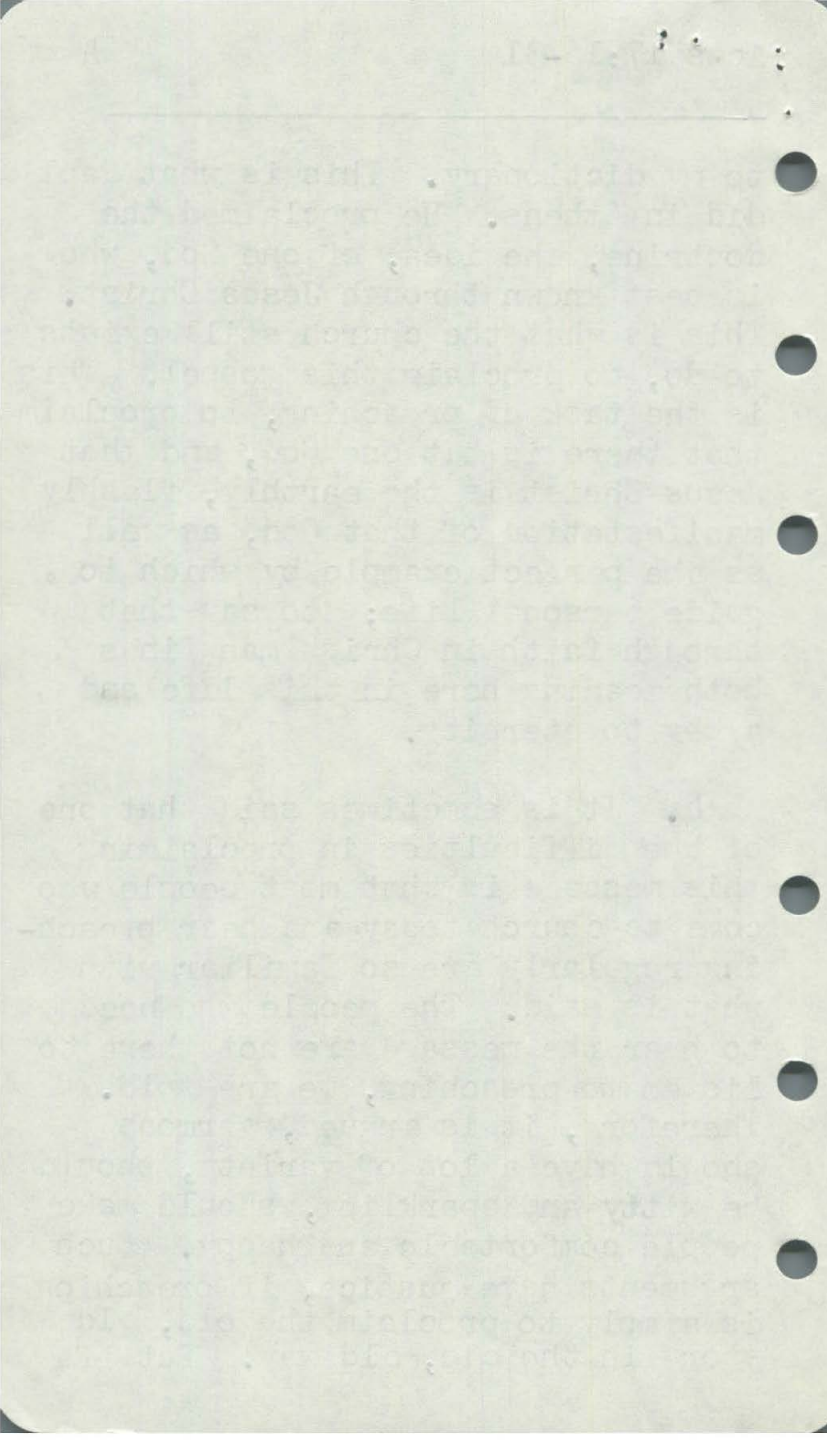
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to my dictionary. This is what Paul did in Athens. He proclaimed the doctrine, the idea, of one God, who is best known through Jesus Christ. This is what the church still exists to do, to proclaim this gospel. This is the task of preaching, to proclaim that there is but one God, and that Jesus Christ is the earthly, fleshly manifestation of that God, as well as the perfect example by which to guide personal life; to say that through faith in Christ man finds both meaning here in this life and a key to eternity.

4. It is sometimes said that one of the difficulties in proclaiming this message is that most people who come to church today and hear preaching regularly are so familiar with what is said. The people who need to hear the message are not there to listen to preaching, we are told. Therefore, it is argued, sermons should have a lot of variety, should be witty and sparkling, should make people comfortable and happy. Such arguments have justice, if preaching is simply to proclaim the old, old story in the old, old way. But if

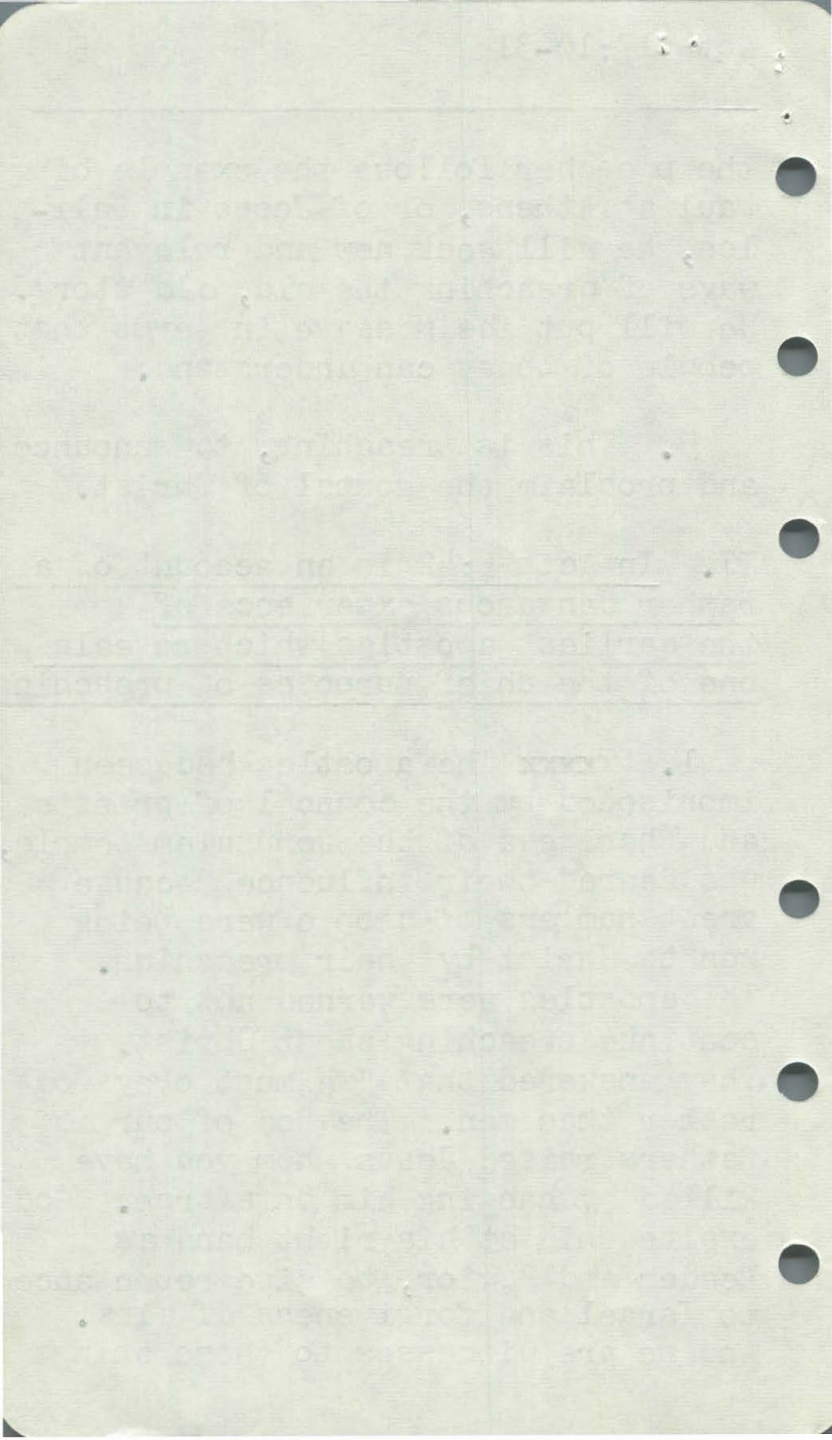


the preacher follows the example of Paul at Athens, or of Jesus in Galilee, he will seek new and relevant ways of preaching the old, old story. He will put the message in terms that people of today can understand.

5. This is preaching, to announce and proclaim the gospel of Christ.

II. In Acts 5:42 is an account of a rather dangerous experience of the earliest apostles which reveals one of the chief purposes of preaching

1. ~~There~~ The apostles had been imprisoned by the council of priests and Pharisees of the Jerusalem temple, who feared their influence because great numbers of people were being won to Christ by their preaching. The apostles were warned not to continue preaching about Christ. They answered that "we must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you have killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things

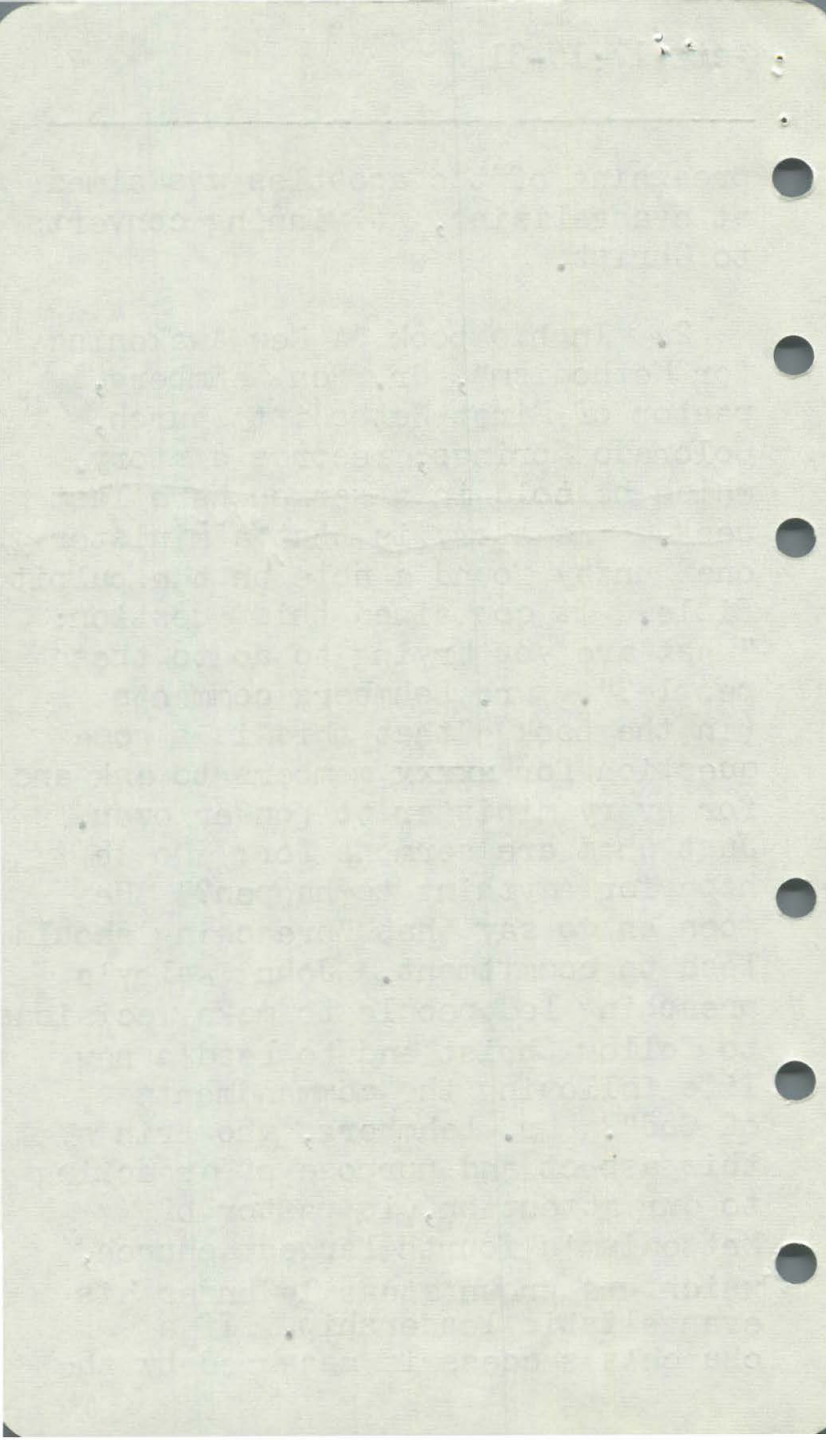


and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him". The account in Acts 5 states the reaction of the council of priests to this: "when they heard this they were enraged and wanted to kill them". (v.33). One of the priests, Gamaliel, a man "held in honor by all the people", calmed them down by advising that the apostles be released; because ~~if~~ their work were not of God it would perish; but if it were of God it could not be destroyed. The council took his advice. They beat the apostles, again warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles paid little attention to the warning, however. The record says "and every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ". (v.42).

2. The Greek from which this word preaching came, as used in this story, more accurately means "to evangelize". To evangelize is to convert to Christianity. In its best sense, conversion is a voluntary act of free choice by a thoroughly convinced and committed person. The

preaching of the apostles was aimed at evangelizing, at winning converts to Christ.

2. In his book "A New Awakening for Methodism", Dr. Ben Lehmborg, ^{late} pastor of First Methodist Church, Colorado Springs, records a story. ~~which he told in a sermon here last week.~~ ^{about} The story is that a minister ^{who} one Sunday found a note ^{on} the pulpit Bible. It contained this question: "What are you trying to do to these people?". Dr. Lehmborg comments (in the book) "that this is a good question for ~~every~~ members to ask and for every minister to ponder over. Just what are sermons for? Do we hope for anything to happen?" He goes on to say that "preaching should lead to commitment. John Wesley's preaching led people to make decisions to follow Christ and to lead a new life following the commandments of God". Dr. Lehmborg, who brings this aspect and purpose of preaching to our attention, ~~is~~ ^{was} pastor of Methodism's fourth largest church, which ~~has~~ ^{has} grown steadily under his evangelistic leadership. If a church's success is measured by the

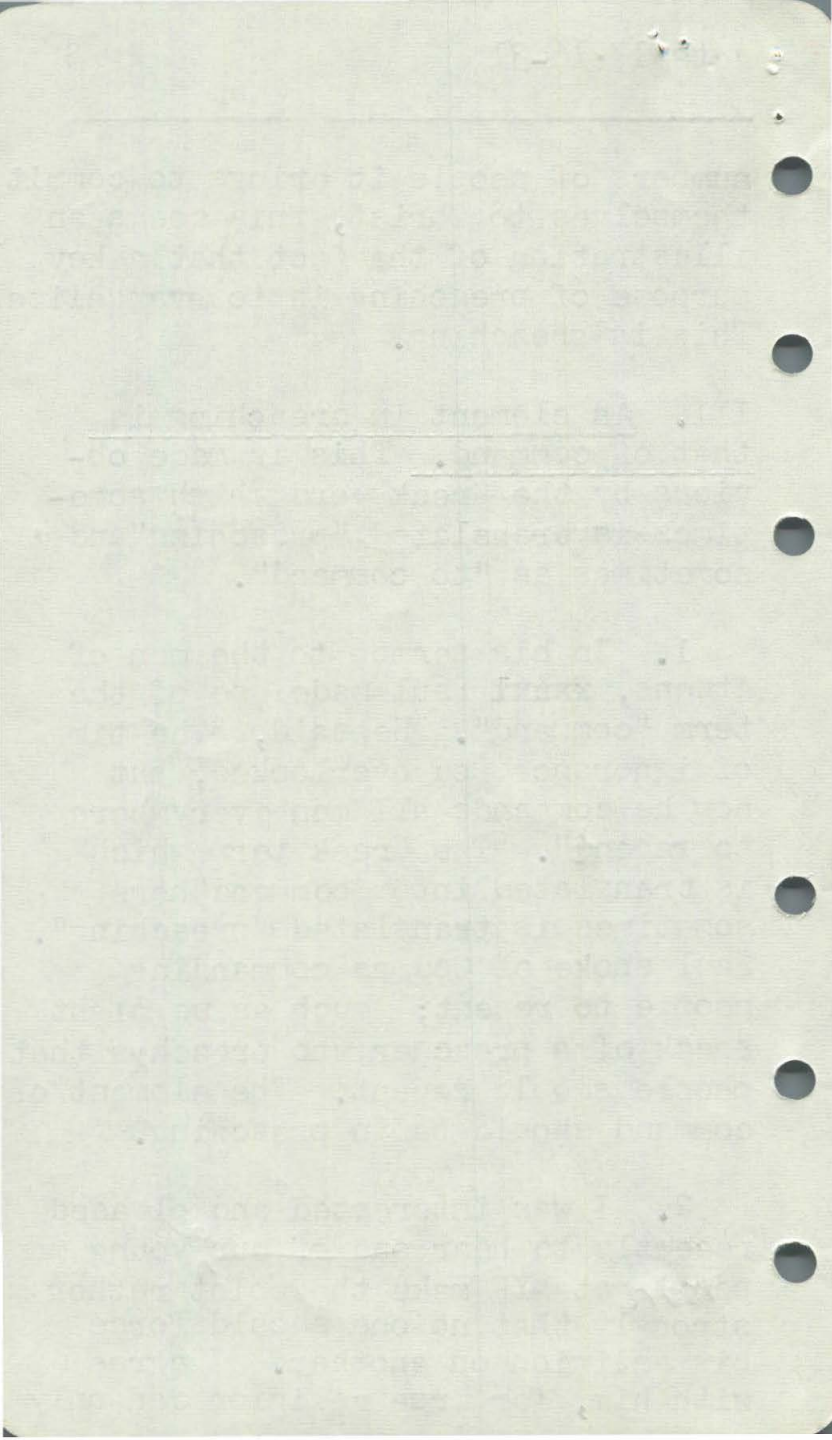


numbers of people it brings to commit themselves to Christ, this seems an illustration of the fact that a key purpose of preaching is to evangelize. This is preaching.

III. An element in preaching is that of command. This is made obvious by the Greek word which sometimes is translated "preaching" and sometimes as "to command".

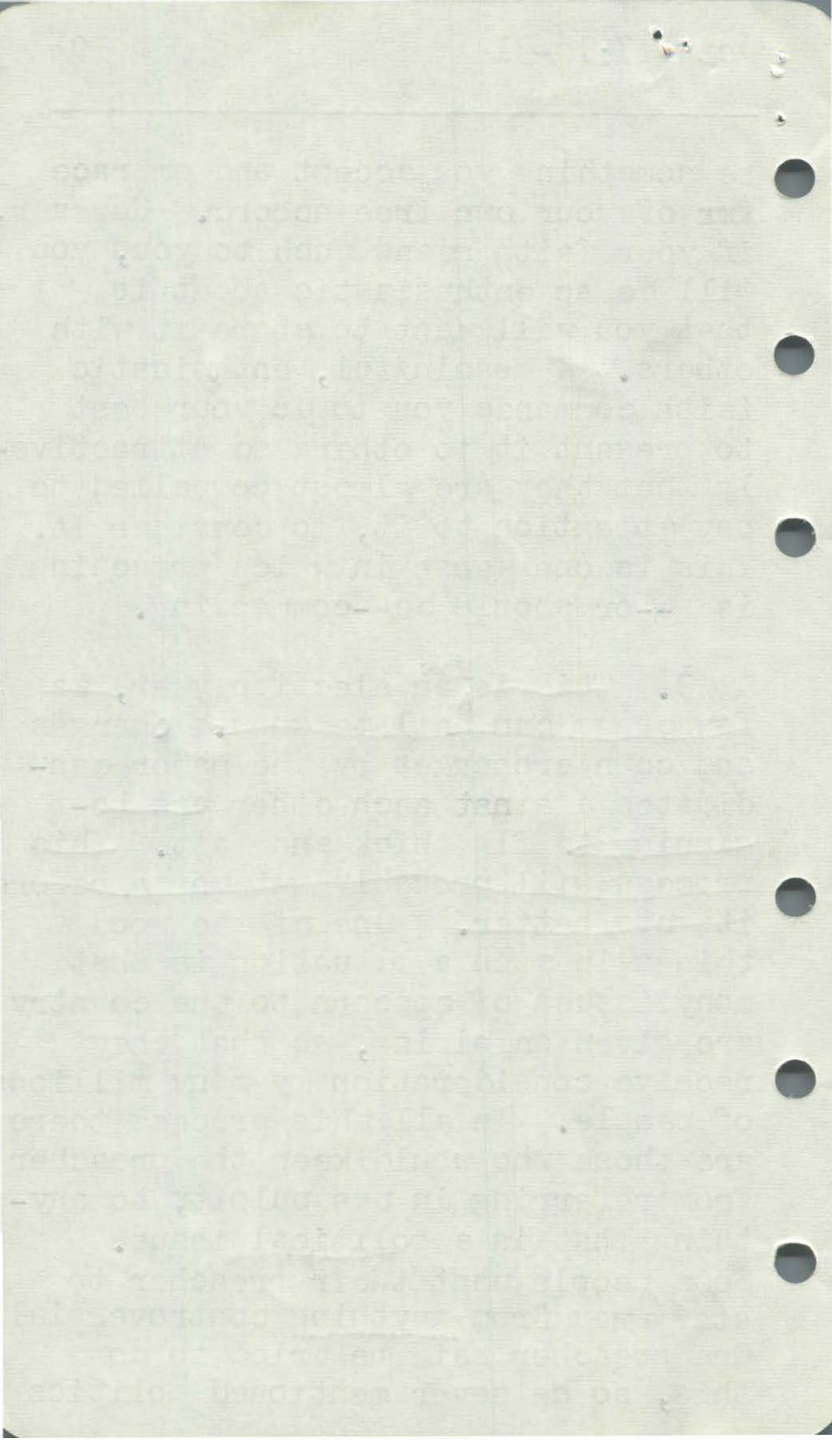
1. In his sermon to the men of Athens, ~~Paul~~ Paul made use of the term "command". He said, "The time of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent". The Greek term which is translated into "command" here sometimes is translated "preaching". Paul spoke of God as commanding people to repent; much as we might speak of a preacher who preaches that people should repent. The element of command should be in preaching.

2. I was interested and pleased ^{once} recently to hear ~~one of our~~ young people at NYF make the point rather strongly that no one should force his religion on another. I agree with him, for true religion can only



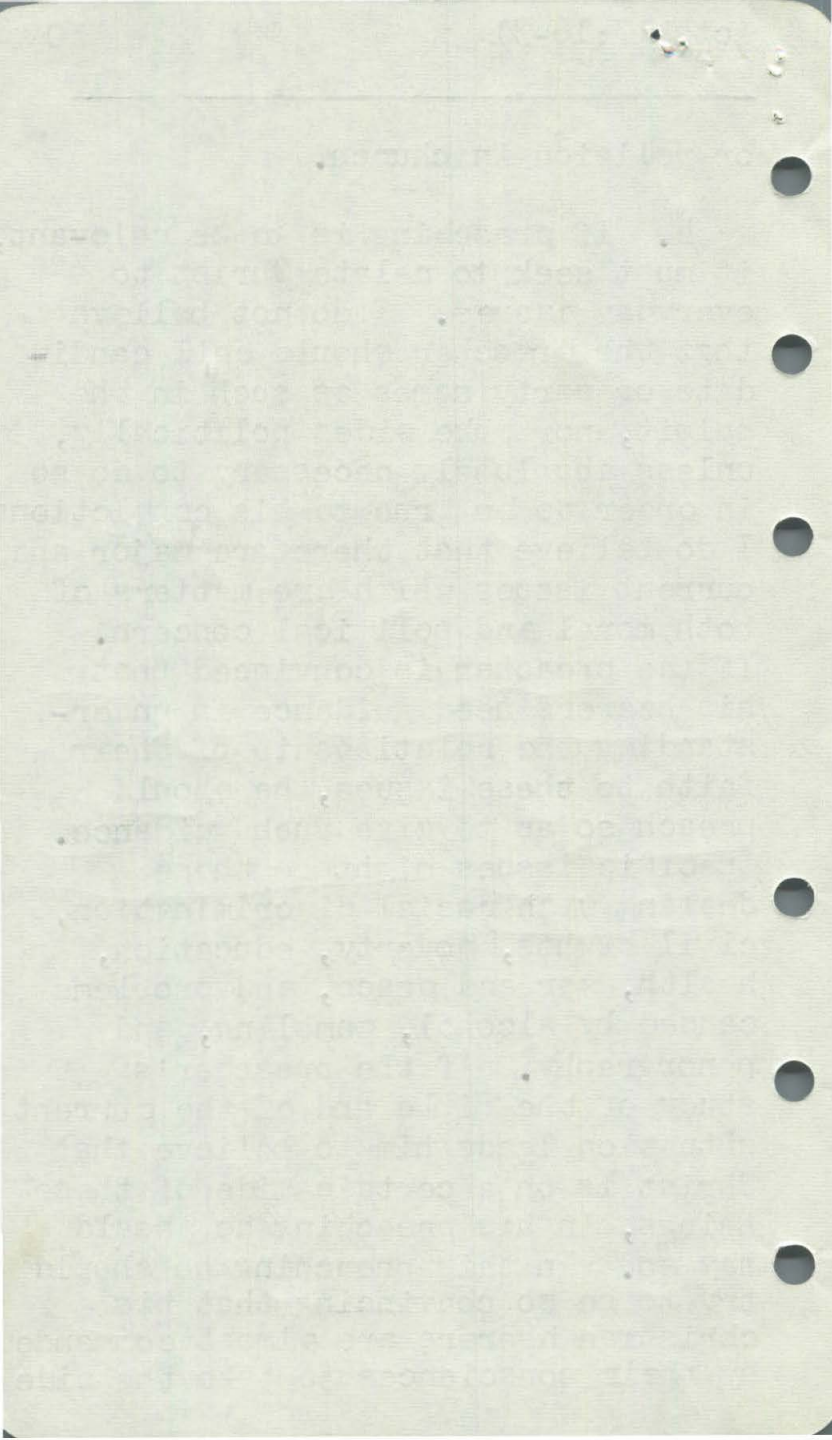
be something you accept and embrace ~~for~~ of your own free accord. However, if your faith means much to you, you will be so enthusiastic about it that you will want to share it with others. ~~That~~ meaningful, enthusiastic faith commands you to do your best to present it to others so attractively that they are almost compelled to pay attention to it, to consider it. This is one sense in which preaching is --or should be--commanding.

3. This is ^{In} an election year, ~~as few of us can fail to know.~~ Charges and countercharges by the major candidates against each other are ~~beginning to~~ fly thick and fast. This process will probably get worse before it gets better. One of the good things in such a situation is that many issues of concern to the country are given an airing, so that they receive consideration by many millions of people. In all this process there are those who would keep the preacher from referring in the pulpit to anything that is a political issue. Some people want their preacher to stay away from anything controversial. One preacher said he tried to do this, so he never mentioned politics



or religion in church.

4. If preaching is to be relevant, it must seek to relate Christ to everyday issues. I do not believe that the preacher should call candidate or party names as such in the pulpit, nor take sides politically, unless absolutely necessary to do so in order to be true to his convictions. I do believe that there are ^{always} major and current issues which are matters of both moral and political concern. If the preacher is convinced that his hearers need guidance in understanding the relationship of their faith to these issues, he should preach so as to give such guidance. Specific issues might be those dealing with racial discrimination, civil rights, poverty, education, health, war and peace, and problems caused by alcohol, gambling, and pornography. If the preacher's study of the Bible and of the current situation leads him to believe that Christ is on a certain side of these things, in his preaching he should say so. In this preaching he should try to be so convincing that his christian hearers are almost commanded by their consciences to take the side



on these thing that he urges. In this sense preaching should command. This is preaching.

Conclusion: There are at least these three purposes of Christian preaching that we have considered.

1. Preaching should announce or proclaim God through Christ.

2. Preaching should evangelize, convert or win people to Christ and the Christian life.

3. Preaching should command the conscience and action of christians on behalf of mercy, justice and meaningful life for all mankind.

4. There could well be other aspects of preaching of which you can think. Some of them certainly are suggested by our three purposes here; and others are not as important though well worthwhile.

5. This is preaching, to offer to people the good news of salvation through Christ. This is our plea, that you accept and serve the Christ in whose behalf all Christian sermons

in these things and the other things
and the other things and the other things
this is the first thing

Conclusion: There are only two things
in the world of things and the other things
the other things and the other things

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things in the world of things

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things in the world of things

3. The third thing is the existence of
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are preached.

