



Pastor David's Weekly Devotional

Over the past few weeks, we have been looking at various unbiblical sayings. These are “Christian” maxims that are not found in the Bible and often communicate something that is unbiblical. We have already examined the following sayings: “God helps those who help themselves”, “To forgive is to forget”, and “Pastors are called to a higher standard.”

Another commonly used “Christian” expression is “Preach the Gospel, use words if necessary.” This widely used saying is often attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi (1181-1226). It has, however, been determined that Saint Francis never said such a thing, nor was this quote a part of the Franciscan order. Also, this quote is quite contrary to Francis’ own life and ministry for Francis was a preacher who was known to preach up to five times a day! He clearly saw the value and necessity of using words when preaching the Gospel.

But this – seemingly clever, pithy, and provocative – quote remains very popular today. While some may argue that there is an element of truth in saying “preach the Gospel, use words if necessary” (i.e. affirming that Christians need to live out the Gospel, akin to “actions speak louder than words” and “practice what you preach), I think it is more misleading and erroneous than helpful and true.

One of the biggest fallacies of this saying is thinking that practicing the Gospel is more important than preaching the Gospel. That, if you could only choose one, you should always choose preaching the Gospel with your life rather than preaching the Gospel with your lips. This is wrong for many reasons.

First, there is a false dichotomy between living for Christ and proclaiming Christ. The Bible never invites us to choose between the two. To be sure, every Christian should passionately avoid hypocrisy and duplicity. But the antidote to those vices is not partial obedience. Disobeying God’s command to proclaim the Gospel does not heighten or strengthen one’s Christian life. We are commanded to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ with both our lips (Matt.28:18-20; Mk.16:15; Lk.24:47; Rom.10:14, 17; 1Pet.2:9; 3:15) and our lives (Matt.5:16; Jn.13:35; 15:8; Acts 1:8; 1Jn.3:4-10).

Second, no one will ever get saved simply by watching a Christian live his/her Christian life. Words are always necessary! No one is going to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ by osmosis. No one is going to become a Christian just by watching Christians. At some point, the Gospel must be proclaimed – with words. There is no Gospel preaching if the Gospel is not proclaimed. It is supremely arrogant to think that your Christian life is a better mechanism for one’s salvation than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that the Gospel “*is the power of God for salvation*” (Rom.1:16).

Rom 10:14-17 ~ “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’ ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’ ¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

D.A. Carson said it well: “So when one hears the frequently repeated slogan, ‘Preach the gospel – use words if necessary,’ one has to say, as gently but as firmly as one can, that this is smug nonsense. While not as pithy, a better Christian saying is: “Preach the Gospel and practice what you preach.”

Together in and for Christ,
Pastor David
(10/19/26)

Scripture Readings for the Week (Monday – Sunday ~ Week #42):

Deuteronomy 1-3; 2 Chronicles 21-24; Psalm 120-121; Proverbs 31; Nahum; Acts 7-8; Hebrews 11-13

Recommended Reading:

“The Gospel and Personal Evangelism” by Mark Dever