

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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What Shall We Do Now? (Part 1)

Luke 3:10; II Timothy 3:14

Last April, our home church celebrated its 45th anniversary. Our pastor asked me to preach the closing message in a month-long celebration. As I was seeking the Lord's will for the message, the thought kept coming to my mind, "Where do we go from here, or what shall we do now?" I then began searching the Bible to see if that question, or similar questions, had been asked by anyone and recorded in Scripture.

To my delight I found the question, "What shall we do?," 11 times in 8 different passages. In I Samuel 5:8 and 6:2, the Philistines ask, "What shall we do?" They asked the question concerning the ark of the covenant. They had taken the ark when they had defeated the Israelites, but found that Jehovah would not abide His ark being in the place of an idol, and had twice knocked down Dagon. The second time Dagon was broken in pieces. The Philistines are wondering what to do with the ark and eventually send it back to Israel.

King Amaziah asks, "What shall we do?" in II Chronicles 25:9. He had paid Israel to come and help him fight against Edom. But God sends a prophet to tell him not to go up with Israel. If Amaziah refuses to listen, the man of God says that Judah will lose. Amaziah wonders about the money that he has paid to Israel. The prophet replies, "*The LORD is able to give thee much more than this*" (II Chronicles 25:9). Amaziah listens to the man of God and wins the battle.

King Ahasuerus is the next person to ask "What shall we do?" He does so in Esther 1:15. Vashti had refused the king's command to appear before him. Ahasuerus asks his advisors what they think

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should be done to Vashti because she did not come. They advise that she be removed from being queen. The king agrees, and Vashti is promptly removed.

The final Old Testament passage that contains this question is Jonah 1:11. The sailors ask Jonah, "What shall we do?" Jonah tells them to throw him into the sea, but the sailors initially refuse to do so. After failing in their attempt to row to land, they toss him overboard and the sea "*ceased from her raging*" (Jonah 1:15).

John the Baptist is asked the question, "What shall we do?," three times in Luke 3:10, 3:12, and 3:14. After hearing John preach, the people, the publicans, and the soldiers all want to know what their response should be to his preaching. John replies to each of them differently. It is interesting to note that each group knew that they should change what they were doing. Preachers should expect the same from their preaching. It should cause people to want to change.

The people ask Jesus in John 6:28, "What shall we do?" He had fed them the day before and now is talking to them about eternal things. They were looking for more physical bread, but He had turned His attention to what they needed for eternal life. That elicits the question, "What shall we do?" In John 6:29, Jesus gives the answer. It says, "*Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*" Jesus would spend the rest of the chapter giving the discourse on the bread of life.

In Acts 2:37, the people ask "What shall we do?" Peter had just finished his sermon at Pentecost. It was a powerful message and the people "*were pricked in their heart.*" The Holy Spirit had revealed to them their sinful condition, and they needed to do something. Peter responds in verse 38, "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*" Many heeded his message—about 3,000 souls.

The final time this question, “What shall we do?,” is found in Scripture is Acts 4:16. The council asks this concerning Peter and John. Peter had healed a lame man in the temple, and then preached to the people. This upset the council, and they arrested Peter and John and put them in prison. They then wonder what to do with them. They decide to command them not to preach in the name of Jesus. Peter and John reply, “*We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4:20). They are released and faithfully serve God.

I mention these instances to cause us to really ponder, “What shall we do now?” Our home church turned 45 years old in April 2008. We needed to ask ourselves, “What shall we do now?” A church that just turned one year old needs to ask themselves, “What shall we do now?” A church that is looking for a pastor needs to ponder, “What shall we do now?” This is not a question that we just think about every few years. It is a question that we need to consider constantly. It is not just for churches. Individuals need to ask themselves, “What shall we do now?” Fathers need to ask themselves, “What shall we do now?” Mothers need to ask themselves, “What shall we do now?” Children need to ask themselves, “What shall we do now?” Pastors need to ask themselves, “What shall we do now?” Deacons need to ask themselves, “What shall we do now?” On and on we could go. Put your name in there and ask yourself, “What shall we do now?”

What is the answer to that question? As individuals and churches, “What shall we do now?” The question is answered in II Timothy 3:14. I will spend the rest of the message expounding on this thought, but the Holy Ghost summarizes it clearly in that verse. It says, “*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.*” Continue means “to remain; to abide; not to depart; not to leave; to last; to endure; to remain as one is; not to become another; the present imperative calls for a constant and continual habit of life.” So many times, people and churches come to a crossroads in their lives. They must make a decision, “What shall we do now?” Sadly, many do not

continue in what they have learned. They forsake truth for error. They forsake the right way for compromise. They forsake the Bible way for the easy way.

“What shall we do now?” The Lord gave me three answers to that question. We must Keep Preaching; we must Keep Praying; and we must Keep Persevering. Let us look at each of these thoughts.

“What shall we do now?” We must **Keep Preaching**. II Timothy 4:2 says, “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*” Paul says to the Ephesians in Acts 20:27, “*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*” Paul, inspired of the Holy Ghost, tells Timothy to preach. He uses a similar word, talking of his own practice, in Acts 20:27. The word preach means “to proclaim as a herald; to publish; to proclaim openly; it is talking about the public proclamation of the Gospel and matters pertaining to it.” One writer gave this description about the word preach. He said, “The herald was someone who had important news to bring. He often announced an athletic event or religious festival, or functioned as a political messenger, the bringer of some news or command from the king’s court. He was to have a strong voice and proclaim his message with vigor without lingering to discuss it. The herald’s most important qualification was that he faithfully represent or report the word of the one by whom he had been sent. He was not to be ‘original,’ but his message was to be that of another.” This description of a herald is the perfect description of a preacher. Of course, the Holy Ghost knew this. That is why He led Paul to use it.

Several parallels between the herald and the preacher stand out to me. 1) He had important news to bring. Preachers have the most important news—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 2) He brought news from the king’s court. Preachers bring a message from the King of Kings—I AM the only way of salvation. 3) He was to have a strong voice and proclaim his message with vigor. The preacher is to be strong in proclaiming the truths of Scripture. He should proclaim it with

passion and forcefulness. By its very nature, preaching is loud. We have traded preaching for teaching in our day. Men who used to preach have been replaced by teachers—exactly what Paul warned against in II Timothy 4:3. It would be insulting to me if someone should call me a good teacher. Paul told Timothy to preach, not to teach. Now all good preaching will involve teaching, but we are not commanded to teach. We are commanded to preach! There is a difference, and everyone can notice the difference. Sadly, our fundamental, Independent Baptist churches have replaced preaching with teaching. We have seen fulfilled in our circles the warning of II Timothy 4:3. We must get back to true preaching. That means a loud, passionate, forceful proclamation of the truths of Scripture. You do not accept what I am saying. Listen to some old-time preaching from Bob Jones Sr., Harold Sightler, Oliver Greene, and many, many others. I have been criticized for my style of preaching. I have been told that people do not like it today. But that is untrue. Many do. They did not like it back then either. But the real men of God kept doing it. Why have some stopped it? Because they are not real men of God, and they give in to the desires of the people. I will continue with this thought next month.