

PAUL . . . PREACHER OR EVANGELIST?

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Evangelistic activity in Paul's day certainly included communication by word, just as it does in our day; but it also included much more. Thus, as the translator comes to Paul's letters, it is important for him to be aware of Paul's strategies and tactics. Fundamentally, Paul was an organizer, a founder of house churches. He felt called by God to spread the Gospel as he understood it (Rom 1.1-7, 9.3, 1 Cor 2.2-5, 2 Cor 10 & 11, Phil 1.19-24). His daily concern was the little congregations he had established (2 Cor 11.28).

Details about Paul's activities as a missionary-organizer are scattered throughout his letters. But one of the best pictures of his work is found in Romans 15. In verses 18-20 we see that Paul's goal was to organize communities of believers of all races. His objective was to win a response by any means: word and deed, signs and wonders. His strategy was to work in an orderly way from Jerusalem around the Mediterranean coastline to the Adriatic Sea and to focus his labors in new territories not yet entered by other missionaries or missionary teams. In verses 23-24 we have the remarkable picture of a man in his mid-fifties, after at least 20 years of constant travel, struggle and personal risk—20 years of hard evangelistic activity—making plans for the next phase of his work.

Paul describes his missionary activities by the verb *euangelizo*. This rare Greek verb is not easy to translate. The noun *euangelion* means "good news" to those who receive it and "a reward for good news" to the person who brings it. However, the verb is much harder to deal with. English does not have a verb which is derived from the noun "Gospel", so we cannot simply say, "I gospel to you", or "the Gospel which was gospelsed". Translators have searched for alternatives and have usually chosen to translate *euangelizo* by some form of the English verb "preach", as can be seen from the following table.

Text	RSV	Jerusalem Bible	Good News Bible
Gal 1.8a	preach	preach	preach
Gal 1.8b	preach	preach	preach
Gal 1.9	preach	preach	preach
Gal 1.11	preach	preach	preach
Gal 1.16	preach	preach	preach
Gal 1.23	preach	preach	preach
Gal 4.13	preach	preach	preach
1 Cor 1.17	preach	preach	tell
1 Cor 9.16a	preach	preach	preach
1 Cor 9.16b	preach	preach	preach
1 Cor 9.18	preach	preach	preach
1 Cor 15.1	preach	preach	preach
1 Cor 15.2	—	preach	preach
2 Cor 10.16	preach	carrying	preach
2 Cor 11.7	preach	preach	preach
Rom 1.15	preach	bring	preach
Rom 10.15	preach	bring	bring
Rom 15.20	preach	preach	proclaim

"Preach", however, is normally limited to verbal activity and implies the delivery of a sermon, usually in the context of worship. Very few translators or

New Testament scholars today would consider Paul a “preacher” in the modern sense of this term. Therefore, in translating *euangelizo*, we really need to select a word or construct a phrase which conveys the dynamic quality as well as the variety that evangelistic activity had for Paul. The words in italics are my suggestions for translations of *euangelizo* in the following texts. These texts are selected from among the 18 occasions when Paul uses this verb, in his letters to the Romans, the Galatians and the Corinthians.

Gal 1.8-9 “But if even we ourselves or an angel from heaven *should present the Gospel* in a manner contrary to the way *we presented it* to you, let him be cursed! As we said before, so now I say again, if any person *presents the Gospel* to you differently than how you received it, that person is damned!”

Paul is not involved in an argument among “preachers” about how to “preach”. What is at stake is the identity of the new Christian communities in the province of Galatia, who have been influenced to forsake the unconditional way of relating to each other which Paul *showed* them himself earlier. We might even wish to translate *euangelizo* as “portray” or “live” the Gospel, here.

Gal 1.11 “I want you to know that the Gospel which *was disclosed* by me is not from human beings . . .”

This play on words (“the Gospel which I gospeled”) might also be translated “the Gospel which I embodied in your midst”. Paul thought of himself as somehow physically expressing the Crucified Messiah (Gal 3.1, 6.7). And he was received in Galatia as Christ himself (Gal 4.14). It is clear here as elsewhere in Galatians that *euangelizo* refers not simply to preaching but to the total impact of Paul’s presence.

Gal 1.23 “They only heard, ‘He who once persecuted us now *is spreading* the faith he tried to destroy.’”

For Paul, activity on behalf of the Gospel is just as aggressive as activity against the Gospel. Evangelism is hard work (1 Cor 15.10) which involves the establishing or planting of Christian communities. The connotations of “preaching” simply do not convey the qualities of engagement and activism which evangelistic labor had for Paul. This is especially clear in Galatians which contains 7 of the 18 occasions when Paul uses the term, *euangelizo*. These chapters reflect conflict and bitter disagreement over fundamentals. Paul is addressing himself not only to preachers and other specialists in the churches. He is addressing ordinary people, who have been summoned through his witness to reverse their values and live a life of service and solidarity with Christ (Rom 8.16-17).

1 Cor 1.17 “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to *live the Gospel*—not in eloquent speech, lest the Cross of Christ be made empty.”

Paul draws a distinction here between Gospel presentation and the power of words. He felt called to demonstrate the power and authority of the Cross through “weakness” and “fear and trembling” rather than by means of profound, moving address (1 Cor 2.1-5).

1 Cor 9.16, “Yet even if I am able *to live the Gospel*, this is nothing I
18 should boast about. Necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I

do not live the Gospel! . . . What then is my reward? By living the Gospel as I do, I make the Gospel free of charge, not even claiming my rights in the Gospel."

It was being said in Corinth that Paul was unworthy of material support. He answers that his lifestyle and his missionary practice (9.1-7) entitle him to support even when he doesn't claim it. Paul is certainly not talking about being paid to preach.

1 Cor 15. 1-2 "Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the Gospel which I presented to you—in what terms I presented the Gospel to you—which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved—if you continue to hold it.

Paul used *euangelizo* to encompass all of his strategies as a missionary-organizer. This included his practice of recounting the 'facts' or the historical content of the Gospel, in particular the record of resurrection appearances. And so as he writes or perhaps dictates this letter, he wishes to make clear for himself and for his readers that he now is talking about the traditions he had received and passed on. This is why he repeats himself ". . . the Gospel which I presented—(that is to say) in what terms I presented the Gospel." (The RSV hides this distinction by skipping over the first appearance of *euangelizo* in this passage.)

2 Cor 10.16 ". . . in order to establish the Gospel in lands beyond you . . ."

As we have seen, Paul's goal was to organize new communities of Christians. He expects to move into areas beyond the province of Achaia, areas untouched by other missionaries, and establish churches there.

Rom 10.15 "And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How welcome are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Just as in 1 Corinthians, we find here a close connection between preaching and other kinds of evangelistic activity. However, this means that the role of the preacher is expanded. Gospel activity is not narrowed down to mean only the use of words. Paul is talking about the prophets, who conveyed "good news" in dramatic and creative fashion. In many cases they attempted even to embody the message they brought. Paul says also that the word about Christ is also the "event" (*rēmatos*) of Christ (verse 17), which must be *lived*.

Rom 15. 18-20 "For I will not dare to speak of anything except that which Christ has done through me to win a response from all peoples—by word and deed, through the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit—so that from Jerusalem as far around as Illyricum the Gospel of Christ has been established—making it my goal to live the Gospel not where Christ is named lest I build on another's foundation."

We have already seen how helpful this passage is in demonstrating the variety and range of Paul's missionary labors and strategies, which include word, deeds, signs and wonders. Paul did indeed "preach Jesus" but he did so in his lifestyle and in his work as a missionary-organizer. It is interesting to note in this passage the fondness of translators for the term "preach", which is used here to translate another Greek word, *peplerokenai*, which means literally "made full".

Conclusion

Paul's use of *euangelizo* does not support the repeated use of "preach" in translation. For good or ill, "preach" has taken on in English clerical and technical senses. A translation of *euangelizo* in any language should not be limited to a term which implies only communication by word. Also, in many churches the preaching ministry is limited to ordained persons. But Paul is not writing only to preachers in his letters; and so a word or phrase must be used which will address each believer and Bible reader in his or her own situation. Paul challenged all his readers to imitate him (1 Cor 4.16, 11.1, Phil 4.5). He was not thinking only of those who are called to specialized ministries in the church, but saw evangelism as an activity for each Christian.

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A BOA NOVA PARA AS CRIANÇAS: "GOOD NEWS FOR CHILDREN"*

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The book *A Boa Nova para as Crianças* (which we will refer to after this as ABNpaC) represents a noble effort on the part of the Bible Society of Portugal to share the message of the New Testament with the children of that country. The book is noteworthy not only because it uses a language level appropriate for children, but even more because it illustrates the message in such an attractive and powerful way.

The introduction to the book states that its principle purpose is: *tornar a mensagem bíblica mais acessível a todas as crianças e numa linguagem que elas podem, sem qualquer dificuldade, entender muito bem*, "to make the biblical message more accessible to all children by presenting it in language they can understand without any difficulty." However, given the difficult social and cultural situation in Portugal today, there is another purpose, which though listed in second place, is in fact as important as the first: *proporcionar aos educadores cristãos um texto fácil para alfabetização, não só de crianças mas também de muitos adultos*, "to provide Christian educators with a simple textbook for the teaching of reading not only to children, but also to the many illiterate adults." The needs of both of these groups, the children learning to read and the many unschooled adults, are successfully met by ABNpaC which retells *os principais acontecimentos da vida de Jesus Cristo e dos seus primeiros seguidores, relatados nos quatro Evangelhos e no livro dos Actos dos Apóstolos*, "the principle events from the life of Jesus and his early disciples as reported in the four Gospels and in the Book of Acts" in simple, straightforward language.

ABNpaC has carefully selected 85 passages from the New Testament and has arranged them more or less in the order of the events they refer to. It thus provides the framework for learning the basic facts about the life and work of Jesus, as well as that of the early efforts of the church which grew out of the work of the apostles. The format of presentation is uniform throughout: on each left-hand page a story is presented in large, clear modern type, and on the right-hand page facing it, this biblical message is appropriately illustrated by a four-color picture.