



“Semper Reformanda”

Study 5: Christ’s Teaching Ministry (Matt. 4:12-25)

o The principle of “semper reformanda” requires that the church imitate the all-round ministry of Christ, beginning with the teaching ministry.

I. The significance of Christ’s teaching ministry.

1. The apostle Paul played a special role in setting the pattern of church life in the NT age.
 - He was an apostle “born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8 cf. 1:1; 9:1-2). The marks of an apostle was seen in him (2 Cor. 12:12), and he was accepted as an apostle by the other apostles (Gal. 2:7-9). Paul’s writings were regarded as Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:1-2, 14-16).
 - The things written by Paul are commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). Imitate me... (11:1). How? (i) In personal life, i.e. sanctification (Phil 2:2-8; 3:17 “imitators” as in 1 Cor 11:1). (ii) In church life (14:33 cf 7:17). (iii) In service (Phil 3:10 cf Col 1:29; Phil 3:12-14, 16).
2. Important hermeneutical principles to keep in mind when “imitating Paul”.
 - Commands given to apostles are meant for the churches, unless it can be shown that those commands are specifically for the apostles, or unique for the time and circumstances. Examples: Matt. 18:15-17; 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 11:23ff.
 - Apostolic examples “hath the force of a divine institution” (Owen 16:197). Not mechanical, literal fashion. To determine the principle involved. Then, strive to apply that principle, make effort to achieve the ideal. Examples: support of full-time preachers (1 Cor. 9:5; 1 Tim. 5:17 cf. Acts 18:3; 20:33-35; 2 Thess. 3:7-9); rule by elders (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1ff.); orderly worship (1 Cor. 14:27, 31, 40 cf. 7:17; 14:33).
 - The norm to be distinguished from the exception. Allowance must be made for the transition between the OT age and the NT age. Scriptures were given gradually and cumulatively. “The NT teachings are in the OT concealed, the OT teachings are by the NT revealed.” Examples: the appointment of Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:23-26 cf. Rev. 21:12-14), the determination of God’s will by the casting of lots (Acts 1:26); the sign gifts to mark the beginning of the NT age (Acts 2:17; Heb. 2:4; 2 Cor. 12:12).
3. Apart from submission to Christ’s three offices, the principle of “semper reformanda” requires that we imitate the Lord in His ministry in relation to the world. Reformation must be extended from within the church to the church’s relation to the world.
 - Paul’s ministry was modelled after the Lord’s and in accordance to the Lord’s commands: in carrying out the GC, in evangelism, in training preachers, in good works, in baptism and the Lord’s Supper, etc.
 - Matthew’s Gospel was “prepared for converts from Judaism” (Origen, c. AD 185-254). Paul was one such. He must have learned of the Lord’s ministry from Matthew’s gospel, apart from receiving direct revelation from the Lord. Matthew’s Gospel was written before

the destruction of the temple in AD 70, probably in AD 50. The birth of Christ is described in Chs 1 & 2. The ministry of John the Baptists is given in Ch 3. The beginning of Jesus's ministry is described in Ch 4. Two parts: vv 1-11 shows the private, personal, preparation for ministry, in His temptation. Second part, His public ministry, how it began, its nature, and effects. Important for us to understand the character of Jesus's ministry and its relevance to us today.

II. The character and relevance of Christ's teaching ministry.

1. Christ ministry had a definite beginning (12-16).

- Jesus had begun preaching (cf Luke 4:23). Andrew & Peter, ex-followers of John the Baptist, had followed Christ for a time before returning to fishing at Capernaum (John 1:40-42).
 - Public ministry officially began after John imprisoned, and Jesus left Nazareth for Capernaum. John imprisoned for rebuking Herod Antipas (14:3-4). Jesus moved to Capernaum after people of Nazareth tried to murder Him (Luke 4:16-30)
 - The call to the gospel ministry follows the same pattern. The private & personal preparation of the man, through various trials & temptations. The experience of preaching & providences in life before certainty of God's calling.
- = Pray for men truly called to ministry.

2. Christ's ministry had a definite theme and task (17-22).

- Jesus's ministry has definite theme of repentance before one could enter kingdom of God (17). Exactly the same as that of John's (3:2). Not surprising, as John was His herald/messenger.
 - The four of 12 disciples called at this time: Peter & Andrew, James & John. All fishermen, all left all to follow Him, all to become "fishers of men".
 - Putting the theme together with the task to be performed, we know it has to do with making disciples by proclaiming gospel. The theme of repentance & God's kingdom involves winning souls to Christ (cf. Luke 5:32). The continuing task of the church until Christ's return is encapsulated in the GC (Matt 28:18-20).
- = Never lose sight of GC. No vision, no mission.

3. Christ's ministry had a definite method (23-25).

- It was an all-round ministry, consisting of three activities involved, viz. teaching, preaching the gospel, & healing. Matt. 4:23 (cf. 9:35) is a key verse. No more miraculous healing, but good works expected (Tit 3:8, 14). Here, we focus on teaching.
- Three factors distinguish the acts of preaching from teaching (cf Matt 11:1): mode of delivery, audience, purpose to be accomplished. Teaching ("didasko") imparts doctrine, to a homogeneous group, to dispel ignorance. Preaching ("kerusso") authoritatively proclaims God's will, to a mix audience, to change lives.
- There is considerable overlap between the two, but helpful to keep distinction between them. "Teaching" is also a general term to cover all modes of imparting knowledge by words, e.g. 1 Tim 3:2; 4:11; 6:3; 1 Cor 12:28-29; James 3:1. This is the sense of the word when used wrt Christ's overall ministry. A key passage is Eph. 4:11-16, which shows that the teaching God's word to build up the faith of believers is important aspect of the church's ministry.
- Apart from building up the faith of church members, preachers are to be trained. The Lord trained disciples before sending them forth to preach (Luke 9:1; 10:1). Paul trained up Timothy, Titus, Silas, Luke, and others (Acts 20:4-6). A key passage is 2 Tim. 2:2, which

shows that churches are to work in co-operation in the training of preachers. (Ephesus was likely the “mother” of all the Asian churches.) Seminary or college to start only when there are model churches. Teachers are experienced pastors. Students are members of churches.

= The primacy of the word of God must be upheld. Consider what John Owen said:

On Eph. 4:8-13, “The thing aimed at is, the bringing of all the saints and disciples of Christ, the whole church, to that measure and perfection of grace which Christ hath assigned to them in this world, that they may be meet for himself to receive in glory. The means whereby this is to be done and effected is, the faithful, regular, and effectual discharge of the work of the ministry; unto which the administration of all his ordinances and institutions doth confessedly belong.” (Works 15:11)

“...*the edification of them that are converted unto God and do believe*. Herein consists that feeding of his sheep and lambs that the Lord Christ hath committed into them; and it is mentioned as the principal end for which the ministry was ordained, or for which pastors and teachers are granted unto the church, Eph. iv. 8-13.” (Works 15:116)

= An all-round ministry requires the building up of the faith of believers while engaging in gospel preaching and good works.

Review Questions

1. Paul imitated Christ not only in personal life but also in what other areas?
2. State the three hermeneutical principles that must be kept in mind when “imitating Paul”.
3. Apart from submission to Christ’s three offices, what does the principle of “semper reformanda” require of us?
4. Which Gospel was most likely read by the apostle Paul?
5. What may we learn from the Lord about the call to the gospel ministry?
6. What was the theme of the Lord’s ministry?
7. In the all-round ministry of the Lord, what three activities are involved?
8. What are the three factors that distinguish the act of preaching from the act of teaching?
9. Which key passage shows the importance of building up the faith of believers in the church?
10. Which key passage shows that full-time preachers must be trained up?

Assignment/Discussion

An all-round ministry requires teaching believers while engaging in gospel preaching and good works. What are the likely consequences of an unbalanced ministry?

Memory passage (Eph. 4:11-16)

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint

supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

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