

What Shall We Call the Preacher?

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Frequently we hear Christians using terms that convey unscriptural ideas concerning religious subjects. We believe it is essential for us to use words that convey Scriptural ideas as nearly as we possibly can. The Scriptures do not exist apart from the Words of Scripture. If the Scriptures are important, then the Words of Scripture are just as important. Paul attributed the very Words he spoke and wrote to inspiration (1 Cor. 2:13). We conclude that the vocabulary of Scripture must be that which the Holy Spirit chose to convey the ideas God wanted to reveal. We conclude that it is essential for serious Bible students to be concerned about calling Bible things by Bible names.

There are three basic New Testament words that refer to those who preach:

- *Preacher* meaning one who is a public proclaimer (Rom. 10:14).
- *Evangelist* meaning a bringer of good tidings (2 Tim. 4:5).
- *Minister* meaning a servant (Eph. 3:7).

Occasionally a Gospel preacher is referred to by a well-meaning, but mistaken brother or sister as a *pastor*. Such usage illustrates a Scriptural term used in an unscriptural way. *Pastor* is a New Testament term, but it is not used in reference to those who preach. A pastor is a shepherd. The Scriptural application of the term is found in Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11, and 1 Peter 5:2. In these verses *feed*, *pastors*, and *tend* are all translated from the same root word relating to the shepherds of God's flock. The work of a New Testament pastor belongs to the elders or bishops of the churches, as is seen beyond argument from the context of Acts 20:28 (cf v. 17) and 1 Peter 5:1-2). One may be a pastor who is a preacher, as was Peter. But he was not a pastor because he was a **preacher** but because he was an elder (1 Pet. 5:1).

Man has turned the preacher into a pastor. The pastor system places the preacher in control of a church. He becomes the shepherd of the flock in this concept, but such is not of God. Not only do some of the saints use the wrong word (*pastor*) to refer to Gospel preachers, perhaps many more have an unscriptural concept of his work. Let us learn that God makes elders the pastors of the flock and men make preachers their pastors.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in the August 28, 1975, edition of *the Granbury Gospel*, weekly bulletin of the Granbury Church of Christ, Granbury, Texas, of which I was editor.

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