

# Equipping the congregation by means of preaching: Paul's sermon at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38) – perspectives for the South African context

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## Abstract

### Equipping the congregation by means of preaching: Paul's sermon at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38) – perspectives for the South African context

*In an attempt to supply guidelines to equip contemporary South African congregations by means of preaching, basis-theoretical material from Acts 20:17-38 is investigated. In this process the term **preaching**, as well as the goal, primacy and effect of preaching is also illuminated. Furthermore the fact that the Word of God has power to build up the congregation thoroughly because the Word is inspired (God-breathed) is highlighted. Acts of teaching, rebuking, correcting and training are regarded as main features of preaching in equipping the congregation. In conclusion, practice-theoretical guidelines for equipping the congregation by means of preaching in the present situation are presented.*

## 1. Introduction

In a speech at the historic opening of Parliament on 2 February 1990 President De Klerk announced important steps to abandon the apartheid policy: “The dynamic developments in international politics have created new opportunities for South Africa as well. Southern Africa now has a historical opportunity to set aside its conflicts and ideological differences and draw upon joint programme and reconstruction”. With this statement, South Africa entered “a decisive period of transition” (Huber, 1991:14).

In this regard Müller (1991:184) states that “it is almost impossible to make predictions on the characteristics of the future South Africa. Changes are taking place at such a breath-taking pace that even experts in futuristic studies can not make reliable predictions”. In his article Massie (1993:19) emphasizes that “the process (of transition) will accelerate dramatically in the next five years”.

After the election in April 1994, transitions in South Africa have indeed been divergent and dramatic – to such an extent that some people feel confused. The government is struggling with social issues such as violence, crime, corruption, rape, abuse, murder, the loss of standards and values, etc. (Saayman, 1995:3; Louw, 1997:16-17; Cochrane, 1997:2; Kistner, 1997:140). Müller (1991:185) states that the new era of post-apartheid has been characterised by “big changes” and therefore can indeed be described as a “crisis”. The crisis in present-day South Africa, according to Bam (1991:52), is that of “socio-political unrest and crisis”.

In this situation, a study on equipping Christians by means of preaching based on the sermons in Acts, can be profitable. Acts is filled with direct sermons, including speeches, which constitute about half of the entire book (Kistemaker, 1995:8; also Barackman, 1959:179). Johnson (1997:11) also mentions that “at least thirty percent of the text of Acts consists of apostolic preaching, either in fairly full form or in summary”. Willimon (1988:161) states that “Luke’s address to Theophilus suggests that *Acts is preaching*, not in the sense of evangelical appeal to the unknowing, but preaching as catechetical proclamation to strengthen those who already know”.

Charles (1995:48) also mentions that “in the book of Acts, three speeches of Paul have been recorded – one to a Jewish audience (Ch. 13), one to a Christian audience (congregation leaders) (Ch. 20), and one to a pagan audience (Ch. 17). This distribution surely is not by chance”. Paul’s sermon at Miletus (Ch. 20) can be regarded as supplying suitable guidelines equipping the congregation by means of preaching, because in this pericope the Word is directed to a specific reality. Paul’s sermon deals with concrete crises which the congregation will have to face. It also deals with the way in which the congregation should manage these crises.

This article focuses on Paul’s sermon at Miletus, because this sermon contains relevant and applicable material on equipping the New Testament congregation by means of preaching. According to this view the hypothesis is that Paul’s sermon at Miletus contains data in equipping the congregation that deserve to be investigated more closely. In the investigation of the central issue, specific passages of Scripture will be identified and exegesis of these passages will be done. Furthermore, relevant data will be analysed and interpreted with the focus on more contemporary sources.

## 2. Basis-theoretical perspectives on preaching

### 2.1 Defining the term “preaching”

There are many New Testament terms used for preaching. In Paul’s sermon at Miletus, however, five different words are used for preaching: *kerusson* from *kerusso* (Acts 20:25), *diamarturasthai* ~ *marturomai* from *martureo* (Acts 20:24; 20:26), *didaksai* from *didasko* (Acts 20:20), *anaggeilai* from *anaggello* (Acts 20:20; 20:27), and *noutheton* from *noutheteo* (Acts 20:31).

#### 2.1.1 *Kerusso*

This verb means to publicly announce religious truths and principles while urging acceptance and compliance – “to preach” (Louw & Nida, 1989:417). Throughout the New Testament the central meaning of this concept is the proclamation of a new state of events (Bauer, 1974:432). This new state of events is in essence the coming of the kingdom (Mat. 3:2). This concept of preaching is unique in the sense that it does not only proclaim new events, but also is a new event itself (Venter, 1992:9). In the acts of the apostles, the new state of events is the cross (1 Cor. 1:23) and resurrection (2 Cor. 4:5). The reality of Christ’s resurrection is the kernel of the oldest kerugma. In Romans 10:15, authority is linked to this act of preaching in the sense that the message only conveys the message of the Sender (Louw & Nida, 1989:417). The message thus is more important than the herald.

#### 2.1.2 *Martureo*

This verb means to provide information about a person or concerning an event of which the speaker has direct knowledge – “to witness” (Louw & Nida, 1989:418). Beutler (1993:390) states that this verb in Acts means that “someone has received a good witness” or “has a good reputation” (Acts 6:3; 10:22; 16:2; 22:12). According to Coenen (1978:1043-1044), *martureo* in Acts is used in the sense of human attestation for good conduct, i.e., to confirm some situation, or for someone’s good name. *Martus* is used in Acts 6:13 and 7:58 of the (false) witnesses brought against Stephen in accordance with the requirements of the Jewish law. To Luke the witnesses are the apostles and the disciples, who have been commissioned by Jesus with the proclamation of the message of the kingdom. They are more precisely defined in Acts 1:22 as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus (cf. 2:32; 3:15; 13:31; 26:16). Therefore the verb *martureo* is a legal term indicating the communication of the truth of the gospel from one who has firsthand knowledge.

#### 2.1.3 *Didasko*

This verb means to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting – “to teach, teaching” (Louw & Nida, 1989:413). This verb focuses on the purpose

and content of the message transmitted (Mayhue, 1992:8). The central content which this verb contains, is salvation as understood by the post-resurrection church which forms the subject matter of this verb in Acts. The act of preaching, as captured in the concept, involves teaching Scripture and unfolding it (Runia, 1983:26). This verb, therefore, emphasises that the preacher has to unfold the message as to its meaning and consequences, both dogmatically and ethically.

#### **2.1.4 Anangello**

This verb means to announce or inform, with a possible focus upon the source of information – “to tell, to inform” (Louw & Nida, 1989:411). In Acts 14:27 and 15:4, this verb is used where the apostles recount what God has done through them – a knowledge of the present act of God corresponding to that of the prophets (Schniewind, 1978:64).

#### **2.1.5 Noutheteo**

This verb means to admonish someone for having done something wrong. It also means to advise someone concerning the dangerous consequences of some happening or action – “to admonish, to warn” (Louw & Nida, 1989:436-437).

Behm (1978:1021-1022) states that the man who by admonition and correction seeks to turn others from what is wrong and urges them to do good is the apostle, the preacher of the gospel, the one who bears responsibility for the faith and life of the primitive churches. Paul's pastoral work in a congregation is retrospectively presented as a special, inwardly motivated cure of souls by means of indefatigable exhortation with a view to correction and amendment (Acts 20:31).

#### **2.1.6 Conclusion**

The following conclusions can be drawn from the definition of the term “preaching”:

- Preaching is deeply rooted in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit as Sender of the preacher. It focuses on the things of God and Scripture as exclusively central in the preacher's message.
- Preaching is more than just recounting the story *about* the Word of God. In Christian preaching *this Word itself* comes to the listeners. Christian preaching, therefore, *is* the Word of God coming to men.

### **2.2 The goal of preaching**

The goal of preaching can be defined in various ways. Preaching aims to glorify God (Rom. 11:36), and it works and upholds faith in the heart of the believer

(Rom. 11:36). In Paul's sermon at Miletus the goal of preaching is stated in Acts 20:21: "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus".

Having claimed for his ministry in Ephesus the praise of being humble, affectionate, diligent and faithful, Paul now describes its specific character or substance, what it was and what it consisted of. In the first place, it was a testimony to the truth, a common description of Christian and particularly Apostolic preaching (Alexander, 1991:244). He reduces two main points of doctrine and of duty, *repentance and faith* as the subject of this testimony.

The unique expression *metanoia eis deon* (repentance to God), may be explained by the relationship of *metanoia* (to repent), to the more usual *epistrefein* (turn), *metanoia* (repentance), and *pistis* (faith), indicating the appropriate response to the first and second articles of the creed respectively (Conzelmann, 1987:174). Criswell (1980:44) mentions that "the word translated, 'repentance', *metanoia*, actually means a 'change of mind' and refers to a change of attitude, a change of purpose, a change of life-style. It is a word with an active connotation, not a word with passive undertones. It is a dynamic word, not a lethargic word. It refers to something a man does".

Lenski (1964:840) states that *pistis* (faith) is the heart's trust and confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ, the very name being an epitome of the gospel (cf. Acts 1:6; 1:21; 2:22, 36).

The nouns *repentance* and *faith* represent two sides of the same coin. Because Paul mentions two aspects of one concept, we ought not to link repentance to the Gentile and faith to the Jew. Both Jews and Gentiles had to repent of their sins and both had to express their faith in Jesus. Further, repentance lacking faith as its counterpart is useless, and faith without the prerequisite of repentance is futile. Indeed, repentance and faith are tied together in an unbreakable relation (Calvin, 1966:176).

Bock (1986:150) also states that Acts 20:21 is brief and clear. Paul preached to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus. In this verse repentance and faith are linked directly, as are Jews and Gentiles.

Paul as a preacher testified faithfully and continually to both groups of people. What was the content of his testimony? Simply put, it is the summary of Christian doctrine: *repentance and faith*. In his sermon, Paul says that he proclaimed to both Jews and Greeks repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus (Kistemaker, 1995:726).

To summarise, the scope of Paul's preaching in terms of the twin focus on *repentance* and *faith* does not indicate a minimalist "Christian basics" approach to the content of revealed truth. From the biblical record of Paul's ministry it is

obvious that it included a wide range of doctrinal subjects. The point is that, in the last analysis, the purpose of all of God's truth is to bring us to *repentance* and *faith* – that is, to new life in Christ (Keddie, 1993:258).

### **2.3 The primacy of preaching**

The primacy of preaching in Paul's sermon at Miletus is identified in Acts 20:22-24.

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Newman and Nida (1972:392) state that the word "*dromos*" literally means "race", that is, athletic contest, but in the present context it is evidently used in a figurative sense of the race to which God had called Paul. *Diakonia* ("task", "work" used in TEV) is the same word that is used in Acts 1:17. If *dromos* and *diakonia* have essentially the same meaning in this passage, the last clause, "to testify to the gospel of God's grace", refers to both of these activities; otherwise this clause may be taken to refer only to *diakonia*. Therefore, it may be useful to say "the task (work) which I was given to do, is to declare the Good News about the grace of God".

As in so many contexts, "the grace of God" may be rendered as "the goodness of God" in the sense of "the kindness or goodness of God toward people" (Newman & Nida, 1972:392). In this verse "the gospel of God's grace" is a perfect summary of Paul's whole message, and is identical with "preaching the kingdom" in the next verse (Neil, 1986:214).

Lenski (1964:843) states that Paul is governed in this verse by one purpose only, in which his life is not even a pawn; it is the finishing of his apostolic "race", meaning the *diakonia* or ministry which he received from the Lord Jesus. The Lord gave Paul the work of serving him, and he wants to finish it in whatever way the Lord has planned for him. With an appositional infinitive Paul further describes his task: "to testify the gospel of the grace of God".

Kistemaker (1995:729) states that both in the presence of the believers in Caesarea and in his writings, Paul declares that he is ready to yield everything, including his life, to Jesus Christ (Acts 21:13; 2 Cor. 12:10; Phil. 1:20-21; 2:17; 3:8). Paul states that he is running a race to fulfil his task, a metaphor he repeats in his last epistle, which he wrote before his death; "I have finished the race" (2 Tim. 4:7). Paul's conversion experience was the beginning of that race, which he now expects to end. He knows that the purpose of this race is to complete the

work Jesus has given him to do, namely, the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. Paul regards his preaching ministry as the prime task which the church has to continue.

By mentioning the primacy of preaching, Stott (1983:15) stresses that "preaching is indispensable to Christianity. Without preaching a necessary part of its authenticity will be lost. For Christianity is, in its very essence, a religion of the Word of God".

Dargan (1974:7, 557) states that preaching is an essential part and a distinguishing feature of Christianity:

The Founder of Christianity (Jesus Christ) was himself the first of its preachers; he was preceded by his forerunner and followed by his apostles, and in the preaching of these the proclamation and teaching of God's Word by public address was made an essential and permanent feature of the Christian religion.

Bernal (1994:22) also mentions that "until preaching is restored to its primacy and dignity in the minds of people and preachers, the sorrows of the godly can only be multiplied during the neglect".

## **2.4 The effect of preaching**

The effect of preaching in Paul's sermon at Miletus is identified in Acts 20:36-38: "When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship".

At the conclusion of his preaching, Paul kneels down with the elders from Ephesus and fervently prays for each of them. In his sermon, he commended them to God; now before his departure, he carries their needs and requests to God in prayer.

The mentioning of his kneeling down seems to imply that it was not his customary posture in public prayer, but one occasioned by the strength of his emotions (Alexander, 1991:256). Lenski (1964:857) states that this attitude should express what is in the heart.

The constant love Paul had given the congregation at Ephesus during his ministry is fully reciprocated by the elders, who, overcome by their emotions, begin to weep loudly. "They all wept" literally means that there was abundant weeping (on the part) of all. The noun denotes loud weeping and wailing (Walker, 1965:482). Kistemaker (1995:740) stresses that the intensity of their weeping demonstrates their affection for Paul as a pastor or preacher. They

embrace him and repeatedly kiss him. The imperfect *katephiloun* expresses that “they kissed him tenderly again and again”. In ancient culture, a parting kiss on the cheek, forehead, shoulder or hand was a sign of grateful respect and love (William & Larkin, 1995:300). It signified the proof of the intense regard toward Paul as their pastor.

In his preaching, Paul states that the elders would never see him again (v. 25). Now he experiences *the impact* of that word, because the members of his audience say farewell to him with the understanding that they will never meet again on earth. They are “deeply distressed” because of Paul’s word that this is the final parting. The strength of the expression may be learned from its application elsewhere to maternal anguish and the torments of the damned (cf. Luk. 2:48; 16:24, 25) (Alexander, 1991:257).

In short, the farewell scene is intended to underscore the character of Paul’s sermon (Conzelmann, 1987:176). The love and respect of the audience are accompanied by Paul’s fervent teaching and preaching. It is true that their tears, embraces, kisses and sorrow are caused by the impact of Paul’s preaching. These actions and emotions are in response to Paul’s preaching. Therefore preaching has its effect in encouraging and strengthening listeners spiritually in order to respond to the message proclaimed by the preacher.

## **2.5 Basis-theoretical conclusion**

From Paul’s sermon at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38), the following conclusion can be drawn about basis-theoretical perspectives on preaching:

- Preaching is deeply rooted in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit as Sender of the preacher. Preaching is more than just recounting the story *about* the Word of God. In Christian preaching *this Word itself* comes to the listeners. Christian preaching, therefore, *is* the Word of God coming to men.
- The goal of preaching is to bring people to *repentance and faith* (new life). And it also encourages new converts to be spiritually mature in their faith, and then to serve God. Preaching as the task which Jesus has given, has primacy in the church of God, because the survival of the church depends on the Word of God. The effect of preaching is to encourage and to strengthen listeners spiritually in order to respond to the message proclaimed by the preacher.

## **3. Paul and preaching as a means of equipping the congregation**

Buttrick (1994:23) states that



... when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers called lawfully, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful. Neither any other Word of God is to be invented nor is to be expected from heaven: and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; for even if he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God remains still true and good.

Calvin's opinion underscores this idea. According to Calvin, preaching so to say "borrows" its status from the Word of God, from Scripture. It is the Word of God inasmuch as it delivers the Biblical message, which is God's message or Word (Parker, 1992:23).

Preaching as the Word of God, therefore, is one of the most effective means of equipping the congregation because the Word is powerful.

### 3.1 Preaching is able to build up the congregation

A reference that preaching is able to build up the congregation firmly, is identified in Paul's sermon at Miletus (Acts 20:32). "Now I commit you to God and to the Word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified".

In previous verses (vv. 29-31), Paul reminded the leaders about facing dangers. In the face of such threats, Paul as a preacher commits (*paratithemai*) the church – literally he deposits the church in the presence of God and ... *the Word of his grace*. In the safekeeping of God and his word, the church will not be destroyed but will grow spiritually (William & Larkin, 1995:299). In other words, after exhorting the Ephesian elders to be watchful both over the sheep and against the wolves, the apostle proceeds to commend them to God and his Word of grace (Stott, 1991:327).

Newman and Nida (1972:396-397) state that

... many translations render literally the Greek phrase 'the Word of his grace'. The TEV has taken 'Word' in the sense of message: *the message of his grace*. The NEB has employed a rather meaningless expression 'his gracious Word'. It is difficult to decide exactly what this phrase means; it could refer to the Old Testament or to the teachings of Jesus. In the present context, however, it seems to refer rather to *Paul's own message* which he preached about the grace of God'.

As Paul was now leaving the congregation the elders could no longer count upon his personal presence for such pastoral guidance and wise admonition. However, though Paul might go, God was ever with the congregation, and so was God's Word which they had received – the Word that proclaimed His grace in redeeming them and His grace in sanctifying them. To God, then, and to this Word of His, Paul solemnly committed them. By that Word, which implies

preaching, as they accepted and obeyed it, they would be built up in faith and love together with their fellow-Christians; by that Word, too, they were assured of their inheritance among all the people of God, sanctified by His grace (Bruce, 1984:417).

As a preacher Paul emphasises that preaching as the Word of God is able to do one thing: *the Word can build up the congregation*. The Greek word is itself an image of the process – *oikodomeo* comes from *oikos* (house). Thus Paul says that Christians are “members of God’s household (literally, the buildings [*oikeioi*] of God), built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:19-22; cf. 1 Cor. 3:9) (Keddie, 1993:262). In this regard, Harrison (1975:317) mentions that “to ‘build up’ the people of God is a primary function of the Word and of the ministry of the Word. Paul is very fond of using the term *edification* (seven times in the Corinthian letters alone)”.

Lenski (1964:853) mentions that by adding “and to the Word of his grace”, Paul states what he expects God to do for the church. God and the Word of his grace always go together; God lets his grace flow out through that Word. With the attributive participle Paul describes the power of this Word. We construe *tooi dunamenooi* with *tooi logooi*; there is, however, little difference in force when it is construed with *tooi Theooi*. The Word (gospel which Paul preached) is the power of God (Rom. 1:16). The Word is able to do two things: *to build us up* spiritually in this life, and *to give us the inheritance* of the life to come.

Kistemaker (1995:736) states that

... the gospel of Christ has *innate power to strengthen and establish* the Ephesian elders in their faith. By implication, we understand that the gospel receives its authority from the Lord Jesus. He demonstrates his power by confirming the believers through the spoken and written Word (compare Rom. 16:25). To be precise, it is the gospel to which Paul commits the elders, and this gospel gives them a legacy.

To summarise – there are grave and grievous perils threatening the church of God, wolves from without, church members from within. However, these are our resources: God, and the Word of His grace, which means preaching (Morgan, 1957:369). The Word can *build up the church*, and guarantee its members the *inheritance* which awaits all who belong to the new Israel (Neil, 1986:215). Preaching the Word of God builds up Christians, i.e. makes them mature (cf. 1 Cor 3:9-15; Eph. 4:12).

### **3.2 Preaching is able to equip the congregation thoroughly**

Concerning the means of equipping the congregation, it is necessary to investigate 2 Timothy 3:16-17 because this passage is one of the most important

references on equipping Christians in Scriptures and was written by Paul, the author of the sermon at Miletus. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”.

### 3.2.1 God-breathed Word

Paul’s definition of Scripture, of *all scripture*, is that it is *inspired by God*. The single Greek word *theopneustos* literally translated means *God-breathed* and indicates not that Scripture itself or its human authors were breathed into by God, but that Scripture was breathed or breathed out by God. Scripture is not to be thought of as already in existence when (subsequently) God breathed into it, but as itself brought into existence by the breath or Spirit of God. There is no “theory” or explanation of inspiration here, for no reference is made to the human authors, who (Peter says) *moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God* (2 Pet. 1:21). Nevertheless, it is clear from many passages that inspiration, however the process operated, did not destroy the individuality or the active co-operation, that all Scripture is God-breathed. It originated in God’s mind and was communicated from God’s mouth by God’s breath or Spirit. It is therefore rightly termed “the Word of God”, for God spoke it. Indeed, as the prophets used to say, *the mouth of the Lord has spoken it* (Stott, 1973:101-102).

### 3.2.2 Preaching as a means of equipping the congregation

The affirmation of the inspiration of Scripture leads to a discussion of its usefulness. Only its divine origin secures and explains its human profit. Indeed, Scripture is the chief means which God employs to bring *the man of God* to maturity (Stott, 1973:103). In order to equip man Paul described four modi in which Scripture can be utilised.

#### 3.2.2.1 *didaskalia* (teaching)

The word *didaskalia* means teaching. Teaching includes instruction in doctrine and matters of Christian conduct, and in this context the emphasis is more on building up the community of believers than on proclaiming the gospel to unbelievers (Towner, 1994:201). Here Paul suggests that Scripture is a positive source of Christian doctrine. The Word, therefore, has power to teach people who are wandering in the world in order to be people of God.

#### 3.2.2.2 *elengmos* (rebuking)

The word *elengmos* has the meaning of “proving, convicting, reproof; i.e., for refuting error and rebuking sin” (Rienecker, 1980:301). It may refer to a rebuke that exposes the errors of false teachers, and it may also refer to reproof in our personal lives. Whether the reproof is personal or doctrinal, Scripture can show sinners their failures, clarify the point of the mistake, and lead them to a new

sense of peace and wholeness (Lea & Griffin, 1992:237). The Word, therefore, has power to change sinners in the world.

### **3.2.2.3 epanorthosis (correcting)**

The word *epanorthosis* has the meaning of “correction, recovery, setting upright on their moral feet” (Lock, 1936:110). The taught and rebuked sinner is knocked off his feet in committing a sin. The restitution can be effected only by God, who works through His inspired Scripture to bring about repentance and stimulate towards life (Moellering, 1970:165). This word, only used here in the New Testament, suggests that Scripture helps individuals to adjust their doctrine or personal practices to a right state before God. Correction is one means God uses in order to restore people to spiritual positions they have forfeited. This emphasis frequently appears in the wilderness experience of Israel (see Deut. 8:2-3,5) (Lea & Griffin, 1992:237). Accordingly the Word is powerful for convicting the misguided and disobedient of their errors and restoring them to the right paths.

### **3.2.2.4 paideia (training)**

The word *paideia* means “training, instruction, discipline” (Rienecker, 1980:301). *Training* in righteousness expresses the positive goal of teaching and discipling. Here *righteousness* describes the observable Christian life (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22). The application of Scriptural principles to our lives by gifted teachers in the congregation enables us to make progress in a life-style that is pleasing to God (Towner, 1994:201).

Lea and Griffin (1992:237) mention that *paideia* as used in this verse is to provide moral training that leads to righteous living. This positive purpose is expressed by a term (*paideia*) that also appears in Ephesians 6:4 (“training”). In Ephesians it denotes a system of discipline used by a parent to develop a Christian character in a child. In this verse it describes a system of discipline in Scripture that leads to a holy life-style. The Word, therefore, has power which can change people's moral life in righteousness.

## **3.3 Basis-theoretical conclusion**

The following basis-theoretical conclusions can be made about preaching as a means of equipping the congregation:

- All Scriptures are “God-breathed”, which means the Word originated from God. Preaching proclaims the Word originating from God. Preaching, therefore, has as much *power* as the Word of God.
- Preaching the Word of God has power which is able to *build up* the congregation firmly even though there are grave and grievous perils

threatening the church of God. Preaching the Word of God also has power which is able to *equip* the congregation thoroughly for every good work by teaching, rebuking, correcting and training, even though the congregation lives and exists in this broken world.

- Accordingly, in the contemporary South Africa, pastors, first of all, should realise that the Word of God alone can change the heart of sinful men. Furthermore, pastors should let people of all social standings (politicians, government officials, economists, educators, students, workers, etc.) in South Africa hear the voice of the Word of God. The Word preached by a pastor can – like a two-edged knife even – work powerfully in the heart of these people though they are stubborn and corrupt.

#### 4. Practice-theoretical perspectives

From Paul's sermon at Miletus, the following general guidelines can finally be deduced about equipping the congregation by means of preaching:

The pastor is not called to minister in the context of the past, but in the contemporary context. Thus it is an urgent task for the preacher in South Africa to preach the Word of God within this unstable and corrupt context. Pastors should prepare and deliver sermons which are relevant to the contemporary South African context.

There is – unfortunately – a tendency among certain pastors to focus on the Bible text only, whereas the contemporary context should also be incorporated in the application of the Biblical text.

- Preaching is more than just recounting the story *about* the Word of God. In Christian preaching *this Word itself* comes to the listeners. Christian preaching, therefore, *is* the Word of God coming to men. The goal of preaching is to bring people to *repentance and faith* (new life), and it has primacy in the church of God because survival of the church belongs to the Word of God. Preaching as the Word of God can be one of the most effective means of equipping the congregation.

Under these circumstances, pastors should realise that they have been called by God in order to help people who experience socio-political unrest and crisis. They must also remember that they have to preach not their own words but the Word of God because that alone brings people true values and standard in a broken world. They must also not forget that they should encourage and strengthen their congregation with the Word because a sound South African church and society is absolutely dependant on the Word of God. They should also preach people to repent of their sins. The preacher

should also encourage his listeners to play the role of salt and light by means of self-denial, cross-bearing and love in this broken world.

- All Scriptures are “God-breathed”, which means the Word originated from God. Preaching proclaims the Word as originating from God. Preaching, therefore, has as much *power* as the Word of God. Preaching is powerful to *build up* the congregation firmly, and to *equip* the congregation thoroughly for every good work by teaching, rebuking, correcting and training, even though there are grave and grievous perils threatening the church of God in this broken world.

Accordingly, in the contemporary South African situation, pastors, should realise that the Word of God alone can change the heart of sinful men. Furthermore, pastors should let people of all social standings (politicians, government officials, economists, educators, students, workers, etc.) in South Africa hear the voice of the Word of God. They can implement spiritual discipline programmes and continuous Bible study programmes in congregations.

- In summary: in the situation of “socio-political unrest and crisis” in South Africa, pastors should devote themselves fully to equip their congregation by means of preaching. By doing so, the members of the congregation, that is, Christians who are well equipped with the Word preached, will enthusiastically carry out their task in the broken society of South Africa. Only then South Africa will be stable and experience peace – socially and politically.

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