

Section 3

FULFILL THY MINISTRY

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What Is A Preacher?

INTRO: Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He left a charge for His apostles and all subsequent disciples (Mark 16:15-16). Preaching and teaching God's word is the most important task for any Christian whether from a pulpit, over a kitchen table, or by example.

Some men have become so overwhelmed by the necessity, seriousness, and magnitude of this work, that they have chosen to dedicate themselves to the work of preaching the gospel. Many have given up good-paying jobs, secure homes, friends, and lifestyles to devote all their time to "the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). Tragically, many have also abused that position to make money, feed an ego, or become prominent and influential. Such are unworthy motives (cf. Philippians 1:15-17).

What is a preacher and what is his place in the church and God's scheme of things? How important is his work of proclaiming the gospel (Romans 10:13-17; Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-16)?

I. THE POSITION

A. Definitions. The following words are not titles as much as they are descriptions of his work. Such words associate the man with what he does.

1. Preacher (Gr. 'kerux') (see 1 Timothy 2:7; Romans 10:14; 2 Timothy 1:11). He is a herald. He is one who proclaims, announces, or cries out God's word.
2. Teacher (Gr. 'didaskalos') (see 1 Timothy 2:7; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:3). He is one who instructs the disciples (students) of Christ.
3. Minister (Gr. 'diakonos') (see 1 Timothy 4:6; Acts 26:16; 1 Corinthians 4:1). He is a servant or attendant.
4. Evangelist (Gr. 'euangelistes') (see Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:5). He is a "messenger of good", one who carries the "good news" of the gospel to men.
5. Ministry. The word has reference to "the general ministry of a **servant** of the Lord in preaching and teaching" (Vine) (see Acts 20:24; 2 Corinthians 6:3; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:5).

One who is in "the ministry" is not one who is to be served by the congregation, but one who serves them (notably their spiritual needs).

The first four terms all refer to the **work** he does, they are not merely the **title** he wears. Therefore to be a preacher, one must preach (2 Timothy 4:2), to be an evangelist, one must evangelize (2 Timothy 4:5), and to be a minister, one must minister (serve) (2 Timothy 4:5). All this is the work of the same man and without doing this work he is none of these.

B. Authority Of A Preacher. The apostles had authority to give commands and dictates, that authority being given to them by Christ (2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10; Matthew 16:19). What kind of authority does a preacher have?

1. Speak These Things With All Authority (Titus 2:15). This "stresses the authoritativeness of the command" (Vine), not the man! His message **from God** has authority. Therefore, he is to speak it

decidedly, without ambiguity, compromise, or keeping anything back. He is to state them, not as advice, but the requirement of God (Acts 20:27)!

His authority has limitations. When he says what God said, everyone must obey it. But he must not outstep his bounds.

- a. He has no authority to make pronouncements of his own (James 4:12).
- b. He has no authority to rule or run a church. He is not a "pastor" (see Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:17,28; 1 Timothy 3:1f; Titus 1:5-9). He does not rule the church, he is a teacher and preacher to the church.

C. Development Of Clergy-Laity Distinction.

1. Distinction. In the religious world a distinction has developed, between the "clergy" (body of religious officials) and the "laity" (church members and following). The preacher is considered a "man of God" and is shown reverence and a degree of veneration.

That distinction has been further crystallized by such titles as "Reverend", "Father", "Your Holiness" and "Your Eminence". Special clothing is even worn to announce that distinction to those who might not otherwise know.

God makes no such distinctions (Acts 10:34) and condemns them among men (Matthew 23:5-12). Only God is worthy to be called "Father" or "Reverend" (Matthew 23:9; Psalm 111:9 KJV). Preachers are **not** the spiritual aristocrats of the church.

2. Professionalizing Preachers. In many cases, "the ministry" has become nothing more than a profession with a religious twist.

In the eyes of such men, preaching is chosen as a profession of preferred service. He wants to do something good for his fellowman, so he chooses the ministry, much like someone would choose nursing, social work, the Peace Corp, etc.

In the eyes of such churches, a preacher is a paid professional whose job is to lead a church or community to a higher moral standing, to exert his influence in government and policy making, to lead civil rights crusades, and to preach a sermon or two, visit the hospitals and jails, offer counseling, perform weddings, funerals, and offer invocations before sporting and other events.

His ability is determined by his educational degrees and seminary training rather than his simple knowledge of God's word.

Such concepts are directly opposed to the simplicity of the concept of preachers in the New Testament church.

3. What Some "Churches Of Christ" Have Done. What notion do we have of preachers and their work?
 - a. Do we ever show a distinction between a preacher and member by referring only to the preacher as "Brother So-and-so"? Is that much different than calling him "father" or "reverend"?
 - b. What would we think of a preacher who refused to perform a wedding or funeral service?
 - c. Is it a preacher's job to visit sick people, hospitals, nursing homes, and shut-ins (cf. Matthew 25:35-40)?
 - d. Some churches require graduation from a brotherhood college before hiring a preacher.
 - e. Do we think of preachers as employees of the church?

- f. Some churches expect the preacher to live a different lifestyle than they do, merely because he is "the preacher".
- g. What **should** we think of the man and his work?

D. Characteristics Of The Ministry.

1. It Is A Spiritual Work And Service. Actually, it is the **only** truly spiritual ministry in the world today (except perhaps the eldership, but that involves physical needs too). That which is "spiritual" pertains to the inner, invisible, and eternal qualities in a human being, especially in his relation to God. Preaching, or ministering, is the only work **wholly** dedicated to service on this level (1 Timothy 4:16; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Philippians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:19-20).

It is God's work in human hands.

2. It Is A Ministry Which Links God With Men. The goal of this work is to bridge the gap between God and men, divided by sin, and unite men with God, through their own faith and obedience (2 Corinthians 5:20).

It is a service whose value will be measured in eternity! It is the work of a man who is striving to be saved, and take as many people with him as he can! (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 2 Corinthians 1:14). It is this conviction that enables a man to go on in the ministry in spite of great difficulties and trials.

3. It Is A Life Not A Job. He is a preacher 24 hours a day, not just weekdays from nine to five, or weekends and Wednesdays. Not one minute out of any day can he be detached from that work (1 Timothy 4:15; 2 Timothy 2:3-4).

He is not a workaholic, nor does he sacrifice family, rest, and free time — but he never forgets what he is and what he does, and he does whatever he must whenever it is needed. It is a life of sacrifice and is his offering to God, his family, his brethren, and his fellowman (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 12:15; Philippians 2:17; Ephesians 5:21-6:4).

II. THE MAN

- A. What Kind Of Man Should He Be? Does he need to have a college degree? Special Bible training? Pleasant, outgoing personality? Clean-cut angelic children cute enough to pinch their cheeks? Outgoing, socially conscious wife? How old should he be? How much preaching experience should he have? What if he has a physical handicap or limitation?

The Bible does not require, nor even suggest, **one** of those things! But is that not what we often expect in preachers? Such characteristics may be advantageous to have, but hardly necessary.

1. Many capable men have passed over the opportunity to preach because they lacked these things. What a terrible waste it would have been if many famous gospel preachers had quit because they did not possess such qualities.

a. Peter and John were ignorant, unlearned fishermen (Acts 2:7-8; 4:13).

b. Paul's presence was weak and contemptible (2 Corinthians 10:10)

c. John the Baptist was a wilderness hermit (Mark 1:4-6).

- B. Realistic Expectations Of A Preacher. "Superman" lives on the pages of a comic book — not in real life. Even God's heroes of old were men of like nature such as ours.
1. Preachers Are Not Perfect (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). Nor are their families. They are reaching toward it like everyone else, but have not attained it (Philippians 3:12-16). Preachers can get down on themselves for flaws, as much as others can. That is not fair!
Many people expect his wife and children to be "picture perfect" too. Such is impossible. Brethren should not expect that of them, nor should the preacher!!
 2. Preachers Are All Different (Romans 12:4-8; Matthew 25:14-30). They are not all turned out of the same mold. Each man has his own good qualities, strengths and weaknesses. Not everyone can be a Dee Bowman, Robert Jackson, or Homer Hailey! But an evangelist is effective and pleasing to God if he uses **all** the talents God has given him.
 3. Preachers Don't Need Special Schooling (Ephesians 4:11-16). The church is a sufficient schooling ground for gospel preachers. Schools may be helpful, but are not necessary to the development of such men.
Notice how Timothy became equipped for the work (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-17). Can you imagine Timothy "trying out" at some church, and, upon brethren asking him about his schooling and training, responding "My mom and grandma taught me the Bible from the time I was little"?
 4. Preachers May Not Possess Great Oratorical Skills. Some men are blessed with and have learned such, but it is God's word, not eloquence, which converts people (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).
Apollos was "eloquent" (but that may merely mean "learned"). Notice what made him powerful in the word though (Acts 18:24-28).

CONCLUSION: Preaching the gospel is the most important work in the world, because only through preaching can the lost be saved (Romans 10:14-16; 1 Corinthians 1:21) and the church be edified and built up (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Preachers should not be burdened with all the other things. They should take advantage of every opportunity and opening to do good and point people to Christ; but, let us never forget the **real** purpose of preaching — saving the precious souls of men, women, and children!!

Qualifications Of A Preacher

INTRO: If you were to give a group of people a sheet of paper and ask them for the ten most important and desired qualities for a gospel preacher, you might not even find two people who agree.

Unfortunately, many qualified men have been turned away for not possessing arbitrarily made, unscriptural qualifications demanded by churches. Tragically, many unqualified men have become preachers with no comprehension of what they are supposed to be before God!

Any man can become a preacher, but a preacher must be a special person. His life and reputation have a great influence on his ministry. Often people's judgments of his message are connected to their judgment of him.

Nowhere in Scripture are the qualifications of an evangelist cataloged for us, as are those of elders and deacons. There are, however, very explicit qualifications mentioned for those who do preach the word. The majority of these are found in Paul's letters to preachers — Timothy and Titus.

I. HE MUST BE A MAN OF THE WORD

- A. Grounded In The Truth (2 Timothy 1:13; 3:14-15). He must know the truth, incorporate it in his life, and be unmoveable in it. More than just being associated with it, he must know it, having it written in his heart, nourished in and following it (1 Timothy 4:6,13,16; 6:20).

One cannot teach what he does not know. He cannot have faith nor build faith in others for that which he does not know. He does not have to know everything, but he does have to know enough.

- B. Constant Student Of The Word (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:13,15). Anyone who cannot discipline himself to study (and learn) will never be an effective gospel preacher. His desire to study must come from his love and yearning for truth (1 Peter 2:2) not just to satisfy his own curiosity.

A preacher who does not diligently study **should** "be ashamed"! He must spend time studying, but if he is not learning the truth, he is wasting time (2 Timothy 3:6-7; 1 Timothy 1:7). A teacher who is not also a student soon becomes a failure as a teacher!

- C. Able To Teach (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Timothy 4:6; Titus 2:1). Knowledge may benefit its possessor, but is no further use if he cannot teach it. He must develop his abilities, because a preacher must teach publically and from house to house (Acts 20:20).

Teaching, preaching, and evangelizing are a preacher's work. Any preacher who cannot effectively impart knowledge to people should not be preaching — the truth is that he is not!

- D. Must Be Gentle, Meek, And Patient (2 Timothy 2:24-25). Teaching ability is not enough. He has a responsibility to the **way** he teaches.

He must not "strive" or engage in meaningless disputes. That does not mean, though, that he must avoid controversy. Dealing with false teachers and those who oppose the truth necessarily means there will be disputes. The temptation is to be rough, abrasive, and short tempered. It takes real discipline of self to correct men with a spirit of gentleness and meekness.

Meekness is not weakness! But neither is rudeness and a lack of tact to be confused with strength and courage. Winning an argument is not nearly as important as winning a soul!

II. HE MUST BE A MAN CONSCIOUS OF PEOPLE

- A. Love And Concern For Lost Souls (Romans 10:1; 9:2-3; Matthew 9:36-37). Too many men seem to hold the sinner in contempt and hatred. We must, however, learn to love the sinner and hate the sin.

Sinners are not the enemy to be tortured and punished, they are victims of the enemy. Someone has said that "Christians are the only army in the world who shoot their own wounded".

He must be strong of character and sympathetic, for he will need to be both in the face of the most distressing circumstances, as he ministers to people in great pain and mental anxiety.

- B. Ability To Get Along With People (1 Timothy 5:1-2,21-22). He does that by showing love, concern, and respect for people. He speaks to them tactfully, but truthfully. At times that may anger them, but they respect him for it.

Any preacher who is bitter, antagonistic, and obnoxious will not do any good with people and will likely be hated. There is **never** a reason for him to be offensive, even though the truth he preaches will sometimes offend people.

- C. Adaptable (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). A man who is "stuck in his ways", demanding, stubborn and opinionated need not be preaching. The church is not a wild bronco for him to break, tame, and get in line. If he cannot adjust to their needs, then he cannot help them!

He must be willing to give in to many matters of opinion when decisions must be made. He cannot be a "floormat" for brethren to walk over and push around. He must not view himself too highly (Romans 12:3). He must also be able to laugh at himself. The work he is doing is of the greatest importance, but he personally is not. He must not wear his feelings on his sleeve.

III. HE MUST BE A MAN OF INTEGRITY

- A. Courage And Conviction (2 Timothy 1:7-8; 4:2; 2:1; 1 Timothy 6:12). The pulpit is no place for a soft compromiser or someone who is afraid to say what needs to be said. Many think of preachers as weak, mousy kind of men. He must be one of the bravest men around, because he is in a direct conflict with the most evil of men and the most evil enemy of men. Courage is not the absence of fear; it is doing what you must in the face of your greatest fear.

He must rebuke sin in anyone (even his superiors) (1 Timothy 5:19-20; Titus 1:10-11; 2:15).

- B. Pure And Blameless (1 Timothy 5:22; 6:13-14). His life must be above reproach, so that his message is not silenced by the glaring inconsistency of his life (Titus 2:7-8).

He must be a model to them, a living example of the very things he is encouraging in them (2 Timothy 3:10; 1 Timothy 4:12).

- C. A Good Conscience (1 Timothy 1:5,19). A pure conscience, which is undefiled. It knows the difference between right and wrong. It is also good because it is clean. A clean conscience is one which knows it has been forgiven of its sins and that there are no blots or stains on it.
- D. Not Greedy (1 Timothy 6:6-11; Acts 20:33). Those who preach "for money" won't be worth what they do make! They will also be in for a big surprise. A preacher who does make a good salary is not necessarily greedy. But if he is preaching to support his family rather than having his family supported so he can preach, then he is doing so for the wrong reason. His attitude about it makes the difference.
He should be someone who can live on much or little, but always live within his means (Philippians 4:11-12).

IV. HE MUST BE A MAN OF DEDICATION

- A. Must Be Driven To Preach (Jeremiah 20:9; 1 Corinthians 9:16). Some preach to live, others live to preach. He must be of the latter breed. There must be a driving force within him (whether conscience, conviction, or the Spirit's constraint on his heart) leading him to devote his life to preaching. Without that, he will quit or his preaching efforts will be lifeless and profitless.
Men of dedication are motivated, driven men, with a passion for what they are doing.
- B. Self-Disciplined (1 Timothy 4:16; 1 Corinthians 9:27). He must "take heed to himself" — no one else likely will (except his wife and he often resents that from her). No one is looking over your shoulder all the time; no time clock is keeping tabs on you; no one is telling you where to be and what to do.
He must be a self-starter, a finisher, and one who takes pride in doing his job the best he can even if no one else cares (Ecclesiastes 9:10)!! He needs to set aside regular work and study hours and discipline himself to keep that schedule, get out of bed early, visit people, and do what needs to be done when it needs to be done (Ephesians 5:16; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).
Self-discipline will bring results evident to all (1 Timothy 4:13-15). Since he usually must answer to no one else, he must answer to himself.
- C. Hard Worker (2 Timothy 2:6,15; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). It is no coincidence that Jesus chose stalwart men, used to hard work, to be His apostles. Preaching is hard work (although you wouldn't know it from the size and shape of some preachers). It is mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically demanding work. There is great pressure on him all week long.
He must learn to work hard studying, preaching, teaching in homes, and doing whatever work is necessary to support himself in his preaching endeavors (cf. Acts 18:1-4). Laziness is an assumed trait of preachers. By his life and efforts he must show that to be untrue of himself.
- D. Willing And Able To Endure Hardships (2 Timothy 2:3; 4:5). Some take up preaching thinking it will be "a breeze" or a way to enjoy nothing but good treatment all the time. They are soon surprised and usually fail. Others "endure" the hardships but bellyache about them and let everyone

know all the bad things about preaching. Such complaining has no place among gospel preachers.

Hardships will come from without the church (1 Timothy 1:8) and from within (2 Timothy 4:3-5). If a man is going to preach he must accept and endure them gladly (2 Timothy 3:12) and not turn bitter.

- E. A Spirit Of Hopefulness (2 Timothy 1:12; 4:17-18; Philippians 4:13). A pessimist should not be a preacher. He cannot develop and strengthen faith in anyone else because he has none himself. If he loses hope, he will not try to do much more to change the world or the lives of Christians. Then he is useless to all.

He must be realistic enough to face facts just as they are, yet optimistic enough to hope for the best no matter how discouraging the outlook might be.

CONCLUSION: It takes a special man to be a gospel preacher —not better than everyone else, just special. He should not be set upon a pedestal in any sense, but such is the kind of man God needs for that work! God can use a man like that. Let the world think that preachers are losers who could not make it in the real world (truthfully some may be), but God has chosen the greatest men for the greatest work, "... But whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28).

The Work Of An Evangelist

INTRO: "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). That underscored phrase tells us two things about being an evangelist.

- 1) It is a **work**. And work is just that -- work!! Being an evangelist is not a padded life of ease. It is a labor.
- 2) There is a **specific** work to be done. There are responsibilities peculiar to evangelists that are not expected of others. Also there are specific things he should be giving his attention to in contrast with other works.

When brethren misunderstand the work of an evangelist there is great trouble for the man, but when the evangelist misunderstands his work there is great trouble for the church, the community, and the cause of Christ.

I. THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST

A. What It Is Not.

1. It Is Not The Duty (Nor The Right) Of An Evangelist To Take Over A Church. The "pastor" concept of the denominations has one man building up or moving in and taking control of a church -- leading, guiding and making decisions.
God has delegated that place to elders in the local church (1 Peter 5:2-3; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17). The preacher has **one** voice in matters, just like everyone else. His opinion may be highly respected, but he is not to rule any church!
2. It Is Not His Work To Help The Church "Climb The Social Ladder". He is not the church's representative to the community. Some want to increase the prestige of the church in the community. They join fraternal orders and business clubs in town to have their churches recognized and accepted among them. They court the favor of ministerial associations in ecumenical alliances and working together in community affairs.
No gospel preacher should ally himself with false teachers (Romans 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11; 2 Timothy 3:1-13).
3. It Is Not His Work To Be The Church-Appointed Ambassador To The Sick. People expect him to tour hospitals, shut-ins, and so on, and be company for them.
He has a responsibility to do so like anyone else (Matthew 25:34-40) and either with elders, or in place of them when there are none, he should visit and pray for the sick (James 5:14-16).

B. What His Work Is.

1. Preach The Word (2 Timothy 4:2). Everything else, as important as it may be, is secondary to that one charge! Whether in public or private, he is to continually herald the good news (Acts 20:20).
Notice the restrictive nature of what he is to preach -- "the word". There is no place left for opinion, speculation, philosophy, or the social gospel! Preach the word, because the word saves (James 1:21; Romans 1:16).

2. Studying (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:13,16). Studying is the only way to rightly divide the word of truth, or else he may be like the blind leading the blind.
 Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God, and the word by preachers (Romans 10:14-17). But a preacher cannot teach what he does not know, and cannot know what he has not studied.
 If he becomes an office errand boy, social director, marriage problem arbiter, etc. he will have no time to study. Then he will have to get up and say something with nothing to say.
3. Edify A Church (Ephesians 4:11-12,16). Evangelists are important to the growth, preparation, and equipping of the saints for their work. There are many ways of doing this (sermons, bulletins, special classes, home studies, etc.) (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3-4).
 He is to teach teachers to teach (2 Timothy 2:2). Thus, they will be able to build themselves up if he helps prepare, train, and encourage other teachers.
4. Ground Churches In The Truth (Ephesians 4:11-16). Thus they can stand on the firm foundation of truth so they will not fall (Titus 1:13). The church is to be the pillar and support of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). If it rests on faulty foundations, the banner of truth will not be upheld to the world.
5. Guard The Faith (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:14). As a sentry, he stands and wages battle against false doctrine and apostacy.
 - a. He exposes those violating the pattern of sound words (1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 3:9-11).
 - b. He warns against apostacy when people begin to depart from the truth (1 Timothy 4:1-6; 2 Timothy 3:1-13).

Note that the work of preachers is always on a high, spiritual plane. This is his importance to God's people -- not socially, but spiritually.

C. The Sphere Of His Responsibilities.

1. Toward The Church.

- a. He is to organize local churches (1 Timothy 3:15; Titus 1:5). God has given him no authority to rule, but he is to be a sort of manager --helping guide the church to conduct its affairs properly. Of course he must be faithful to God's plans and instructions and not just implement his own.
 - 1) Appoint church officers (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). He does not **select** men to serve as elders or deacons. He does make known the qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). The congregation selects the men to serve (Acts 6:1-6). Then an evangelist appoints or designates those men to that work and position and then all (the qualified men, the congregation, and the evangelist) recognize them in that peculiar capacity.
 - 2) Give instructions for worship assemblies (1 Timothy 2:1-15). Especially concerning prayer and the conduct of both men and women in the public worship.
 - 3) Give instructions for benevolent work (1 Timothy 5:3-16; 6:17-19)
 - 4) Give instructions for church discipline (1 Timothy 1:18-20; 5:19-22; 6:3-5; Titus 3:10-11)

- 5) Responsibilities toward various groups in the church (1 Timothy 5:1-2,17-21; Titus 2:1-10).
2. Toward The World.
 - a. Titus and Timothy are not specifically told to preach to non-Christians in those letters.
 - b. All Christians are to preach though (Acts 8:4; 1 Peter 3:15; Matthew 28:18-20)
 - c. Some evangelists were supported in order to do it (1 Corinthians 9:14; Philippians 4:15-16; 2 Corinthians 11:8).
 - 1) Obligated (1 Corinthians 9:16-17; Romans 1:14)
 - 2) To be zealous for souls (1 Corinthians 9:19-22)
 - 3) Personally pure and dedicated in this work (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).
 3. Toward The Faith.
 - a. Withstand those who teach different doctrines (1 Timothy 6:3-10; Titus 1:10-14)
 - b. Withstand those who tear down rather than edify (1 Timothy 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:14,16-18,23-26; Titus 3:9)
 - c. Withstand factious men (Titus 3:10-11)
 - d. Refuse to compromise (1 Timothy 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 4:2-4)

III. THE ATTITUDE OF AN EVANGELIST TOWARD HIS WORK

- A. What Should His Attitude Be? Timothy had witnessed the apostle Paul's attitude toward his work (2 Timothy 3:10-11). In the second Corinthian letter he gives us a little insight into his attitude about preaching.

"It is not the events of his outward life which attract our supreme interest. It is rather the revelation which is here made of the apostle's soul. We look into his very heart. We see his motives, his anguish, his joys, his fears, his hopes, his wounded feelings, his ardent love. Evidently the whole letter was written under the stress of strong emotion...

"The secret of his life is laid bare; his one impelling purpose is made plain... 'The love of Christ constrains us...'" (Charles R. Erdman, Second Epistle Of Paul To The Corinthians, pp. 10-11).

1. Honest (2 Corinthians 4:1-6). There is no need for deceit in preaching. If people cannot be turned to the Lord by the truth, you cannot trick or manipulate them to turn.
2. Suffering (2 Corinthians 4:7-18). There must be a willingness to suffer because it **will** come (2 Timothy 3:12). But not a willingness just for the sake of "sticking it out", "sucking it in", or "taking our lumps", but with a view to eternal glory.
3. Hopeful (2 Corinthians 5:1-11). The hope looks to reward for faithfulness and perseverance in our labors. Not all of our reward for preaching comes from the mouths or wallets of brethren.
4. Devoted (2 Corinthians 5:12-17). Here is disclosed the secret of Paul's life and must be of ours -- "the love of Christ constrains me". This is not our love for Christ, but Christ's love for us, which makes of us a new creature.

5. Reconciling (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Having as our most basic aim working at the reconciliation between God and man.
6. To Bring No Blame To The Ministry (2 Corinthians 6:3-10). Neither by life nor actions nor word preached.

CONCLUSION: The work of an evangelist is very specialized in a sense, but must be broad enough to encompass everything of a spiritual nature which must be done by this man -- he must be a spiritual handyman and "jack-of-all-trades".

More churches and preachers need to read 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus to see what the work of an evangelist is. Then he should get to it!!

A Preacher And His Preaching

INTRO: A preacher's worth is seen in his ability to proclaim the gospel simply and forcefully enough to motivate and convict the hearers to act on it. Preaching is God's chosen way of getting His message to men (1 Corinthians 1:18,21). Therefore, the progress of the word is at the mercy of men.

God has given us instructions concerning "how" we are to preach and what components are necessary in our preaching (1 Timothy 4:16). We must make sure that our preaching is worthy of the message.

The Bible records many great sermons and excerpts of sermons (The Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 5-7], Stephen's defense [Acts 7], Paul's address on Mar's Hill [Acts 17], and Peter's gospel sermon [Acts 2]). These sermons were great because they were the truth and they were characterized by many of the following qualities. Likewise our preaching should bear these marks.

I. CHRIST CENTERED

A. Preaching Must Point Men To Christ (1 Corinthians 1:22-23; 2:1-2). He is the center of the universe, man's salvation, and existence. Therefore He must be the center of our preaching. He is our:

1. Lord (Philippians 2:9-11)
2. Master (Matthew 23:8,10)
3. Example (1 Peter 2:21)
4. Saviour (Ephesians 5:23)
5. Sustainer (Colossians 1:16-17)

Our preaching must be about Him -- to believers and unbelievers. Many pulpits address social problems, others emphasize the church, morality, etc. We must be sure that Christ is behind all our preaching. Every lesson won't be about the life of Christ, but every one will have Him as its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Preaching Christ will involve preaching the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9; cf. Acts 8:35). Just as He was the key figure in all the recorded sermons in Acts, we must so point men to Christ.

II. CONSISTENT

A. Preaching Must Be Consistent. A preacher must **always** speak the truth, no matter what the situation. He "speaks the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) yet always speaks the truth.

He will not proclaim one thing to one group and another thing to a different group. He does not determine how and what to preach by what brethren in different places believe (1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17).

He plays no favorites in preaching, warning and exposing sin (1 Timothy 5:19-22). He does not just pick on certain ones.

He may encounter some difficult, delicate situations. Some may be very emotional and touchy, but he still must preach about them, handling them the best he can (2 Timothy 2:24-26). He must not allow his own feelings to interfere with the truth. Sometimes a preacher is considered heartless because of this need, but his heart is usually broken as much as those he must preach to.

III. SIMPLE

A. Preaching Must Be Simple (2 Corinthians 11:3). We don't need a preacher who will send us to the dictionary but to the Bible. The gospel message

of salvation is simple, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was simple, and these are the backbone of Christianity.

The gospel was meant to be understood (Ephesians 3:4; 5:17). Superiority of speech and human wisdom are useless (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Yet, as we develop, we should be able to understand the deeper truths of the gospel (Hebrews 5:12-6:3). We must teach and grasp the more difficult doctrines lest we be deceived (2 Peter 3:14-18).

The Bible was written to be understood. Preaching should be understandable. Preach so that children can understand you. The only ones who could not understand preaching in New Testament days were those who were hearing but not listening (Matthew 13:10-15).

IV. RELEVANT

A. Preaching Must Be Relevant. It must deal with the needs of those who hear and application must be made to today's life if any good is to be accomplished.

The Bible's message is timeless (1 Peter 1:23-25). But in different cultures, settings, and times, its message must be applied to the present day -- not **changed** to fit the present day, but **applied** to the present day.

The basic nature of sin never changes, but it takes different shapes and forms in each generation. These must be addressed.

V. HUMBLE

A. Preaching Must Be Humble. If it is arrogant and condescending few will listen. Never come down from the pulpit daring someone to take a poke at you for what was said. A preacher's message is great, but he is not necessarily great (2 Corinthians 4:6-7). He must not get caught up in his own self-importance.

He must possess humility to recognize, preach against, and bring down pride. The realization that after preaching the truth to others he himself can fall should make him humble (1 Corinthians 9:26-27; 10:12).

He must never forget his own humanity even as he rises to greater spirituality (Galatians 6:1).

VI. UNASHAMED

A. Preaching Must Be Unashamed (Romans 1:16-17). He will stand behind the cross and preach whatever needs to be preached. He might be hated, slandered and persecuted, but he won't be ashamed to preach the gospel (2 Timothy 1:6-8).

He will boldly proclaim and hold back none of God's word. He may apologize for his lack of tact or discretion in his manner of speaking, but will never apologize for preaching what the Bible says, no matter how hard it stings (1 Peter 4:11).

A preacher should not always be rough, but when encouragement and positive preaching don't get the job done he must start bearing down forcefully because of his love for souls. The gospel is the "power of God" -- it is not quiet, passive and permissive, therefore we should not preach it that way!

Even when he knows it means members will leave, he will teach the

truth the best way he knows how as he tries to address the problem and the need. Jesus preached some hard things when He had great numbers following Him (John 6:22-66). Sometimes you have to separate the weak and indifferent from the committed -- the men from the boys -- for the benefit of the church.

VII. CERTAIN

A. Preaching Must Be With Certainty. There is already enough doubt and unbelief in people's hearts. They need a foundation on which to build their lives and that foundation is the truth (Ephesians 2:20; 4:11-14).

We must not preach speculation or conjecture but truth -- solid, bed-rock truth (John 8:32; 14:6). Jesus said those things with certainty. They show the certainty of being able to attain the truth, the absolute-ness of truth and the power of truth. The influence of human philosophy has shipwrecked the faith of many on the sea of indecision.

Some say there is no absolute truth and we are playing God when we claim there is and that we know what it is. The certainty of our message should be heard in both doctrinal and moral preaching. There must be a sharp distinction between truth and error and between holiness and worldliness (Romans 12:9). Men need something to stake their faith on.

VIII. NOT MEN PLEASERS

A. Preaching Must Not Be To Please Men. A preacher is concerned with what brethren think of him, but he will preach the truth regardless (Galatians 1:10). That is the only way **he** can remain faithful.

Some people want to hear sermons about sins they do not commit -- just don't preach at them. But that is what preaching is all about.

The servant of God must be steadfast in preaching the truth -- the **most** needed truth of his audience. Many preachers have been fired or asked to leave because they preached some truth that did not set right with the brethren (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Preachers do not have the greatest job security. Yet, they cannot cater to the whims of the people, but preach God's word even when he knows his job is on the line, because his soul is on the line if he does not (1 Thessalonians 2:4; Ezekiel 3:17-21).

IX. WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

A. Preaching Must Address The Whole Counsel Of God. He can leave nothing back -- nothing that is helpful nor hurtful (Acts 20:20,27). He cannot shrink from preaching **anything** that needs to be said. He does it because he loves God and the souls of his hearers.

He may appear cruel at times because he hits tender spots. But he does not wish to inflict pain to people's wounds, just to let them know they are there and remain unhealed.

He has no choice. The salvation of souls is at stake -- his and others (1 Timothy 4:16). He is guilty of the blood of those he fails to warn and rebuke (Acts 20:26).

X. REPETITION

A. Preaching Must Be Repetitious. Repetition is the best teacher. Don't

always look for something new to preach about -- that is futile (cf. Acts 17:21). Preaching the same things are important to grounding people in those truths (1 Timothy 1:3-4).

Preaching on the same things is a sure way to indoctrinate a church, then activate them to teach the things and do the things they know (2 Peter 1:12-15). Don't neglect a topic just because you have preached on it before... don't preach the same outline, vary it with a new arrangement and study or borrow someone else's ideas.

XI. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

A. Preaching Should Be Positive And Negative (2 Timothy 4:2). Lessons should be a mixture of positive and negative topics... but not in the same lesson.

Error must be attacked and its strongholds torn down with the truth (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Gospel preaching is more than just setting forth truth; it is making the application. It is calling into question those things opposed to the truth and antagonistic to the true nature and will of God. We must disturb people who are in error so they know it (Acts 2:37). It was not the mere preaching of the Law which got the prophets stoned, but the preaching of a message which condemned the conduct of the people (Matthew 23:37; Acts 7:51-52, 54-60).

On the other hand, we must not simply draw a vacuum by tearing down evil, we must fill the vacuum with positive truth (cf. Matthew 12:43-45). We must fill the hearts of our audience with noble things to believe (Philippians 4:8-9), commands to be obeyed, and promises to be received (John 14:1-3).

Strive for balance in preaching.

CONCLUSION: A preacher has a tremendous and sobering responsibility to his preaching (James 3:1). Let us not take this charge lightly or frivolously (Colossians 4:17).

A Preacher And His Life

INTRO: Preachers are constantly being scrutinized under a microscope. Brethren expect much from him, and rightly so because he expects much from them. Many are looking for role models, others are looking for his faults because he is always pointing out their faults.

He must identify sin in himself before identifying it in others. He must preach every lesson to himself before preaching it to others (1 Corinthians 9:27; Romans 2:21-24). He must be sure that his life brings no offense to his message (Titus 2:7-8).

Does a preacher have responsibility to live more righteously than the rest of the brethren? No, but he has no excuse for not doing so either!! Some attitudes toward him are unfair ("why you can't do that, you are a preacher"). All Christians must be careful of their influence, but realistically preachers need to be extra careful and above reproach.

I. PRACTICE WHAT HE PREACHES

A. Practice What He Preaches (Matthew 23:2-3). "Hypocrites in the church" is one of the sharpest thorns in the side of the church today. Often the preacher is the worst one of the bunch! Preachers are without excuse who disobey the very commands of God he preaches to others (Romans 2:17-24).

He must be a living example of his sermon (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:10). He owes that much to his brethren -- telling them is not enough. Showing them is essential to their instruction (Philippians 4:9; Acts 20:18-20). One of the best ways to prepare to preach is to live it first (Ezra 7:10).

His life must be the kind which brings shame to the ungodly (Titus 2:8) rather than giving them fuel to condemn his message. His word can be hindered by righteous living. People are looking for something to diffuse the powerful message which condemns their lives -- don't let it be yours!

A preacher's unrighteous life does not relieve anyone from not heeding his words (when speaking the truth) (Matthew 23:2-3) but it will hinder the word.

II. SUPERIOR EXAMPLE

A. Preachers Must Exhibit Superior Examples. Brethren look to them for guidance, expecting much, and deserving much. A preacher will not be perfect, but his life should serve as a model for others. Young preachers must work even harder at it (1 Timothy 4:12).

His must be an example of godly living and faithful service (1 Timothy 6:11-14; 2 Timothy 2:22). Although all should be conscious of their example, he must be.

1. Language (James 3:2-6; Titus 2:8). He must avoid profane speech and use only edifying words. Many people don't care whether their language sounds like the world or not.
 - a. He should never curse others (James 3:8-12). A preacher's efforts are to save people. Why would he want to damn someone's soul, condemning them to hell?
 - b. He should never use crude and vulgar speech, euphemisms or words that sound a little softer than their profane counterparts

(Ephesians 4:29). Such language is shameful.

2. Not Engaged In Questionable Practices (Romans 12:2,9). Some practices are questionable and debatable as to their morality. We have spent enough of our lifetimes in such practices to go back to them.
 - a. Gambling (cards, dice, carnival games, football pools)
 - b. Dishonest business ventures
 - c. Deception (only telling part of the truth, hiding other things)
 - d. Mixed swimming
 - e. Immodest dress (even in summertime)
 - f. Movies (he must be careful of what he watches)
3. Deny Himself Certain Liberties (1 Corinthians 10:32-33). He may have to forego certain things which are right in and of themselves because of the weak conscience of a brother or what others might think.

We must be sensitive to the conscience of others and not make them stumble (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:1,4-13). In matters of liberty it is important to be flexible and be willing to give up his personal liberty for the sake of his example (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

III. DISCIPLINE SELF

- A. Discipline His Lusts (2 Timothy 2:22). A preacher, like any other Christian, will never cease to be tempted, because he is enticed by his own desires (lusts) (James 1:14-15). His Christianity too is a struggle to restrain his own desires and lusts. After preaching to others he can fall himself (1 Corinthians 9:26-27).

He needs to keep out of compromising situations which may arouse inordinate lusts. He must control his lust for:

1. Women (Matthew 5:28). Beware of preacher "groupies"
2. Money (1 Timothy 6:9-10)
3. Power (2 Corinthians 4:2; 12:11, 14-15)
4. Popularity (1 Thessalonians 2:6)

- B. Discipline His Anger (James 1:19-20). The strongest man is the man who can subdue himself (Proverbs 25:28). When everyone else is flying off the handle, he must maintain control of his anger. That is not to say he must never get angry -- but he must never allow that anger to lead him to sin (Ephesians 4:26-27).

Whether anger is righteous indignation or not, he must never allow that anger to cause him to speak or act unadvisedly (James 1:19-20).

- C. Discipline His Time (Ephesians 5:17). Soon after undertaking the responsibility of preaching, a man learns there is more to be done than there is time available.

Set up a schedule and adhere to it as much as possible. Some things will need to be reshuffled in view of more pressing needs, but be organized. Budget time for study, personal work, hospital visits, family and self.

He needs to insure that he gets things done **when** they need to be done. He needs to be dependable -- if he is always late, forgetting appointments, and canceling events and studies, he conveys a message to people that such things are not important to him.

His use of time is important to accomplish all the Lord's work.

IV. DENY SELF AND SERVE

A. Deny Himself (Matthew 16:24-25). His life is no longer his own. He is a bond-servant of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:10). He no longer lives for himself -- his life is now ended and begun as a new life with Jesus Christ as the very center of it (Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Those are the commitments he made when he became a Christian. But now he gives up his life to his brethren and fellowman too (Philippians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 12:15).

He must give up all that stands in his way of faithful service to God (Philippians 3:13-17). Like a disciplined athlete he must deny himself to reach a greater goal.

B. Serve Others (Matthew 20:27-28). He is a servant, not a master. The word "minister" is not an exalted title but a description of his obligation and responsibility. He is not to be catered to, but give himself over to the work of serving others -- in the middle of the night or whenever needed.

Not many people will subject themselves to others, especially those which may be spiritually inferior.

V. RELATION TO BRETHREN

A. His Family. They are brethren and he should love them like his own family (cf. Mark 10:29-30). He must dearly love them and all he does should be done with consideration for their spiritual well-being (1 Thessalonians 2:7-12). He must be careful to treat them all fairly, equitably, and respectfully (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

1. Older men -- deserve respect their age demands.

2. Younger men -- rather than rivals, we are brethren.

3. Older women -- love and tenderness as we would treat our own mothers.

4. Younger women -- as sisters. If we think of them as sisters, we won't think illicit thoughts of them. We should be completely pure in our relationships with them. We could be tempted and fall, or destroy our influence.

CONCLUSION: Preachers are not immune from sin. Preachers are looked to for examples and as role models for Christianity. We must be sure that what they see in us does not cause them to stumble (Romans 14:13).

We must take great pains and look closely to ourselves that we bring no reproach (1 Timothy 4:15-16). Flee from sin (1 Timothy 6:11) and pursue righteousness (2 Timothy 2:22).

A Preacher And His Family

INTRO: One of the greatest dangers for a preacher is with priorities -- trying to save the world and losing his own family. Such is one of the greatest failures any preacher can ever suffer. As a preacher and Christian he is to completely deny himself (Luke 9:23-25), yet he must beware of the danger of including his family in that denial!!

God never commands **any** man to deny his family. Actually, He condemns the man who does (1 Timothy 5:8). The church is to be led by men who have led and saved their families (1 Timothy 3:4-5), not those who have driven them away!

A preacher's family situation is governed by the same principles as any other man's. But certain circumstances make his position unique and different from other families. He must adapt God's principles to his own family environment.

I. POSITION IN THE HOME

A. Head Of Household (Ephesians 5:22-24; 6:4; Colossians 3:18-21). He has the responsibility to guide and lead his family, and to keep them under control. His influence is limited if he does not. Some preacher's wives and/or children are constant issues in the church where they work, often unjustly. But sometimes they conduct themselves in such a way as to become a point of controversy.

The unique position of a preacher in the local church puts undue pressure on his family. He must be strong enough to help them bear it (Galatians 6:2).

B. Must Not Sacrifice His Family. He preaches to others that they must not sacrifice their families for their careers. Neither must he!! He attempts to convince other men that their jobs must be secondary to their families, merely using them to provide for their family. He too, must remember that his work must be secondary to the needs of his family (1 Corinthians 7:32-38; 9:5). He took on that added burden when he married.

Preachers have a right (and obligation) to care for their families (1 Timothy 5:8). He must not forget that in the midst of his sobering responsibility to get the gospel to the lost of all the world.

C. Absenteeism. Sometimes he must be gone for the gospel's sake. But he must spend time with his family (both "quality" time and "quantity" time). Neither brethren nor unbelievers must have greater consideration than one's own family.

Involve them in your work. Find out what your wife wants to do to enhance your work and then cooperate with her, working together. Don't always run the children off because you are busy. Allow them to be with you while you work, visit, go to Gospel Meetings, etc. Do not isolate your family from your work -- involve them (after all, preaching is your life!!).

II. RELATIONSHIP WITH WIFE

A. His Responsibility To Her (Ephesians 5:22-33). The preacher who does not so love his wife with all his heart, soul and being can know **nothing** of Christ's love for the church!! His love for her is to be as

sacrificial as Christ's love for the church.

1. Sacrifice Himself To Her (Ephesians 5:25). Jesus gave up His life for the church in life and death. Every act of His life was for her well-being. So should the preacher give himself for his wife.
2. Nourish Her (Ephesians 5:28-29). He feeds, supports, maintains her and causes her to grow in maturity, wisdom, and spirituality.
3. Cherish Her (Ephesians 5:28-29). He treats her with tenderness and affection. He takes care of her, supporting, encouraging, comforting, and holding her dear. The man who deals harshly or judgmentally with his wife, who fusses and fights with her, is a disgrace to God, preaching, and manhood.
4. Loves Her (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). How else can he know of Christ's love for the church?
5. Lives With Her With Understanding (1 Peter 3:7). The complaint of many men is "who can understand women?" The Bible commands husbands to.
 - a. Understand Her Needs. She has emotional needs, physical needs, and spiritual needs. Hers are different from his, therefore he is responsible to learn what she individually needs. He cannot necessarily know that by looking at other women, but by observing her personally.
 - b. Understand Her Feelings About The Position Of "Preacher's Wife". Brethren unfairly expect certain things of a preacher's wife which are neither necessary nor scriptural. There are the extra pressures of "being in a fishbowl", instability, always moving or the threat of moving, double standards, and the difficulties of other people opening up and befriending her.

Don't justify the brethren... justify your wife!

- B. What Relation Does A Preacher's Wife Have To His Work? Do not have greater expectations and requirements of her than you should!! The brethren do enough of that. They often expect her to be a social director, hostess, visit all the sick and elderly, bake and cook for people, do secretarial work, babysit their kids, etc.

Many churches think they are hiring **two** ministers for the price of one. When you move to work with a church and they employ you, they are employing **only** you.

Nevertheless, she must be willing to accept the fact that her role is looked on in society as a leadership role and she must do her best to meet that challenge.

Do not expect her to be superwoman -- she cannot be, nor can she cope with your expectations!! Her feelings can be (and are often) wounded, she needs privacy, gets sick, has the blahs, gets frustrated, talks out of place, uses bad judgment, and even sins. She has the same right to her hobbies and job outside the home as any other Christian woman. Do not set up a double standard for her and do not accept the brethren's.

- C. Pitfalls In The Home. A man's success or failure as a gospel preacher is greatly influenced by his home life. Problems between husband and wife and failure in commitment to one another are detrimental to his work. Therefore, he must beware of some basic pitfalls which damage his work.

1. The Let Down Of Courtesy. Courtesy for the sake of appearances is worthless, but when prompted by genuine appreciation and sincerity it will enhance a preacher's marriage. Be at least as kind to your wife as you are to brethren and prospective converts.
2. The Let Down Of Compliments. It is evident of little appreciation for the other. Many wives feel that home is the place where they slave the hardest and are appreciated the least!! Giving compliments is just being thoughtful.
3. The Let Down Of Personal Pride. If wife or husband "let themselves go" with no consideration of what makes him/her attractive to the other, then likely he/she will not be attractive to the other.
Try to be what **she** likes in a man!
4. The Let Down In Behavior Toward Other Women. When preachers marry, they are to keep themselves only to their wives. A man who is too friendly, flirtatious, and close to the sisters will hurt his wife, make her jealous, and cast doubts on his faithfulness and love.
 - a. Keep your hands to yourself. Be careful of brotherly hugs and "holy kisses".
 - b. Avoid situations where you or a sister could be tempted.
 - c. Avoid situations where others could accuse you of evil (Romans 12:17).
 - d. Assist women with their problems (cf. Galatians 3:28), but be careful when and where.

III. RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN

- A. His Responsibility To Them. Do his obligations as a preacher relieve him from his responsibilities as a father? Or do they give him unique opportunities which other fathers do not have?
 1. Bring Them Up In The Lord (Ephesians 6:4). He is responsible for their spiritual upbringing. A preacher who is too busy instructing the brethren to instruct his own children has some misplaced values. When they are together he should teach them of spiritual things (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; cf. Proverbs 1:8-9; 2:1-2; 6:20-23).
 2. Do Not Exasperate Them (Colossians 3:21). Children know when other people are more important to you than they are. **You** may be the one who turns them away from God! You are a father **before** you are a preacher!!
 3. Providing For All Their Needs (1 Timothy 5:8). He brought them into the world and he has no excuse if they are lost because of his negligence! Neglecting his own children is shameful. He should take advantage of every possible time to be with them.
- B. Problem Of Rearing His Children Normally. Many brethren will not allow his children to be normal. They expect them to be "preacher's kids" (P.K.'s). Such attitudes make it difficult on children growing up and on fathers who must work hard not to require the same unfair things the brethren do.
Be aware of some of the problem areas for "preacher's kids".
 1. Extra Pressures. Every action and behavior is being closely monitored by people. They are expected to be angels.
 2. Double Standards. Conduct which is allowable, condoned, or defended in other children is not proper for "preacher's kids".

3. Instability. With the constant likelihood of moving, it is difficult for children to get adjusted to new environments, leaving a place they have become attached to, making new friends, etc. If their father is gone often that leads to their sorrow, loneliness, and insecurity.
4. Tested By Friends. Friends see how far they will go to bend the rules, friends at church keep their distance. Their friends are afraid they have to act differently around the preacher. Friendships are hard in forming and demanding on the preacher's children.

IV. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER FAMILY

- A. His Responsibility To Them. If he is fortunate, his family will all be Christians. But likely that is not the case. At times his preaching and convictions may stand between him and his family. What must he do, in either case?
 1. Choose Christ First (Matthew 10:34-37). When conflicts come, they must come, but he cannot betray the Lord for the sake of his family (cf. 10:21-22).

Family may ask him to compromise his convictions or be easier with his preaching and put great pressure on him -- but he must be faithful (Galatians 1:10; Acts 5:29).
 2. Find Comfort In Spiritual Family (Mark 10:29-31). God has given us another family to draw to if our physical family rejects us because of our faith.

CONCLUSION: The success of a preacher's work depends greatly on the stability of his home life. The stability of his home life depends greatly on his effort and his realization of his own responsibilities outlined in God's word.

"For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own family?"

A Preacher And The Church

INTRO: Preachers generally work with a few different congregations over a lifetime of preaching. Although each church is different there are certain things preachers must remember in their relationship with every church.

Initially they begin as strangers, but he must come to think of them as brethren rather than employers. He must learn to work with them as much as anyone else must. If he expects to be respected and held in high esteem, then he must respect and hold in honor the church he labors with.

Preachers, elders, and churches all have faults, shortcomings, weaknesses, and sins. A good working relation must first recognize that. No sin is acceptable, but the realization that all men sin (Romans 3:10,23) will help form better attitudes toward one another and a smoother working relationship.

I. LOCATED PREACHERS

A. What Is A "Located Preacher"? He is a preacher who labors with a single congregation of God's people rather than a "circuit-rider".

The value of such a man is his ability and opportunity to ground brethren in the truth rather than just come in and revive them occasionally (cf. Acts 20:20,27). He is one of God's provisions to stabilize a church and help them grow together (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Some people contest the scripturalness of such a position. But in New Testament times, men **did** serve as "located preachers".

1. Paul (Acts 19:8-10; 20:17-21,31). The apostle labored in Ephesus for three years (even in the middle of a missionary journey).
2. Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3). He remained in Ephesus to instruct the brethren (4:6,11-16). He was probably still there when Paul wrote the second time (2 Timothy 4:11-12,14-15 [cf. 1 Timothy 1:18-20]; 4:19 [cf. 1:16-18; Acts 18:18-19]).
3. Luke. He must have been in Philippi at least five years. Note the "we" and "they" passages of Acts.
 - a. "They" (Acts 16:6-9)
 - b. "We" (Acts 16:10-40). Luke traveled with Paul to Philippi.
 - c. "They" (Acts 17:1ff). Luke did not leave Philippi with Paul and the others.
 - d. "We" (Acts 20:4-6). Note what events and time had transpired.
4. Archippus (Colossians 4:16-17; Philemon 2).

II. HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12,17-20)

A. Ministry Among Brethren. The apostle's motives and work among the Thessalonians had been questioned and criticized. His defense to them serves as a guide for us and our work among any church. These things should characterize our coming to and working among brethren.

1. Courage And Boldness (2:2). Not allowing persecution or opposition to stop him. Conflict comes -- Paul faced it in Philippi (Acts 16:16-40) before coming to Thessalonica -- the preacher therefore must not quit.
2. Not Impurely Motivated (2:3). Some preachers have ulterior motives for preaching. He is not to preach with guile (talking out of both sides of his mouth, "speaking with forked tongue")
3. Speak The Gospel (2:4). The Pure gospel. Brethren don't need to hear stories, musings, or current events. God has approved of

gospel preaching, but none of these others (cf. Acts 20:20,27).

4. Not A Man Pleaser (2:4). He must not be offensive to people nor show disregard for them, but he must not preach to tickle ears or just make people feel good about themselves (Galatians 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3-4). That benefits no Christian.
5. Not A Flatterer (2:5). That does not mean that he never says anything good about them, but he must never flatter or "kiss up" to further his own selfish ends.
6. Not Covetous (2:5). God has determined that one who preaches the gospel should live of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14). He must be concerned with his material needs for himself and his family, but not use preaching just to gain those (Acts 20:33-35; 1 Thessalonians 2:9).
Making a good salary is not a sign of covetousness. Paul had been so far from seeking glory of men or coveting that he had refrained from demanding support as he could have.
7. Not A Glory-Seeker (2:6). Every preacher needs to hear encouraging and favorable comments about his work, but he must not work merely to receive the praise.
8. Gentle (2:7). Some preachers are hard and harsh to the church. He should treat them as his own family, tenderly and gently. His love must be firm and disciplinary when necessary and not some easy, sentimental thing.
9. Giving Himself To The Church (2:8; cf. 2 Corinthians 12:15). Each church is not just his place of employment, but the place where he gives so many years of his life. His work is to be a self-sacrificing labor of love.
10. Blameless Behavior (2:10). He must be a living sermon to them so that none will have anything evil to say of him (Titus 2:7-8).
11. Charge Them As A Father (2:11-12). He must have the tender, loving care of a mother and guidance, wisdom, and influence of a father. Fathers have the greatest influence on their children to give direction (cf. Ephesians 6:4).
12. Crown Of Glorifying (2:17-20). Christian friendships are priceless. They will be the objects of our highest hopes and source of our deepest joy. A preacher who can never feel that way about his brethren should not be there.

Even such high caliber and character does not always escape the slander and false charges which come from those full of suspicion, malice and envy. On the other hand, such a life lends itself to be above reproach and proof to his brethren of a preacher's love and dedication to them.

III. HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ELDERS

- A. A Preacher And The Elders. Both preachers and elders were appointed by God for the benefit of the church (Ephesians 4:11-16). A church with both elders and a preacher who are compatible in their work is truly blessed. Preachers and elders are in somewhat similar positions of responsibility, yet different in authority. The abuse of their positions can cause conflict between them (1 Timothy 5:19-22; 1 Peter 5:2-3). Preachers and elders must not be in competition.

1. Some preachers exhibit a superior attitude toward elders and often display open contempt for them and their efforts to shepherd the flock. He likely has a greater knowledge of the Bible, a wider circle of influence, and a broader range of experience and awareness of what brethren are doing all over the country.

He must not hold them in contempt but count them worthy of great honor when they rule well (1 Timothy 5:17).

2. Some elders have a low view of preachers. They may have feelings of inferiority or a fear of preachers as a threat to their authority. Some preachers do try to usurp the authority of elders (Hebrews 13:17).

B. The Relationship Between Preachers And Elders. Preachers don't always have the privilege of working with elders. But when that opportunity arises we must have a good working relationship together.

Below are a few suggestions for mutual respect and cooperation (see "Preaching To Preachers About Preaching", John Waddey, pp. 98-101).

1. There Must Be Mutual Respect. They must respect each other as men and in the peculiar positions God has placed them. Each man will have his own personality and background. Each will have his own opinions and ideas, weaknesses and strengths.

Each one's motives and judgments should always be interpreted in the best possible light. Both positions are vital to the progress of the kingdom (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Ephesians 4:11).

2. There Must Be Mutual Support. Each will have his own trials, burdens and sorrows. Each must be sympathetic and supportive of the other (Galatians 6:2).

A lack of genuine confidence and comradery between some preachers and their elders leaves them afraid to confide in and trust one another. There needs to be a strong bond of brotherly love (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

3. They Should Come To The Defense Of Each Other. Unjust attacks will come to both preachers and elders because of their positions of leadership. They should be loyal to one another -- not while one is sinning -- but should not allow people to speak evil of the other without complete substantiation of charges (1 Timothy 5:19-22).

4. They Should Share In The Planning And Development Of The Work. A preacher likely has more Bible knowledge and a broader range of experience and first-hand knowledge of what brethren are successfully doing elsewhere. Whereas the elders know their own particular flock and its needs very well.

Cooperation can greatly enhance programs of work and teaching.

5. There Must Be Mutual Sympathy. Elders need to recognize the financial needs of their preacher. He cannot expect to "jump" everytime they tell him to, because he has other responsibilities. He needs to spend time with family, vacationing, working around his house, etc.

Preachers must be sympathetic with elders. They likely must work 40-45 hours a week at a secular job. They will be tired and want to spend time with their families sometimes too. Neither should feel the other is not sufficiently dedicated to their work (Philippians 2:4).

6. There Must Be Mutual Prayer. They need to pray with one another and for one another (1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:1-2). Satan has a difficult time driving a wedge of contention between elders and preachers who regularly pray together.
7. There Must Be Periods Of Mutual Study And Growth. Preachers with a broad base of Bible knowledge are often impatient with elders with lesser knowledge. Thus, he should help them grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18; 2 Timothy 2:2).
8. There Must Be Mutual Sharing Of Joys And Triumphs. Too often a preacher gets the credit for the strength or success of a church. Usually, the elders had as much, if not more, to do with that as the preacher. Sometimes the situation is reversed (Romans 13:7).

CONCLUSION: A preacher bears certain personal responsibilities to every individual Christian in the church. A preacher has the influence to make or break a congregation. He must be very careful with his position and use it to its greatest advantage and God's glory. His attitude toward all his fellow workers is important to the well-being of the church.

A Preacher And Church Problems

INTRO: It becomes a vicious circle -- churches hire and fire and preachers move to improve -- each looking for the perfect preacher or perfect church. Neither one finds what is being sought!

Preachers look for churches free from problems in vain. Churches look for preachers free from shortcomings in vain. That must not discourage us from striving for perfection, but it helps us live with reality along the way!

Problems arise between preachers and churches over a multitude of things. When possible they must be worked out. There are two sides to these preacher-church problems.

I. CHURCH PROBLEMS WITH PREACHERS

A. Churches Have Problems With Preachers. Listening to preachers, it sounds a little one-sided, but many churches have legitimate complaints against preachers. The following problems are suggested by James P. Needham in "Preachers and Preaching", pp. 86-94.

1. Personality. Since preachers are not cut out of molds, each has his own particular personality traits. Some traits are inherent and others are acquired. The gospel has the tremendous power to change both and make us "new creatures" (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20).

Some personality traits cause problems with churches:

- a. Immaturity. Some preachers have never "grown up". This is manifested by:
 - 1) A Martyr Complex. They are terribly offended by any kind of criticism. They feel betrayed and persecuted, thus feeling sorry for themselves. They bemoan how mistreated they are and somehow rationalize that their maturity is the only thing which keeps them going. Actually, their lack of it is devastating to the church and their work.
 - 2) Demand For Special Treatment. Some constantly need to be pampered and complimented or they get discouraged and slack off their work. Preachers have to be steadfast in good times and bad (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- b. Egotism. Some preachers think too highly of themselves (Romans 12:3). They cannot condescend to the humble and lowly (Romans 12:16). They cannot be patient with the plight and struggle of the weak.

As they gain more knowledge of the Scriptures, they despise those who have not yet attained their level. They are "God's gift to the church" (They think. See Job 12:2). Preachers can be the most arrogant of all Christians.

- c. Antagonism. Some preachers are rude, sarcastic, and antagonistic. Sometimes this is revealed in the pulpit, other times it shows in their personal relationships with brethren. Preachers must get along with brethren and promote harmony and unity (Romans 12:18).
2. Family. Sometimes a preacher's family is a constant source of contention. Brethren hire the preacher but must live with his family. His family has the distinction of bearing the greatest mark of influence on his work of any human beings.

People take note of his wife and children, and any faults of theirs are charged against him. If his wife talks too much or is domineering his influence will be handicapped. Some wives are lukewarm and uncaring about his work of preaching. They are not preacher's wives by choice, but by necessity, and most everyone knows it. She discourages her husband, blames the church for all their troubles, and is sour with the members.

Children who are mean and unruly are an indictment against their father (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Ephesians 6:4). People often say "the preacher's kids are meaner than any others". Sometimes that is true. He must keep his family under control.

3. Laziness. It is inexcusable in a gospel preacher. God condemns laziness and commands industry (Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). Preaching is not a bad occupation for a lazy man. With any ability he can "get by" with some congregations. Preaching a couple of sermons a week and socializing a lot might appeal to him. He resents people questioning the use of his time and says the Lord is his boss, not the brethren.

Laziness is manifested in several ways. His personal appearance might be affected. A lack of activity is evidence of laziness. Any preacher who gets up later than the rest of the brethren, comes home earlier, and has more afternoons and days off than everyone else is lazy. His preaching suffers too -- if he doesn't continue to mine the Scriptures, the vein he teaches from will soon run out!

4. Leeches. Some preachers are like leeches. They refuse to move when they should, and then others continue to interfere in the work of a church after they are gone. Some preachers are a source of much of the problem in a church -- they are actually detrimental to the church. But when he needs to leave for the good of the church, he does not! He refuses to go, and if he is forced to leave he takes it as a personal insult and tries to prejudice others against the congregation.

Still other preachers never really move from a church. They continue to interfere in the work and continue to influence their followers who remain there. They build up a "cult of personality" -- a personal following in every church who constantly seek their counsel and follow their instruction. No single man should have that much influence and control over a network of churches!

II. PREACHER PROBLEMS WITH CHURCHES

A. Preachers Have Problems With Churches. All preachers face problems, as do all churches. But some church problems he faces are detrimental to him and his work. The following problems are taken from John Waddey's "Preaching To Preachers About Preaching", and James P. Needham's "Preachers and Preaching".

1. The "Rights" Of Preachers. Preachers have "rights" just like everyone else. Sometimes he sacrifices those "rights" for the sake of the cause, but it is a problem when brethren deny him such "rights".
 - a. The Right To Be A Unique Individual. Preachers do not come out of molds, nor should they be expected to be like the preacher before them.

- b. The Right To Devote Himself To God's Work For Him. He is to read, study, meditate, and teach God's word (1 Timothy 4:13). He should not be overwhelmed and burdened with a multitude of trivial responsibilities (secretarial work, social visitation, janitorial work, etc.). These will interfere with his God-given work.
- c. The Right To Have A Wife And Family. Many denominations deny their preachers this right in spite of God's words (1 Corinthians 9:5; Hebrews 13:4). No one in the church denies him that right, but many fail to respect his family and their privacy. They may be overly critical and if the church owns the preacher's house they may act as if it is public domain, welcoming themselves at any time or criticizing his use of it.
- d. The Right To Job Security. The practice of changing preachers every two or three years is unfair to a preacher and his family. It also wrecks havoc on the work of the church.
The threat of losing his job is not as strong a motivation for him to do the work as the assurance of him keeping his job is.
- e. The Right To Some Leisure Time And Recreation. He needs rest and relaxation to remain healthy and fresh. Many preachers are working themselves into an early grave. Some do so because they feel the brethren expect it and others do so to keep up with the work load. Working under such pressure often damages a person's mental and physical health.

Some people delight in being the preacher's critic and tormentor. Such people ought to be ashamed.

- 2. Financial Support. This may be one of the tenderest spots in the church-preacher relationship. Some brethren think a man should preach for the least amount of money he can get by with. They are cheap and tight with the Lord's money and unwilling to spend it on someone who is doing the Lord's work. The Bible addresses that very problem.

- a. Those Who Preach The Gospel Should Live From The Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:3-14). Gospel preachers have certain God-given rights.
 - 1) The right to have necessities (9:4).
 - 2) The right to have and support a family (9:5).
 - 3) The right to leave the workforce and devote his time to study, prayer, and preaching (9:6).

He goes further to show proof that preachers have the right to be supported in their work.

- 1) Uses examples of soldier, husbandman, and shepherd (9:7).
- 2) Cites Old Testament teaching (9:8-10; cf. Deuteronomy 25:4).
- 3) He should reap where he has sown (9:11).
- 4) Uses example of priests in temple service (9:13-14).
- b. Brethren Have An Obligation To Support Their Preacher (Galatians 6:6-10). He is not a "charity case". That is one reason that brethren think he ought to receive as little as he can get by with.

He is a laborer and is due his wage (1 Timothy 5:18). He

deserves some of the same benefits his other working brethren deserve. Undoubtedly, his retirement plan is "out of this world", but he may have to retire **in this world**. Surely he deserves to have provisions made for those years!!

3. Rejecting Instruction. God's spokesmen have always been subjected to all kinds of abuse and persecution (Matthew 11:12). But God takes it as a personal affront when men reject His prophets (1 Chronicles 16:22).
 - a. When Brethren Hurt God's Teachers They Hurt God's Cause. God chose the foolishness of preaching to save men (1 Corinthians 1:21). When a preacher is attacked and driven out of his work, the Lord's cause suffers. There are not enough gospel preachers to tell the world of Jesus. The loss of **any** such man will have repercussions on hundreds or thousands of souls.
 - b. When Brethren Reject Instruction And Correction They Are Rejecting God (John 12:48; 13:20).
 - c. God Punishes People Who Persecute His Prophets (Matthew 23:33-35). How can anyone escape condemnation who mistreats God's messengers?
 - d. The Great Paradox. Why do brethren hate and despise the preacher they have employed to teach them God's word when he does that very thing? Why do people want a preacher and then turn on him as an enemy?

Some dislike him because he preached against their sins or singled them out. Pride won't allow them to repent or stand by idly when they have been exposed (John 3:19-21). Some hate him simply because he is a preacher -- much like the same childish attitude which makes a school child hate his teacher who is trying to do him good. Such is merely a carnal mind (Romans 8:6-8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

CONCLUSIONS: Problems always eventually come between churches and preachers. It is Satan's way to hinder us and the cause of Christ. Yet, we must resolve to not be a part of that problem (Matthew 18:6-7).

A Preacher Faces Problems

INTRO: Preachers face problems in their work -- sometimes making it very difficult... but if there were no problems, we would not be needed! Such difficulties are part of our testing ground and part of our work. Many of these same problems have been instrumental in driving preachers from the ministry.

The apostle Paul faced great problems in his work (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). When writing to his beloved son Timothy about the work of preaching, Paul portrayed it realistically, not just ideally (2 Timothy 1:8-12; 2:1-7,10-13; 3:1-13; 4:5).

A preacher must be prepared for certain inevitable problems.

I. BRETHREN PROBLEMS

A. Attitudes Of Brethren. It would be nice to think that brethren always love and appreciate a man who has dedicated his life to Christ and His gospel. Unfortunately there is still carnality in many (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

1. Unrealistic Expectations. Most preachers are expected to have the best characteristics of **all** the apostles and be completely free from **any** of their flaws.

He is often expected to be superior in every aspect of the faith. Then, to complicate matters, he must meet everyone's **different** ideas of an ideal preacher. Pursue your own individual talents and abilities (Matthew 25:14-30). That is what you are responsible for.

2. Keeping Distance From The Preacher. Often brethren keep their distance and never get very close to a preacher and his family. His position intimidates them and they always feel like they have to be on guard lest they do something he will frown on and chide them about. They appreciate and respect him, they just feel uncomfortable around him.

That presents problems for the preacher because he gets lonely and needs companionship too. Some Christians just carelessly forget that he and his family are in strange new surroundings and don't have the circle of family and friends the members have. They forget to include the preacher and his family (members of their spiritual family) in their get togethers.

Some of that gap can be bridged by showing them you are human and not some strange creature who is to be revered and feared.

3. Criticism. Preachers receive some of the pettiest criticisms -- yet every one of them hurts.

Generally the greatest criticism comes from those who know the least. That being true, a strong self-image will help him shed such boos and catcalls. Theodore Roosevelt's uninspired, yet inspiring words will pick up our spirits.

"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there

is no effort without error and shortcoming; who does actually try to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.

Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat"

(Quotation from "Hand Me Another Brick", Charles Swindoll, p.79).

- B. Dealing With Brethren. Brethren cannot all be "handled" alike. Different people require different treatment (1 Thessalonians 5:14).
1. Warn The Unruly. Some brethren have deviated from the prescribed path, They are walking out of step with God's commands and Jesus' example. Such individuals must be warned -- warned of their sin, warned of the consequences, and warned of the effect it has on others (Matthew 18:15). A Christian then who refuses to repent of his sins must be marked (2 Thessalonians 3:6-7,11).
 2. Encourage The Fainthearted. Some Christians are easily discouraged because they are "of a little soul" (Young). Calm, console and comfort them. Not every Christian is strong enough to make it on his own. We must continue to offer them hope and give them an incentive to be faithful (Isaiah 35:3-4).
A brother with a broken spirit cannot make it on his own (Proverbs 18:14). We cannot give up on him, because such is the very person God desires to be His servant (Psalm 51:17).
 3. Uphold The Weak. He does not need to be rebuked for his weakness, he needs help in overcoming it (Ephesians 6:1-2). Many want to be faithful but have a hard time bearing up under their cross (Matthew 26:41).
We must defend those who are weak and then help them hold up their hands until they gain the strength to do it themselves.
 4. Be Patient With All Men. The best motivation for patience and perseverance in dealing with others is the realization that God and brethren are patient with you!!
God wishes to salvage every soul He can (2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 12:18-21).

II. TEACHERS OF ERROR

- A. Denominational Preachers. Unfortunately denominational preachers are not just competition for us in the recruitment of souls -- they are the enemy!! A gospel preacher must remain aloof from them, exposing their false doctrine (2 John 9-11; Romans 16:17-18).
He may be approached to join a ministerial alliance to address social and community problems. Even though some of the work they do may be good, he cannot ally himself with apostates and unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). As kind and spiritual as these men may appear to be, we need to see them as God sees them because the doctrines they teach bar men from heaven (2 Peter 2:1-22; 2 Timothy 3:1f)

Can a gospel preacher have a part in a preaching service when he must compromise his convictions on truth? Can he be there, participate and say nothing about the truth? Could a preacher serve as a chaplain in the army or navy?

B. Brethren Who Preach Error. When brethren preach error, a preacher is put in the most awkward position of all. He must oppose his own brethren and publicly expose the error. Sometimes he must wage war, because of the soul-destroying doctrines of false teachers.

1. Any whose teaching make shipwreck of men's faith (1 Timothy 1:18-20). This might raise doubts and speculations which make people agnostics rather than believers.
2. Any who teach different doctrines and spring on the world "new truth" must be opposed when such contradicts sound and wholesome teaching in the Bible (1 Timothy 6:3-10).

Some disputes are brought on because a brother is proud and thinks everyone needs to hear what he has to say (Beware of tracts and papers distributed by mail to preachers concerning a disputed position by a man who thinks he is one of the few with the truth).

3. Any who gender strife and faction (Titus 3:8-11). Some warped people would stampede the church and divide it asunder violently, arguing and dissenting over issues which do not matter!!
Such must be opposed, stopped in their tracks and silenced!!
4. Any who would presume a place of personal prominence in the church (3 John 9-11). Not just someone who is a threat to **your** place, because you have no special place either!!
Such men must be cast down from the lofty place they have assumed.

III. PROBLEM OF DISCIPLINE

A. When Discipline Needs Administering. There is a positive and negative side to discipline. One side deals with the instruction of how members ought to behave and the other with instructions on how to proceed if they do not behave.

When is church discipline necessary? The New Testament mentions four classes over whom discipline ought to be exercised.

1. Broken Fellowship And An Unforgiving Spirit (Matthew 18:15-17). We are members one of another, but when a brother sins against us fellowship is broken. Attempts must be made to restore it.
Brethren must be humble enough to admit their sin and forgiving enough to pardon those who transgress against us.
2. Unbelief And False Doctrine (Romans 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11). Those who teach false doctrine and stir up strife and controversy must be quieted and avoided. It is unpleasant, but a preacher must insist that a congregation take scriptural actions against false teachers (1 Timothy 1:19; 6:3-5).
3. Those Who Walk Disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). These are troublemakers, gossips and busybodies, those who refuse to conform their lives to God's commands. Those who divide brethren and cause factions must be dealt with (Titus 3:10).

Such cases might exist where certain women would rule the church or where problems were left by a former preacher. Radicals

might want to control the church or worldliness might be epidemic among the brethren. In any of these cases the leaven must be purged from the lump (1 Corinthians 5:7).

4. Open Worldliness And Immorality (1 Corinthians 5). Adulterous marriages, fornication, drunkenness, immodest dress and many other things are so evil that much of the world even knows they are wrong -- No Christian should be involved in such, and if he is, he should be disciplined (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).

The preacher needs to go and talk with the individual privately, attempting to restore him (Galatians 6:1). No one else needs to know. If it can be resolved, drop it. If not, others should go too. If the brother refuses to do anything take it to the church. If he will not hear them, all should count him as a sinner in rebellion to God (Matthew 18:15-17).

The aim of discipline is **always** to bring the offender back in fellowship with God and the brethren (2 Corinthians 2:3-11).

CONCLUSION: If you don't want to face problems, don't be a preacher. Be one of the many in the congregation who close their eyes to them and hope they will go away. Preachers who hide from problems, are problems themselves!!

The Sins Of Preachers

INTRO: When Paul wrote his beloved son in the faith Timothy, he did not take for granted that Timothy would always choose not to sin. The temptations are just as real for preachers because we are human (cf. Matthew 26:41). He encouraged Timothy to strongly fight against his temptations (1 Timothy 6:3-11, 20-21; 2 Timothy 2:1-3, 22-26; 4:1-5).

Satan has always sought to destroy the church by going for its jugular and bringing its preachers down (1 Peter 5:8-9). Preachers are falling today more than ever, and we must give all diligence and faith to insure that we are not added to that list of casualties (1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Timothy 6:12).

I. THE SINS OF PREACHERS

A. Pride And Arrogance. Preachers **tend** to be a bunch of proud men! It is easy to allow that to happen. Everyone treats you special, wants to shake your hand, and compliments your ability and knowledge.

Preachers are often the center of attention in the church. Their standing produces in them an air of superiority and condescending attitude toward the members.

Jesus condemned the pride of religious leaders (Matthew 23:5-12).

1. Proud preachers like to be treated special and honored by the common people.
2. Proud preachers use religious titles to distinguish them above others -- Reverend, Doctor, etc. (cf. Matthew 23:7-10).
3. Proud preachers often think that they have all knowledge and wisdom. They scorn the ideas of others and often get offended and defensive when their preaching is questioned. Sometimes they will use their position to destroy someone.
4. Proud preachers cannot understand why their wives or families see faults in them that no one else does. It is because they see us as we actually are!
5. Proud preachers are about the most dangerous Christians in the world! They will split a church apart because their ego has been hurt or their will has been opposed by the elders or the brethren.
Never let a church split over you!!!

Pride goes before destruction (Proverbs 16:18). Pride also leaves a preacher open to these other sins.

B. Immorality. This is the curse of modern society. Christians are not immune, nor are preachers. More and more preachers are falling to sexual sins and other forms of worldliness and licentiousness (disregard of sexual restraints).

How could such a thing be thought of among preachers? It can happen to him just like anyone else (James 1:14-15). His temptress may be a real "Jezebel", but he, in thought, may be an "Ahab" -- He has to **let** it happen to him (Proverbs 23:7; 4:23).

1. Cautiously stay out of compromising situations. Sooner or later some woman in the audience, for various reasons, will become attracted to you, and perhaps even fantasize of romantic encounters with you.

Beware of flirtatious women and your own flirting (2 Timothy 3:4-6; 1 Timothy 5:2,22).

2. Teach yourself as you are teaching others (Romans 2:21-22). One of a preacher's greatest dangers is to think he is above the temptations and sins he is warning others of.
3. Cut down on worldly connections (Philippians 4:8-9). Many things like movies, TV, novels, etc. are tinted with such immorality and shape our thoughts subconsciously more than we realize.

A steady diet of prayer and meditation is much better than profanity, drinking, murder, homosexuality, adultery, and nudity we are otherwise subjected to .

It is a sad and foolish preacher who thinks he cannot be tempted with sexual sins (1 Corinthians 10:12).

- C. Hypocrisy. Of all the sins Jesus condemned in religious leaders and teachers, hypocrisy was condemned most often. Hypocritical leaders are the most dangerous hypocrites because they are in a position to influence the innocent (Luke 12:1-3).

Jesus blasted the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. They had led people away from God. Preachers don't have anyone to preach to them very often (and often don't listen when they do), so it becomes easier to "put up a front". Jesus condemned such play-acting (Matthew 23:3-28).

1. Not practicing what we preach (23:3-4).
2. Doing things to be seen by men (23:5).
3. Love to be exalted by men (23:6-7).
4. Barriers to others entering the kingdom (26:13).
5. Influence others to sin too (26:15).
6. Appearing clean and righteous on the outside but inside full of corruption (23:24-26).
7. Beautiful on the outside but dead on the inside (23:27-28).

Not all preachers are hypocrites. Most are not, but only one is too many (Matthew 7:5).

- D. Gossip. Preachers are some of the worst gossips of all, spreading gossip about preachers, brethren and various congregations. It is easy to be meddlesome and fall into the sin of gossip (slander, 2 Timothy 3:3; evil speaking, Titus 3:2; whispering, Romans 1:29; backbiting, Romans 1:30; reviling, 1 Corinthians 6:10; railing, 1 Timothy 6:4) or of encouraging others to gossip by listening.

Sometimes we speak under the guise of "the good of the one involved" or "the good of the church". Gossip is one of the most destructive sins -- it is character assassination!! Years of a prosperous, godly life can be ruined by one slash of a gossip's tongue.

Preachers who cannot control their tongues have a vain religion (James 1:26).

- E. Lying. Preachers are tempted to lie just like everyone else either through outright untruthfulness, deceit, concealing the truth, hypocrisy, rumors and innuendo, and excuses.

Finances are always such a problem that he is tempted to lie about his income on financial reports, on taxes, and paying his bills. People often think preachers are lazy so it is a temptation to exaggerate what he actually does.

Lying is dangerous... it sears the conscience until it becomes normal and accepted and easier the next time. Soon you have no problem with it and it becomes part of your nature (1 Timothy 4:2).

The price paid for lying is greater than any benefit which can be received (Revelation 21:8,27; Proverbs 19:5).

- F. Men Pleasers. It has been said that when we stand in the pulpit we have no friends. When we preach to please the elders, congregation or those in power and positions of influence, we have catered to the people and we have received our reward -- only it won't be from God (Matthew 6:1-2).

There will always be preachers who are willing to tickle ears, keep the peace, and not rock the boat (2 Timothy 4:2-5). But we are to preach the word without fear or favor (Galatians 1:10).

- G. Unloving. This is the opposite extreme. Some brethren enter the pulpit with a flame thrower, calling down fire from heaven to consume everyone in the audience. Such preachers show no mercy or sympathy or patience or understanding. Don't confuse strong preaching with bullying people! There is a time to "reprove" and "rebuke" but also a time to "exhort" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Jesus overthrew the moneychanger's tables and pronounced woes on the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 21:12ff; 23:13ff). But before He did, He wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41; cf. Mark 3:5).

Somewhere along the line we have lost sight of that. Some preachers don't think a sermon is good unless it skins the sects, damns the denominations, creams the Catholics, plasters the Protestants, lambasts the liberals or beats the brethren.

Love rejoices not in unrighteousness (1 Corinthians 13:6) and "speaks the truth in love" every time (Ephesians 4:15).

- H. Apostacy. Some preachers completely fall away from the faith -- they go to live in adultery, join a denomination or completely quit the Lord and the church (1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:17-18).

Such preachers are among the hardest men there are to bring back to the Lord (Hebrews 6:4-6). When a preacher goes off into apostacy, the best thing that can happen is for him to go far off... that minimizes the damage.

II. THE IMPACT OF A PREACHER'S SINS

- A. On His Reputation. A wise man has said "What you are thunders so loud I cannot hear what you say". Our reputation has a great impact on those we teach.

A man's reputation cannot be separated from what he teaches. The acceptance of his teaching is often based on his own faithfulness or lack of it (2 Samuel 12:14). David repented of his sins and was forgiven, but did irreparable damage to his influence.

We must always strive to live above sin and guard our reputations with pure lives (Romans 12:17; 2 Corinthians 8:20-21).

"THE BROKEN PINION"

I walked through the woodland meadows,
Where sweet the thrushes sing,

And I found on a bed of mosses
A bird with a broken wing.
I healed its wound, and each morning
It sang its old, sweet strain;
But the bird with a broken pinion
Never soared as high again.

I found a young life broken
By sin's seductive art,
And touched with Christ-like pity,
I took him to my heart.
He lived with a noble purpose,
And struggled not in vain;
But the life that sin had stricken
Never soared as high again.

But the bird with the broken pinion
Kept another from the snare;
And the life that sin had stricken
Raised another from despair.
Each loss had its compensation --
There is healing for every pain;
But the bird with the broken pinion
Never soars as high again.

-- H. Butterworth --

- B. On His Family. Preachers must realize the extent of the effects of their sins. His family may suffer as much or more because of his sin than **he** does. God's grace can forgive him and he can treat it as though it never happened, but his family must still live with it and its stigma.
His family will go through sorrow. Then there comes anger and their temptation to take retribution or hate him. Then there is shame. His actions have brought shame to his family and they will hang their heads when it is brought up. Self-incrimination follows as family members blame themselves for the preacher's sins (cf. Ezekiel 18:20).
No longer can his family trust him or have any confidence in him. Of all who suffer because of a preacher's sin, perhaps his family suffers most!!
- C. On The Church. Although his public exposition from scripture focuses special attention on him, his life focuses attention on the church he labors with. Thus, the cause of Christ has suffered immeasurable harm from its very proponents -- its preachers!! (cf. Titus 2:7-8)
A preacher who will not pay his bills, who is fraudulent in financial and business affairs, and who is a "dead beat" will do great damage to the church!
People judge churches by their preachers. The church Jesus died for is too precious to suffer such scrutinization... but it does (James 3:1).
- D. On The Community. The weight of impression the church's leaders leave on the community is great. Bishops must have a good report from without (1 Timothy 3:7). Preachers must have nothing in their lives at which unbelievers can point an accusing finger (Titus 2:7-8).

Teachers who sin leave ugly scars on an otherwise unblemished church, and the community is not nearly as forgiving and forgetting as God or the brethren -- especially in smaller towns.

When sin is committed, no one should resort to coverups. Sins need to be repented of and forgiven. If not, the church needs to discipline such a preacher and thus preserve the honor of God's people. The church must let the community know that sin is not condoned, even in the life of its leaders (1 Corinthians 5:7,9-13).

CONCLUSION: Those who take on the work and responsibility of preaching take on the added burden of living above sin and conducting themselves in a manner of life that is honorable and above reproach (2 Corinthians 6:3; 8:20-21).

We receive greater condemnation if we do not (James 3:1). We must all take heed lest we fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Crippled Preachers

INTRO: All sin is destructive to a preacher's life and work. Sin is an ugly scar upon his life. There are also other things which hamper preachers and their preaching. Some of these faults are not really sins, nevertheless they severely hamper his efforts as a gospel preacher.

Paul encouraged a young preacher to be absorbed in those things which save souls (1 Timothy 4:13-16). A preacher must be very serious about keeping himself from hindrances to his work.

Many things cause preachers great problems, cripple them, and rob them of greater usefulness. Some are sin, some are bad judgments, and some are just weakening alliances.

I. CRIPPLED PREACHERS

A. Egotism (Romans 12:3,16). Some preachers might tell us "the secret to my greatness is my deep humility". Egotism is the "practice of too often using the word I; hence self-exaltation, self-praise" (Webster). Praise of self is an empty clanging and clatter (Proverbs 27:2).

A preacher should have a sober attitude about himself and confidence in his work (Romans 12:3; 2 Timothy 1:7). But egotism breeds so many contemptible attitudes.

1. Self-Importance. Some preachers think they are of supreme importance to the Lord's work and that the church cannot do without them. Actually, the Lord has done just fine without any of us and the cause of Christ won't suffer without us either.

This attitude causes some to demand everything they want for their efforts at preaching (money, privileges, etc.). Actually, **servants** are not as important as they think (Luke 17:10).

2. Seeking Greatness (The "Big Name" Syndrome). Some seek brotherhood recognition. They think they have the solutions to all our problems.

We advertise ourselves by our degrees, number of meetings held, debates, books, souls baptized, etc., all in an attempt to bolster our claim to greatness. But those things really mean nothing (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

3. Inability To Listen Or Be Open To Criticism. He counters each criticism with excuses and explanations. He is quick to respond and make his own accusations against his accusers (James 1:19).

Sitting high atop his perch of imagined spirituality and superiority, he might think himself above sin and shortcomings. He needs to listen!

B. Problem Of Jealousy (1 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:19-21). There is a great amount of professional jealousy and envy among preachers. Often a praiseworthy comment about another preacher cannot go by without some preachers "setting them straight about brother so-and-so".

Many are struggling for the praise of brethren, the bigger churches, more meetings, and more money. They compete for positions and are jealous of those who work where "the grass is a little greener". This attitude breeds further problems.

1. Competition. "Preacher parades" can bring out the worst in preachers who underhandedly try to discredit others.
 2. Vanity. This causes some to look, act, and preach in such a way as to promote self-admiration rather than pointing people to Jesus Christ and the cross (Galatians 6:14).
- C. Discovery Of New Methods. A preacher's constant challenge is to help the church grow. Each generation needs the same message (Romans 1:16), but methods of getting that message to people effectively and bringing them to Christ must make certain adaptations to reach those people. The preacher must beware though, of introducing new methods that are unscriptural (cf. 2 Samuel 6:1-11; Leviticus 10:1-3). We must not fall into the trap of trying to outdo the denominations with our methods of getting the people in -- we cannot appeal to spiritual people with carnal tactics. Liberalism and digression among brethren can be traced to this practice.
- D. Evil Companions (1 Corinthians 15:33). Some preachers, sitting at the feet of infidels and modernists in theological seminaries and universities, have lost their faith. Alliances with such unbelieving modernists tint our view of the inspiration of Scripture, truthfulness of miracles, and reliability of the written record. Ungodly friends and acquaintances that we have and try to keep separate from our church life may soften us and encourage us to compromise our stand on morality, marriage, divorce and remarriage, immodest dress, etc. We need to form friendships with Christians (1 Peter 4:1-4; John 15:19). There is a great danger of becoming corrupt when having fellowship with unbelievers (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). All of us need to be among those who can encourage us daily lest we be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13).
- E. Too Many Worldly Involvements (Colossians 3:1-3; Luke 8:14). Some preachers get "too many irons in the fire". They are involved in league sports activities, clubs, PTA, business ventures and may work an extra job. He may have begun many of these activities to meet people and open doors to reach people for Christ. Such use is proper, but often his involvement makes demands on him and detracts time from things he could be doing which are **more** important (cf. Acts 6:2). None of these things are wrong -- they just get in the way and hinder our service to Christ (Matthew 6:24). Always be busy about the Lord's work (John 9:4; cf. Luke 2:49).
- F. Laziness (Proverbs 18:9; 24:30-34). Some preachers have little "get-up-and-go". To be an effective gospel preacher though, one has to approach work in the hardest possible way -- He has to be self-motivated and self-disciplined (1 Timothy 4:15; Proverbs 6:6-8; Romans 12:11). Nothing worthwhile was ever accomplished without hard work. The sluggard lags behind and his preaching and study suffer. The wise man of the Bible characterizes a sluggard for us so we can recognize

such a condition in ourselves and remedy it before it cripples us.

1. Love Of Sleep (Proverbs 26:14). Hinged to his bed, tossing back and forth, he sleepily thinks "just a few more minutes". Rest benefits the hard worker but it hinders the sluggard (Proverbs 20:13).
2. Inability To Start (Proverbs 21:25-26). "Later" and "tomorrow" are his favorite times for accomplishing tasks. A preacher must be a self-starter. He must not be an excuse-maker (Proverbs 20:4; 22:13).
3. Inability To Follow A Task To Its Completion (Proverbs 19:24; 12:27). He makes a promising start but does not have the endurance and energy necessary for completion.

A preacher ought to work **harder** than any of his brethren do at their secular jobs!! (Colossians 3:22-24). And he should complain less because he is working for the Lord.

The ministry has a bad name because of some lazy preachers -- we must "give diligence". "It is better to wear out for the Lord than to rust out".

- G. Time Spent In Study (2 Timothy 2:15). Preachers need to give time to study and reading God's word (1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:13).

1. Not Enough Time In Study. A preacher who does not spend many hours weekly in study and lesson preparation finds that "the well starts to run dry". He must desire the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2). This is the only way **he** can grow.

Then he needs to move on to weightier, meatier things. Through this constant use of the word, he comes to be able to discern right from wrong and thus can help others too (Hebrews 5:14).

Preachers who misquote and misapply Scripture need to spend a little more time with it! It becomes evident and is detrimental to those listening to him.

2. Too Much Time In Study. Don't forget "Christianity Is People". Souls are the real aim of our preaching and teaching. God's people need some to be Bible scholars, but God needs all to reach the world (Matthew 28:18-20).

We are fishermen, not aquarium-keepers (Mark 1:17).

It is essential to spend time with God's word (Psalm 119:11). But we must find a proper balance to be effective.

- H. Debts (Ephesians 4:28). Preachers are notorious for not paying their debts. They are recognized as one of the highest credit risks in the nation! We could say it is the fault of the brethren, but then we would have to blame employers when their laborers failed to pay their bills.

What happens to preachers? Why do they get themselves in such dire straits?

1. Think The World Owes Them Something. We may be doing the greatest work in the world, but no one owes us a handout!! (2 Corinthians 12:14-18; 1 Corinthians 4:12).
2. Pay Is Often Low. Small congregations cannot supply adequate

wages. He must curb his spending to meet his salary -- and may have to do without many things. Often he has poor and expensive insurance coverage.

3. Moves Often. This creates financial problems as he often takes a loss when selling his house, suffers moving expenses, must buy new things to fit each house he lives in, and may even suffer partial loss of income between churches (one or two weeks can put any budget in trouble).
4. Gets In Over His Head. Credit is easy and he may spend much buying equipment, supplies, books, etc. only to find that he eventually has to **pay** for such things.
5. Resents His Brethren. He may feel that he deserves to live on the same standard of living as the brethren -- maybe he does. But he may then live above his means.

Many other reasons could be sighted. Most preachers get in debt just like everyone else. But no preacher should shirk his financial responsibilities -- Jesus did not even do that (Matthew 17:24-27).

Some try to justify themselves and soothe their consciences by just paying a token amount while still spending money on other things. That is dishonest and deceitful! It is commendable when one cannot afford to pay anything, yet he makes the effort to pay off the debt, but it is shameful when one makes such a small effort just to keep creditors off his back and say he is "at least paying something".

A preacher who does not pay his debts is a thief!! (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

CONCLUSION: Preachers have faults which are handicaps to their work. We must "make full proof of our ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5), or fully perform our duties as a minister. Further, we must not live so that the ministry is brought into disrepute because of us (2 Corinthians 6:3).

Some preachers would be better off not preaching... and the church would be better off if some of us were not preaching too!! Make sure you are not one of those!

When You Feel Like Quitting

INTRO: When one finally makes his decision to preach, that should be "the point of no return". Do not make the choice until you are ready to make the commitment!!

Count the cost before you ever make the choice to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ (Luke 14:26-33). Jesus has ways of sifting out those who really desire to preach His word. Some of us wish to follow and serve Him as gospel preachers but don't have the commitment it takes (Luke 9:57-62).

- * Some are swept along by their emotions, by the sight of the crowds, and by the thought of the great privilege of being in such company. Jesus would not have us make a rash choice but count the cost (9:57-58).
- * Some want to serve God but their ties to friends and family are too hard to break. Jesus cannot use them in the places He needs them (9:59-60).
- * Some want to delay, because they still weigh the privilege of such service against the sacrifices it involves. There is no place for such indecision in the kingdom or preaching! (9:61-62)

Such a commitment is necessary for gospel preachers. But what do you do when you feel like quitting? You will feel that way -- those times will come (2 Timothy 2:3; 4:3-5).

I. WHAT DO YOU DO?

A. Ask Yourself. Why are you preaching? Because you want to or have to? Don't preach unless you have to!! God needs men who have conviction from the very beginning, not those who think it would be fun and want to try it out for awhile.

1. Jeremiah 20:9
2. Psalm 39:1-3
3. 1 Corinthians 9:16

B. Maybe You Should Quit. If you don't have the commitment to endure during the difficult times, maybe you should!! (2 Timothy 4:2-5)

Not everyone has been given the responsibility or ability to be a gospel preacher -- We all have various gifts and different niches to fill in the Lord's kingdom (1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 1:12-27). Maybe preaching is not your niche!

Don't quit just because preaching has lost its luster or has become difficult, but if you cannot do the job, find one you can do!

II. PROBLEMS WHICH DRIVE MEN TO QUIT PREACHING

(Many of these points are taken from "Preachers and Preaching" by James P. Needham, pp. 157ff, and "Preaching To Preachers About Preaching" by John Waddey, pp.127f)

A. The Nature Of Our Time. This country's economic prosperity has made us very materialistic. God's people have never been able to handle prosperity.

We are becoming more concerned about "things" and less about "principles" (cf. Luke 12:16-21). Even preachers, concerned with "keeping up with the Joneses" and "having the good things in life",

are looking for bigger salaries. Often preaching does not supply adequate wages, even though it should (1 Timothy 5:18; 1 Corinthians 9:14).

Dollars often drive men to quit preaching -- either the excess of them elsewhere or the lack of them in preaching.

As a self-centered people we do not know what it is to be dedicated to anything enough to make great sacrifices for preaching the gospel (2 Corinthians 12:15; 1:6; Philippians 2:17; Colossians 1:24).

- B. Occupational Hazards. Some are real and others are merely imagined or exaggerated to justify ourselves for quitting.
1. Sagging Security. All the moves, financial sacrifices preachers make, and lack of retirement benefits make preaching poor social security. But Jesus promises us "spiritual security" not "social security" (Luke 9:58; 1 Corinthians 4:11).
Jesus gives us the security we need (Matthew 6:25-33).
 2. Continuous Controversies. Some preachers cannot bare the incessant bickering, arguing, and disagreements among brethren. That is no reason to quit -- that proves how much preachers are needed!
Peace in the Lord's church will always be relative and short-lived (1 Corinthians 11:19; 1 John 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:2).
 3. Timeless Toil. Many preachers have quit because of the demanding workload, which never lets up. It is easy to grow weary, but we must not (Galatians 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58).
Some preachers suffer "burnout" because of the pressure and intensity of the work. Quitting is not the answer. Discipline, pacing oneself, and endurance are important to his spiritual well-being (Hebrews 10:36).
 4. Frustrating Fruitlessness. One of the most difficult things about preaching comes from not seeing the results (John 4:36-38). Some of us have not yet learned the difference between our business and God's! Our job is to put forth the effort. God will bring the results (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).
 5. Irritating Ingratitude. Some preachers grow despondant because their work is not appreciated. Brethren take them for granted and never compliment or praise them for a job well done. That is nothing new (2 Corinthians 12:15; Galatians 4:16). Yet, the Lord does not forget (Hebrews 6:10).
 6. Constant Criticisms. Some brethren criticize everything we do **and** everything we don't do. Preachers should not be so sensitive. What do we stand in the pulpit and do so often? Criticize the brethren! People even criticized the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 10:10). But he did not quit preaching. Instead he found his strength and encouragement in God (1 Corinthians 2:3-5; 2 Corinthians 12:7,9-10; 11:6).
 7. Political Pressures. Some cannot handle the "politics" of preaching. Sometimes elders or a majority of men will try to undermine his influence or teaching and turn other people against him (Philippians 1:15-16). Envious fellow preachers may try to get him fired. Quitting is not the answer. Someone needs to stand up for the right (Galatians 2:3-6).

Sometimes Christians play rough and we must withstand those who sin (3 John 9-11).

C. Maybe The Problem Is With You. Many preachers do not see that their greatest problems come because of some inadequacies within themselves.

1. Maybe You Are Working For The Wrong Master. You are not employed by the church as their public servant. Your employer is God! He has called us into His kingdom (2 Thessalonians 2:14). He has commissioned us to preach (Mark 16:15). He will provide all our needs (Philippians 4:19). He merely lends us to a local band of disciples to help them. We are on **His** payroll!

If brethren do not appreciate us, let us down, abuse us, and show disrespect and unconcern for the Holy Cause, we do not need to throw in the towel and quit. God will never fail us (Hebrews 13:5; 2 Timothy 2:13).

2. Maybe Your Expectations Are Too High. Many men begin preaching because of its glamor and the respect **they** have for other preachers. Such men soon learn that everyone else does not have that same respect for preaching.

We are not peace-time guards but soldiers in the army of Christ, destined for the front line (2 Timothy 2:3; 1 Timothy 6:12). We are in great danger (Luke 10:3).

Preaching is tedious toiling and hard work (John 9:4). It is probably the most difficult thing you will ever do, because you are facing off against the most wicked spiritual powers in all the world (Ephesians 6:12-13).

3. Maybe You Didn't Know What You Were Getting Into. Let me rephrase that -- you didn't know what you were getting into! You couldn't!! Because the only men who know are men who have been there themselves. Even the most intense observer will never know what preaching is all about until he has been doing it himself.

Many quit because they did not know. That intensifies the need for commitment from the beginning!!

III. DISCOURAGED PREACHERS

A. Preachers Have Always Gotten Discouraged. We do not go through anything that God's greatest preachers have not also endured.

1. Isaiah. He faced an indifferent and unconcerned nation and was ready to quit preaching. God told him to preach to them even though they would not listen (Isaiah 6:8-12)!

Like Isaiah, when we agree to preach, "Here am I, send me", we must **never** back down!!

2. Jeremiah. He may have suffered more anguish than any other of God's preachers. He didn't want to be a prophet (1:6). With no visual success, he became despondant and wanted to quit (9:2). He even accused God of deceiving him (15:18-21). This preacher hit rock bottom.

But later, in one of his low spells, even in the face of mockery and persecution, when he wanted to stop preaching he could not (20:7-9). Some preachers have something to say, others have to say something and then there are those who have something to say and have to say it. We need to endure like Jeremiah.

3. Elijah. He thought he was the only one who cared. He tasted the bitter cup of hardship and loneliness and was ready to quit (1 Kings 19:11-14). But God cured his despondency, not by sympathy, but by telling him he was wrong and giving him a job to do so he could not feel sorry for himself anymore (1 Kings 19:15-18).
4. John Mark. He was young and perhaps disillusioned about the real work of preaching the gospel to souls around the world and serving. He went on the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas. He quit and went back home (Acts 13:13). He was not ready for the commitment that was necessary -- the impetuosity of his youth placed him in a position that he was not strong enough to handle. But when he dedicated himself to the work the second time, he passed "the point of no return" and his faith did not sway again (Acts 15:36-39; 1 Peter 5:13; 2 Timothy 4:11).
Discouragement does not mean we have to quit.

CONCLUSION: There is a great and dangerous shortage of preachers (Luke 10:2). Someone has to do it and someone has to stick with it. When you feel like quitting, leave it in God's hands (2 Timothy 1:12). Content yourself to do the best you can (Ecclesiastes 9:10) and don't look back (Luke 9:62).

"Fellow preachers, remember this, the day you committed yourself to preach the gospel, Satan committed himself to destroy you, as surely as he set himself against Jesus in the wilderness. He will stoop to use any tool to drive you out of your sacred calling. Every gospel sermon you preach is a missile against him. Every person you baptize is a victory against him. Every backslider regained is one of his prisoners of war liberated. You above all, must be destroyed. So remember, when things become difficult, Satan is behind it. When you get discouraged and quit, he wins the battle" ("Preaching To Preachers About Preaching", John Waddey, p.129).

"When times come in which one becomes discouraged and thinks about quitting, let him look up with the Psalmist and say, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains; from whence shall my help come? My help cometh from Jehovah, who made heaven and earth' (Psalm 121:1f). Let him rise early in the morning a great while before day and follow Jesus into a desert place and with Him pray for the day's help (Mark 1:35), or go with Him into the mountain and there spend a night in the vigil of prayer (Luke 6:12), or into Gethsemane and in the agony of prayer bring the flesh into submission to the spirit (Luke 22:39f). Or if one thinks his lot is unusually severe, he might spend a night in prison with Paul and Silas, having been beaten with stripes, or be stoned with him and left for dead, or experience hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness with the apostle -- then realize that after all, our lot is not so bad. And in shame for our weakness and self-pity, let us turn to the work with a renewed zeal" (Hailey's Comments, Vol. 2, p.504).

Meditations

Southwind Church
of Christ
Mt. Vernon, Indiana

"Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97)

April 17, 1988

Why Would Anyone Want To Be A Preacher?

Anyone in his right mind, that is. There are many good and bad reasons for wanting to become a preacher "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely... but the latter out of love..." (Philippians 1:15-17). Some think preaching is a "gravy train" "... who suppose that godliness is a means of gain" (1 Timothy 6:5).

Why would anyone want to be a preacher? I can tell you a little from personal experience. Growing up I had always admired the men I knew who devoted their lives to preaching the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Like any other young boy, I imagined myself preaching God's word like these men did, simply and forcefully. It remained a "seed thought" until I was in college. Going away from home, to college, for the first time, I encountered problems in the church there and problems in the church back home. **Somebody** had to do something!! And I could not deny that I was "**somebody**"!! The next three years were unsettled, wanting to devote my life to preaching, but somehow always talking myself out of it for multiplied different reasons.

All the while God's word burned inside and the opportunities I had to preach in various congregations stoked the fire "Then I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name'. But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not" (Jeremiah 20:9). Brethren told me I had the ability and encouraged me to dedicate more time to it. Were they right? I didn't think so, but then I thought "What if they were right?" The parable

of the talents depicts men with different opportunities and abilities (Matthew 25: 14-30). I didn't know whether I was a 5-talent, 2-talent, or 1-talent man, but I did know that God had entrusted me with ability and opportunity to be a gospel preacher, and I would be lost in hell if I buried that!

The apostle's words turned me to evangelism "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Those words still pierce down to the depths of my soul!! I preach God's word because there is **nothing** else I can do!! Not in the sense that I am unqualified, unskilled, or a failure at any other vocation... but there is nothing else my soul will allow me to do. Preaching is not just the **best** use I can make of my life, it is the **only** use!!

The religious world is in a shambles and the Lord's church is floundering and weakening. So much false doctrine is being taught and so many Christian's lives are taking the wrong direction. The majority of people in the world (both religious and non-religious) are traveling down the broad way which leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

The world needs the truth. I may be a rough "earthen vessel" but God can use even me "but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not

(Continued)



Judging People's Hearts

"But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him" (1 Corinthians 8:3). When that person has believed in Jesus Christ, confessed that belief, been baptized into Christ, and changed his life, we can be relatively certain that individual is a Christian. But knowing what is in his heart remains difficult. Actions generally manifest an individual's heart (Matthew 12:33-35) but sometimes they camouflage what is within. Not only can they be a front for hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1ff; 23:27-28), but they can also be inconsistent with what a person really intends and desires to do (Romans 7:15-25). Because of these factors man cannot judge another's heart!! "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (1 Corinthians 2:11).

Jesus knows our hearts "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13; cf. John 2:24; 1 John 3:20). But we don't know another person's temptations. We don't know the degree or intensity, nor the specific enticements which allure him. We are unqualified because "each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (James 1:14).

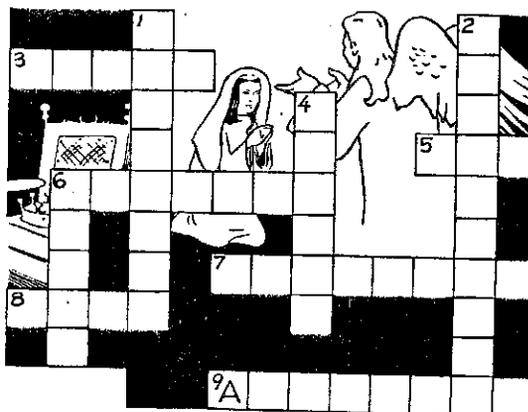
We don't know his degree of spiritual development. Everyone has not attained the same degree of maturity. He may still be a weak babe in Christ "to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule..." (Philippians 3:16). What you hurdled long ago, may still be a stumbling-block to him. Neither do we know his attitudes and motives. His motives may be completely pure and above reproach. He may do some of the most asinine and destructive things, yet do them from pure motives!!

Truthfully, we can judge a tree by its fruits (Matthew 7:15-20), but we are not satisfied to stop there! We want to judge people's motives and intentions. Everyone thinks he is qualified...the truth is that none of us are!! "But why do you judge your brother?... for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10).

Pray Without Ceasing

Pray for me. I don't usually ask for things like that. But I need more help than I can muster on my own. Pray that God open doors of opportunity, give me wisdom, keep me on track and aware of my true work and responsibilities. Pray that I not be slack, but be diligent in personal work, that I may not be covetous, proud or vain. Pray that I overcome laziness and indifference. I know that with God's help and yours I can "do the work of an evangelist (and) fulfil my ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5).

MIRACULOUS NEWS



The angel Gabriel (8 across) to a virgin whose name was Mary. Gabriel said, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found (5 down) with God." Then the (3 across) told Mary that she would bear a son and he would be named Jesus, the (5 across) of God. "He will be great, and shall be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the (4 down) of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob (6 across); and of his kingdom there will be no end." Gabriel then foretold the birth of John the Baptist as he told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth, in her old age, would also have a child. For nothing is (2 down) with God. Mary said, "Behold I am the (7 across) of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy (8 across)." And the angel (1 down) from her.

LUKE 1:26-38

* * * * *

(continued from front)

of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). God just needs a little fire to spark a blazing inferno. I preach the gospel for His glory! I preach the gospel for man's salvation "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14).

Maybe you think this is self-promotion and aggrandizement. I don't intend for it to be... God forgive me if it is... He knows my heart. Rather is is my testimony to the power of God's word!!

EXCELLENT

DON'T TEACH IF YOU CAN HELP IT

The men who shape the world are always motivated from the heart: Orators without convictions soon lose their audiences. When our young nation was threatened, George Washington said, "Put only Americans on duty tonight." No hired mercenary guards as alertly as the soldier who loves the cause!

When asked by a young man, "Should I preach?", David Lipscomb reportedly replied, "Not if you can help it." That thought is certainly scriptural. Preachers without convictions may please audiences but their messages seldom change lives.

Only deep convictions can sustain a cause. We have the truth of God today because it has been so deeply implanted in the hearts of men that they had to preach it! When Judah rebelled, Jeremiah cried out, "If I say I will not mention Him or speak any more in His name there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" (Jer. 20:9). When surrounded by wickedness, David said, "My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned, then I spoke with my tongue" (Psa. 39:3).

When unwilling and unconvinced teachers conduct the class, the fires of conviction are not only not spread, they are quenched! The Spirit of God wrote the word through men of the first century. That same Spirit spreads the word today by His indwelling in the hearts of those who teach. If He had not been in the hearts of inspired writers, they could not have written. If He is not in our hearts, we cannot effectively teach. Paul said, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery: but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..." (Eph. 5:18,19): Do you have any trouble spotting a drunk? His actions clearly show that he is filled with wine. Neither will you have any trouble spotting a teacher who is so filled with God's Spirit that he simply cannot keep quiet. "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11). That same Spirit also livens up the teaching.

Steam has no power until it is pent up. David's life is still our example because his cup wasn't half filled...it ran over! (Psa. 23:5).

--Dwayne Laws

The Weeping Prophet?

If you have thought of Jeremiah as a "weepy," effeminate type, you owe it to him to read his book right now and correct your opinion. In Judah's darkest days, when the nation was totally corrupt and ready to collapse before the Babylonian power, Jehovah found in Jeremiah just the man--with a capital M-A-N --he needed to speak to the apostate nation and to declare his word to both kings and people.

It is true, of course, that as Judah's greatest patriot, Jeremiah wept over what was happening to the nation -- its apostasy as well as the disastrous end to which its faithlessness had led: *"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"* (9:1; cf. 8:18, 21). Add to that misery the persecution that was Jeremiah's constant burden. Plotted against by the people of his own home town (11:18-23), unable to trust his own kinsmen (12:6), smitten and put in stocks (ch. 20), accused of disloyalty and imprisoned (ch. 37), left to sink into the muck of a pit (38:1-6), and always having only one message to proclaim--the destruction which Judah's disloyalty to the covenant made certain, Jeremiah often gave way to depression and despair.

He wanted to escape--just to get away from it all: *"Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them!..."* (9:2). He was puzzled at the prosperity of the wicked. But--an important point!--he brought his complaint to God (12:1-4). God had committed himself

to the prophet's protection (ch. 1), but when the persecutions came Jeremiah's faith was sorely tried and he wondered whether God would prove to be *"a deceitful brook," "waters that fail"* (15:18). As often as he spoke his message was the same: "Violence and destruction!" People came to laugh at him as one smiles at the bearded and robed doomsayer carrying a sign announcing the end of the world. *"I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me. The word of Jehovah is made a reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day."* He would make up his mind simply to quit preaching, but then his heart had a sensation such as one might feel if the marrow of his bones were afire--and he could not hold it in; he had to speak (20:7-9).

I am not encouraged by a man who is "untouchable"--who can face the coals of fire and walk them unafraid. I have no point of contact with such a man. But I can find inspiration in Jeremiah. He felt all that I feel and more. He was afraid and troubled; he wanted to quit; his faith wavered at times. But he kept on. He did his duty anyway. And God was his help (15:19-21; 16:12-18; 20:11-13).

And that means I can keep on too ... whatever comes. And I can latch on to the help Jeremiah found. What helped him can help me.

Preachers who are serious about quitting, whatever else they do, must steer clear of Jeremiah. Just quietly lay down the sword and walk off. But don't read Jeremiah--or you will never be able to quit. L. A. Mott, Jr.

Frustrations We Share In Preaching The Gospel

by Keith Clayton

God's word instructs us to share our mutual concerns, *"rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another"* (Rom. 12:15-16). Those who are active in the spreading of the gospel of the grace of God (as they should be) have plenty of mutual concerns to share and help one another bear. There will never be a lack of joys, sorrows or frustrations to tell to one another. Particularly, regarding the subject of this article, as we go about preaching Truth and exposing error Satan rebels and sees to it that we don't have an easy time of it. *"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"* (2 Tim. 3:12).

If we back up a few verses in **2nd Timothy 3**, we see a whole host of troublesome attitudes and problem areas that will frustrate the efforts of the faithful in converting the lost from sin and to the Lord. **Verse five** tells us of those "religious" folks who claim to follow God, but who only, in reality, follow a powerless god. . .and imaginary deity. These folks could well be the denominationalists of our day who try to prejudice others against us by claiming to others about us, "their religion is too narrow. . .you can't do anything in their religion. . .no freedom to do the things you like." Their allure to others is, "you can do what you want to and be a member of our church." **Verse seven** tells us of the "intellectual" person who is always "studying," yet never allowing application of the Truth to come forth. Certainly, we can see it is frustrating to prove the doctrine of Christ from Scripture, only to hear, "well, I'll have to study that some more. . .how can all these others be wrong. . .if I believe that then I'll have to believe in some other things I don't like. . .that is hard to accept so I'll just have to keep studying" (when they really mean, they see the point is in the Bible, but they don't like it. . .otherwise known as "selective acceptance"). **Verse nine** tells us of those who will not grow in the Truth, that is, they remain spiritual babes (immature). The faithful end up

having to hold their bottle for them in an unending attempt to feed them the Truth that they might grow. The babe ultimately dies because of a lack of growth in the faith. **Verse thirteen** cues us in as to the battle we have with evil men who don't see themselves as evil, but godly. They will grow worse and worse in their self-deceit and, consequently, deluding others to follow their destructive, false ways. . .all the while affirming they follow God. In short, frustrations attack us from many directions and in diverse manners. . .

Generally, we think of this list of frustrational sources as originating with Satan. I believe this to be so. However, it does not follow that the launching pad for the trouble is always from without the body of Jesus Christ, the church of Christ. These frustrating attitudes and actions come from within and without the church of our Lord.

The frustrations that come our way from without the church are easier, for the most part, to pinpoint. This is not to say these attitudes are exclusive to the alien sinner. It is quite evident that some who have named the name of Christ are partakers of some of these problems. However, there are at least five easily spotted attitudes that frustrate our attempts to spread God's word: premium on worldly wisdom, flesh and blood family, human traditions, prejudice, disrespect for God's word (abuse of Scripture).

Recently, brother Jay Vrooman and I went to have a meeting with a new convert, her family and a Baptist preacher. A whole series of articles could be written about that encounter alone. But, this instance points out the insanity of relying on worldly wisdom. The family who called this meeting did not have a single open Bible from which to check out the discussion that was being carried on for their benefit. At one point, the mother of the new convert did make a reference to something "in the Bible" (actually, in the Biblical notes section in the back of the Bible, not the Scriptures themselves).

Just previous to that, the Baptist preacher chided us for our lack of "theological" training and disdain for "wisdom" (meaning his wisdom and the wisdom of theologians who want to get around passages of the Bible they don't want to obey). He referenced, not a Scripture, but a footnote! He was trying to prove that "wise" men don't believe baptism (immersion) is essential for the forgiveness of sins, making an argument on the Greek word in Acts 2:38 for "unto." Of course, it escaped his attention that NO BIBLE TRANSLATION has the words "because of" as the translation for this particular Greek word, "eis." People are not baptized because their sins are already forgiven, rather so their sins can be forgiven, which is consistent with the rest of Scripture (but inconsistent with humanly written footnotes). Now, the implication of this Baptist preacher was evident, "don't let these unlearned and untrained men lead you astray. You don't have to be baptized to be saved." The result? This family listened to worldly wisdom and not to God's word. Be consoled, however, our brethren of the first century had this happen to them also! When Jesus was not apprehended by a group of men sent for the purpose of arresting Him, a similar instance happened to the would be escort. When they returned to the religious leaders who sent them to bring Jesus back to them, the leaders rebuked them. The men exclaimed to the leaders, "never a man so spake" (as Jesus had to them). The arrogant verbal attack of the religious leaders is similar to that of the Baptist preacher. The leaders implied the ones who failed in bringing Jesus back were ignorant for having listened to Him and not the religious elite. *"Then the Pharisees answered them, 'Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him'"* (John 7:47-48)? The same thing happened to the apostles of Jesus. When Peter and John were performing miracles and teaching about Jesus, the religious

leaders forbid them to continue, for the apostles were "uneducated and untrained men" and were acting without authorization of the religious hierarchy of their day. They were asked, "by what power or by what name have you done this"? Then they were told, "speak to no man in this name" (Acts 4:7, 17). Be encouraged, however, in the Truth of God, "for since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). We are ordained (sent) to preach the message of God's word, without the embellishment of worldly wisdom and human schemes. We will find some honest hearts who will bow in submission to God's word and reject the wisdom of the world, which has always been a source of frustration in preaching the gospel.

Satan will also use our physical family (flesh and blood) to frustrate our attempts at persuading folks to be obedient to the Truth. As with the case just mentioned, it was family who rebelled at the obedience to the gospel by their daughter. Of course, this daughter is fully grown and has children of her own and should have cut the apron strings long ago. She should never have allowed her mother to be an obstacle to obeying God's word. But, it happens, over and over again. To be forewarned is to be forearmed! Let us warn folks who are considering obedience to the gospel that there will be attempts to undo the fruit of their obedience to Truth. Jesus said it would come from our own flesh and blood family (that is, from those who don't love the Truth themselves), see Matthew 10:34-39. Warn our new babes in Jesus that we, their teachers, will be unjustly charged as "family wreckers, children stealers, etc." The babes will be charged also with family disloyalty and the like. "Well, John, what will your father think. He has probably seen from his grave that you have joined up with that cult and rejected his religion. Do you believe he has gone to Hell?" Of course, these statements reflect on the lack of honesty on the part of the family member uttering them. The charges are not true and the family knows it, further, these false thoughts are expressed, generally, by those who have no real first-hand knowledge of

the situation (and they don't wish to have any either). These family members must be pleaded with, to be reasonable and make their judgments after objective study of the Truth, if possible. It is good to point out to these family members that their offspring is only following through with the good teaching they received as children: to love God, to be honest, to respect and obey Truth, etc. . Further, the parent needs to know the exact same opportunity exists for them to show their sincerity toward God and the revealed Word of God.

Then comes that old enemy and hater of Truth--tradition, namely, human tradition bound as a matter of religion, but actually being an obstacle to objective understanding of Scripture. "It's so different from what I am used to" is an infamous line frequently used in this situation. . . a fatal line that eventually damns eternally. Sometimes it comes out as, "I feel what I have done for thirty years has been all right, so I don't need to change now. . . I'm an ok person, besides it was good enough for my parents." The only observation that can be made for this problem is one that will get the person to realize they have been "used to" error and not Truth, this is why it seems so different. Their feelings need to be adjusted by the Truth, and they need to know that is what the problem is. This frustration can be easily overcome, if the one doing the frustrating will objectively step outside of himself and look at the matter in Truth.

Prejudice is a biggy! "You feel you are the only ones going to Heaven, what about all these other good people?" This can be real frustrating on the best of days. The problem is that jargon has replaced Truth as a basis for reasoning. There is not much we can do to overcome those whose minds are made up so solidly as not to desire God's Truth at all. But, we can keep the frustration and its effect from becoming bigger by not falling into the trap that prejudice tries to snare us in. The specific statement just quoted is a trap. The one speaking it wants to falsely portray you as willing to "play God." Don't fall for it! Simply speak the truth and reject any claim to superiority over other men: Remember, the big difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is forgiveness. Put the ball in their court,

"do you think you can be saved outside of God's plan," or "do you think every person is saved, in spite of clear Bible teaching to the contrary"? Help them see, somehow, their quarrel is with God and His word, not with you. We are simply the message bearer, not the author of the message. We have no right to change any of it. To change one word of God's message in the Scriptures would be to play God, which we have no right.

Disrespect for God's word (abuse of Scripture) is a common ploy Satan uses to frustrate our attempts to teach the Truth and have it received acceptably. Peter warned of this very thing in Second Peter 3:14-18, as he admonished Christians to be on guard against being "led away with the error of the wicked" (v. 17). He further exhorts that the one whose heart is not set on God would abuse the Scriptures and would "twist to their own destruction, as they also the rest of the Scriptures" (v. 16). Thus, the Bible has fallen on hard times and disrespect for its authority has increased. We can see, understandably, why some might discount the Bible's message because of what some have taught in the name of God (which really had nothing to do with God or His word): Jehovah's Witness doctrine of forbidding blood transfusions, Christian Science's avoidance of modern medicine, cultish doctrines concerning communal living, etc.. But, probably more problematic is the willingness to abuse Scriptures to the end that there is no condemnation for any doctrine men may dream up, no matter how false and without Scriptural justification. A famous line for this type of disrespect for God's word is, "the Bible says to 'Judge not'." Of course the text under consideration is Matthew 7:1, but the context is completely avoided! It is hypocritical judging that is under consideration in Matthew 7:1. Further, this type of statements reflects a willingness to ignore what the rest of the Bible says on the subject. Additional study of Scriptures relating to "judging" demonstrate that God's word is to be preached and used as a basis of our "righteous judgments" (John 7:24). The judgments we make are to be from God's word and not our personal opinions. Again, this frustration is overcome with the whole Truth. Don't let context be overlooked nor other Scriptures avoided or abused.

Thus far, I have primarily written about frustrations that present themselves from without the church of Jesus Christ (though, obviously, not exclusively from without). I would be negligent, indeed, were I to not warn of some areas of concern arising from Christians: **reluctance, personality distinction, euphemism.** These are those who have not circumcised the heart the way they should have, that they might have good spiritual eyesight. They have failed to "*crucify the old man*" (Romans 6:6) and throw away worldly perception as they seek to live according to God's word (see Romans 12:1-2; 2:28-29; Ephesians 4:17-24). This sort of failure prevents individual saints from growing spiritually, and as a further consequence, hinders the spiritual progress of newer babes in Christ as they observe the improper example of those who should know better but don't. In short, we need more circumcising of the heart that it might be more moldable by God's word.

A sister in Christ is heard to say, "you're pushing me"! A brother in the Lord is caught saying, "it's so different from what I am used to. I feel that once a week is enough time to give for worship, besides, where I came from no one made a big deal if we didn't come to every worship assembly possible." Both of these statements express the central problems concerning reluctance to obey God: lack of love for God, lack of faith in His word. These folks still want self to have first priority, not God. They want to be left alone while they offer minimal service to the Christ who died for them. Brethren, we need to freely admit that we sometimes "push" brethren in order that they might do right, thus be saved from wrath by repentance. The Lord is easy to please and, at the same time, hard to satisfy. That is, God is pleased at our efforts to serve Him, but He is not satisfied until we give full service to the King of kings. To this end, we might remind fellow saints we would rather be pulling with them in the same direction than pushing against them because they are headed in the wrong direction. However, we must make known in certain terms, when we need to "push" we will do it. "*Therefore, knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*" (2 Cor. 5:11). Make no apology for loving a Christian and caring for their

soul, to the extent you are willing to "*restore such a one*" (Galatians 6:1). Plead guilty every time we are charged with "pushing," and may there be many times we can be charged with pleading with a saint to do right, without hesitation. "*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart*" (Gal. 6:9). Let us drive out of our hearts the attitude of **reluctance** to follow God in everything. . . as a firm basis for life. Let us remember that when we are walking by the revealed will of God there is no cause for hesitating in acting upon the Truth, either for the babe or the mature in Christ. Acting upon God's word is not like trying to walk on uncertain territory, rather it is solid, as building on the rock (Matt. 7:24-27).

A pet peeve of mine is this thought, as regards going to a brother in Christ who is in error, "you better not talk with him/her, you'll only make matters worse." This is a problem of respect of persons, alias, **personality distinction.** This hurts deeply, for one of the things we do in being faithful to God is show no partiality in admonishing brethren. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), so neither should His children be. The child of God needs to learn, from day one as a Christian, Truth is Truth. . . no matter who speaks it! The sooner we get this principle across the sooner the church will cease to be frustrated by this sort of thinking. A Christian must, early on, learn to be easily entreated (James 3:17) and to avoid being a rockhead (Jer. 5:3). We cannot excuse ourselves from listening to the Truth because we don't like the way a brother/sister in the Lord might say something. All Christians must learn to esteem other saints higher than our own selves (Philippians 2:1-5) and grant that the other has our best in their heart. Of course, this does not excuse any Christian from being formed into the image of Jesus, even in realms of personality.

Some brethren frustrate spiritual progress with spiritual blindness, which surfaces and identifies itself with the use of euphemisms. We sometimes fail to see sin as ugly as it really is. We need to paint a terrible picture of sin, not laughing at it or calling it something else. We need to be as ugly in our terminology about sin as sin is in God's sight (remember, it did cause a

rather grotesque scene on Calvary some years ago). Let's not allow brethren to excuse themselves, by default, from an all out effort to live righteously in God's sight. Sin is not a "mistake" we make. It is sin, plain, old, ugly, soul-condemning, filthy sin which we need to recognize. . . yours and mine. It is all ugly. Let us correct our speech in this matter and perhaps our thinking will change also, "call Bible things by Bible names." Don't be guilty of poor spiritual eyesight, thus giving sin a higher place than it deserves. Be truthful and frank about sin, insisting that we and others use words and descriptions of sin that are consistent with the Biblical view of the horror of sin. God spoke to Jeremiah of old concern His attitude toward the forsaking of the Word done by the Jews. "*Therefore thus says the Lord: Ask now among the Gentiles, who has heard such things? The virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing. . . My people have forgotten Me, they have burned incense to worthless idols. And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths*" (Jer. 18:13, 15). Again, in Ezekiel, as God has pronounced punishment for sin, we see the attitude expressed at the consequence of sin--horror! "*Those who survive will escape and be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, each for his iniquity. Every hand will be feeble, and every knee will be as weak as water. They will be girded with sackcloth; horror will cover them; shame will be on every face, Baldness on all their heads*" (7:16-18). If we can instill this attitude toward sin, erase the word "mistake" from our spiritual vocabulary, then perhaps we will alleviate part of the frustration that comes from abiding sins that are euphemized away as something else.

One last point to ponder is not a frustration, rather a promise. Through all frustrations, trials, tribulations and persecutions, Jesus is with His people. He will preserve, protect and defend us into eternity (Romans 8:31-39). We will not overcome, rather we shall overcome in Him! Jesus is with us to the end of the world if we be faithful to Him and His word. The Lord made this promise and He keeps it. God has always been with the faithful throughout the trials of faithful living in a sinful world. Consider Elijah, being dejected, and then God twice asking

him, "what are you doing here," as he was letting the frustrations of preaching cause him to draw back from the work. The clear implication was that God was on Elijah's side. Even though he was seemingly a minority of one and his troubles were considerable. Think of Jeremiah and the ungodly and hostile society he had to work with. No one, apparently, would listen to him (Jer. 6:10). Even before he begins his mission of preaching, the

ominous warning of trouble to come is present, but not without the attendant promise from God of divine fellowship, "they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you" (Jer. 1:19). This promise to the faithful has not changed. The Lord was in the fire with Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego, to deliver them from the fire. Jesus is with us in our "fires" too (Matt. 28:18-20).

We must learn to not bow or bend to the frustrations of preaching the gospel of God. For in the fires and troubles and frustrations our fellowship with the Lord is the most intimate, for therein we receive the promise of assistance and the special blessing of tested growth in Him.

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"What Must I Do To Be Saved?"

by Larry Hafley

There are numerous great questions in the Bible: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matt. 22:42). "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psa. 8:4). "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mk. 8:36, 37). "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17).

These, and many others that could be cited, are sublime, profound queries, pregnant with eternal substance. However, no question is greater than our topic, "What must I do to be saved?"

HOW WILL SOME MEN ANSWER?

Certain preachers think man can do nothing to effect his salvation. They believe God has decreed and declared, "from all eternity," the specific individuals who shall be saved and who shall be lost. Others say man can do nothing until the Holy Spirit personally and directly operates on the heart of the sinner, regenerates it, and gives him power to believe. Most people teach that all one must do to be saved is to "receive Christ into your heart as your personal Savior," or "simply reach out by faith and say a little prayer, 'Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner. I now trust in you and confess you as my Savior.'" Perhaps you have heard these answers to our question, or something similar to them. Next, let us notice what some other men have said in response to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Respondent Number One: "Believe

on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). This was a direct reply to our title question. It was spoken to a jailer in Philippi. He was told to believe. He was **not** told to "only believe," or "all you have to do is believe." But do we not agree that he was told to "believe on the Lord Jesus?" Certainly, we do. So far, so good.

Respondent Number Two: "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" (Acts 2:38). Remember, this is an answer to a question posed by those who have been convinced that Jesus is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36, 37). They need not be told to believe, for they already believe, else they would not have been "pricked (cut, stuck) in their heart." They believe; so, they inquire of Peter and the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . ." (Acts 2:37, 38).

We may not agree as before, but at least we know what the apostle Peter said in response to the question. I believe and teach what he said. Do you? Does your preacher?

Respondent Number Three: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Saul, who became the apostle Paul, asked, "What shall I do, Lord" (Acts 22:10)? God sent a man named Ananias who told him to be baptized as noted above. Saul believed on the Lord. This is seen by the fact that he

went into Damascus as the Lord told him to do. He evidently repented because he did not continue his murderous mission against the disciples. Thus, Ananias told this believing, penitent man to "be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Again, we may not agree, but we know what the answer was. My answer to our title question is the same as the one Ananias gave. Is it yours? Is it what your preacher would say to a believer who asks, "What shall I do, Lord?"

Observe that the last three answers we have given are Bible answers. They are not "Church of Christ" answers. They are the answers given in the word of God.

A FINAL PLEA

"But," you say, "I like the first answer. It is the only one I will accept; just believe on the Lord and be saved." If you do that, you exclude repentance and baptism, and you reject the word of God. Suppose I were to say, "I like the third answer. It is the only one I will accept; just be baptized and wash away thy sins." What would you say? How could you object? If you can take one answer and deny the others, why cannot I do the same? If I contend for baptism only, I deny the necessity of faith and repentance. Therefore, I must include Acts 16:31. Of course, one must believe on the Lord to be saved! So, we can both tell one to believe and be in harmony with the truth of the gospel.

Why, then, should either of us refuse the response that commands the believer to repent and be baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38; 22:16)? I believe, teach and preach all three responses. Do you? Does your preacher?

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