

What is the ministry of the word?

Most people think that ministry is just a man preaching a sermon on Sunday, but ministry is far more full-bodied. Indeed, it includes the service of all the saints working together in harmony using all their various gifts to edify one another. None is unnecessary, as Paul explains vividly in 1 Corinthians 12.

But what of the ministry of the word in particular? There are several forms which I will explain using the motif of the doctrine of atonement. [The doctrine of redemption and propitiation which satisfies God's anger at sin by accepting the blood of Christ as a substitutionary sacrifice.]

Preaching: is going into the streets and proclaiming that the blood of Christ saves people from sin and heralding Christ as the only Saviour. It is witnessing.

Teaching: is explaining what atonement is to the church in an informal manner involving questions and discussion. It is didactic Biblical instruction.

Prophetic ministry: is speaking from God with spiritual power, to individuals or groups, applying the doctrine of the atonement to bring correction, encouragement and edification.

Exhortation: is stirring people up to love and good works (Heb 10:24) to live on the basis of sins forgiven by the blood of Christ.

Encouragement: is drawing alongside people in order to help them see what Christ's atonement has done for them and to live in the good of it.

Consolation: is bearing one another's burdens, empathising with folk and comforting them to help them pick themselves up. For instance: having dealt with the grief of sin, showing them that they are forgiven by Christ's blood.

Admonishment: is warning or mildly rebuking someone to not spurn the blood of Christ; such as by ignoring sin.

Counselling: using all the above to bring practical wisdom to a troubled person.

Thus we can see that the ministry of the word is far more complex and varied than most believe. When we limit it to a formal sermon on Sunday, with no discussion, then the people are starved of proper ministry. We need leaders today that are fully formed in their ministry and encompass all these forms to edify God's people.

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Understanding Ministries

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