

# The Pastor: His Qualifications

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I honestly believe that part of the problem we face in New Testament churches is caused by men who either are not truly called of God to the ministry or are unqualified to be there. Although it has been said that "many a hot day and many a stubborn mule have called many a man to preach," not just everyone is qualified to be a pastor according to the Bible.

God has set some qualifications that must be met in order for a man to be called of God, to have His blessings upon his ministry and be effective as a minister. I must hasten to add that no man will meet every qualification perfectly. These qualifications are what God has set for the ideal preacher and we, being mere mortals, cannot (with our sin nature) perfectly fit into God's perfect mold. However, the man of God should strive to be the best minister he can be with God's help and also strive to meet each of these qualifications as best he can.

M.L. Moser, Sr. said, "...love to Christ must be regarded in all ages and in all places as the pastor's supreme qualification. All other qualifications are worthless if this is absent" (*Baptist Doctrine in One Year*, pg. 32). Never before in the history of the church has this statement been more true than it is today. If there is one great need among God's men today it is the need to fall more deeply in love with Jesus. There are too many men who are laboring in the vineyard of the Lord without an undying, overwhelming love for Christ and the things that pertain to Him.

Recently, I was in attendance at a Bible Conference where one of the guest speakers made a very favorable, long lasting impression on this preacher. As I spoke to him after he preached, telling him how very much I appreciated his message, tears came into his eyes and he said to me simply, "I love Him". This evangelist went on to say that he felt so unworthy to be used of God, but that from the depths of his heart he wanted to do everything possible to please God because he loved Him. Oh, that this could be the confession of every God-called pastor today; "I love Him." Whew! What a statement!

While I am sure others could possibly find more, as I have searched the Scriptures, I found 29 qualifications which God has placed upon the pastor of the New Testament Baptist church.

## **1. The Scriptural pastor must be "blameless" (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6a, 7a).**

Dr. Albert Garner in his *Baptist Commentary*, Volume 11, says a bishop or pastor must be "one against whom no indictable charge can be laid".

**2. He must also be “the husband of one wife” (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6).**

There are two principal interpretations of this phrase. It is usually interpreted as meaning either a qualification prohibiting polygamy or one excluding divorced men from the pastorate. My personal conviction is the latter, that a divorcee is unqualified to be in the pastorate, not because divorced people are “second-class” Christians, but rather because the pastor of a New Testament church is to be a unique example to the rest of his congregation; an example in stability, an example in his relationship with his wife, and an example in love, faithfulness and fidelity to one wife.

**3. The pastor is to be “vigilant” (I Timothy 3:2).**

Too few pastors are willing to pay the price necessary to keep vigil over their flock. According to the *New Webster’s Dictionary*, the word vigil means “to be wary or to be on the alert for danger.” With so many wolves in this world, it is more necessary now than ever before for the loving shepherd to be alert to the dangers that decimate his flock. Dangers such as heresy, apostasy, carnality and worldliness require constant, daily vigilance.

**4. Being “sober” is also included in the list of qualifications given for the pastor (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).**

I have heard preachers say that this word means to be serious minded, but perhaps they are confusing this with the words somber or solemn. The word sober means “habitually temperate.” There should not even be the slightest chance that the man of God could ever be drunk. To be absolutely sure that this never occurs, then one must be a virtual “teetotaler.” A preacher couldn’t do this and still use wine at the Lord’s Table. If a church uses wine in observance of the Lord’s Supper, the pastor of that church cannot partake.

**5. In addition, the pastor must be “of good behavior” (I Timothy 3:2).**

The man of God must learn to be discreet, modest, congenial and an excellent example in his deportment and demeanor. In the day in which we live, it is especially important that the pastor of one of the Lord’s churches be very cautious in his treatment of ladies in the church itself. It would certainly be of good behavior for the pastor never to counsel women by himself, but rather always have someone else present. I believe that the attitude of our society being what it is, the pastor should even be careful in the manner in which he addresses little girls in the church. Having been the pastor of this good church for over twenty years many of the children of our church are the age that their parents were when I came here. I was there when most of them were born. I have held them, cuddled them, kissed them and hugged them since they were infants. However, it is an unwritten rule around here that when a girl turns 12 years old, she must stop hugging the preacher and advance to simply shaking my hand.

**6. A good pastor must be “given to hospitality” (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).**

I am sorry to say, but after traveling and preaching in different churches for these past nearly 30 years, I have noticed that the great majority of preachers do not know how to take care of their guests, nor do visiting preachers know how to treat their host. Many times over these many years, I have been asked to preach on pastoral ethics, a subject that is almost forgotten and I shall cover it more thoroughly in a later article. However, a pastor should be a gracious host to his visiting preacher brethren.

We here at Fellowship Baptist set aside three days every year for our annual Bible Conference. Those who have attended would unanimously agree that our people know how to treat guests. The pastor should treat visiting pastors, missionaries and evangelists for what they are; ambassadors of the King, men of God. They should be provided comfortable living quarters, where they are assured the strictest privacy. Guest preachers should not be housed with a single lady or even be placed in a situation where they might be alone with a woman in the house. Guests should not be expected to do the pastor’s work for him, making calls from sun-up to supper and then be expected to preach with the freshness of a thoroughly rested individual.

The visiting preacher should be well-fed. Well-balanced, nourishing meals should be provided. It is our custom to place a nice fruit basket in the room when our guests will stay so that afternoon snacks will be available for them. The guest should be given an opportunity to rest in the afternoon. And by all means, the visitor should not be required to be responsible for his own expenses. I have pastored small churches before, but we always made sure that our guests were amply cared for financially. And if this is not possible, tell the visiting evangelist, etc., beforehand that you will not be able to give him much

of a love-offering or perhaps none at all. Many preachers, no . . . most preachers would be willing to come anyway if they themselves are financially able. The best advice is just simply to use common sense in the hospitality shown to other men of God. But, then, sometimes common sense isn't so common, is it?

**7. He must be "apt to teach" (I Timothy 3:2; II Timothy 2:24).**

It is my firm conviction that the pastor is to be the principal teacher of a local, New Testament church. It is his responsibility to feed the sheep (Acts 20:28), and as the shepherd of the Lord's flock, it is also his responsibility to select the pasture on which they will graze. We, like so many other independent Baptist churches, are beginning to put much of our teaching material into print so that our preacher brethren may glean from it. However, it is not my responsibility to teach any other people but the ones whom God has given me. Charles Stanley, John MacArthur, Chuck Swindoll, James Dobson and Bill Gothard have not been given the responsibility to teach your people, pastor, you have been. One of my pet peeves is to hear someone say that they are a student of C.I. Scofield or J. Vernon McGee or Oliver B. Greene, etc. If a person is right with God and their pastor, they will be a student of the one to whom the oversight of the church has been given, the pastor. A truly God-called man will have the ability to teach his people the Bible and will jump at the opportunity to convey to them the truths it contains.

**8. The man of God must unquestionably be "not given to wine" (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).**

I believe that his means NO alcohol whatsoever; not wine, not beer, not mixed drinks; not hard liquor, no alcohol. And this means at no time; not at home, not at a cook-out, not at a bar, and definitely not at church. Dr. Albert Garner in the *Baptist Commentary*, Volume 11, page 41, says that among other things this phrase means, "not...sitting or reclining alongside wine". It would definitely be VERY difficult to not sit by wine if you are drinking it. A preacher could not sit by the stuff if he is holding a little glass of it during the Lord's Supper. In fact, it would be nigh on to impossible to do so. For further teaching on this subject order the tract "The Great Wine Debate" from Wilderness Voice Publications.

**9. And a good pastor is to be "no striker" (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).**

Most of the independent Baptist pastors I know are real fighters. We fight the world and worldliness every day. We fight the flesh. We fight the devil. And sad to say, we often fight each other and even worse we fight the very people God has placed under our leadership. However, our fighting must be done with the proper instruments of battle. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (II Corinthians 10:4).

**10. The earthly leader of the church must not be "greedy of filthy lucre" (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).**

The greed and avarice of the Jim Bakker's and Robert Tilton's of this world have done irreparable damage to the reputation and testimony of all preachers of the gospel everywhere. Regardless of what the world may think, I doubt that many, if any, independent Baptist preachers are in the ministry for the money. Back several years ago, the pastor of a local Methodist church was said to be making \$52,000.00 per year. Man, if that is the case, what a life! Draw \$1,000.00 per week; preach one message per week and the message comes from headquarters. Sit back, eat fudge, watch soap operas, and if any problems crop up, let the elders handle it.

I honestly and sincerely doubt that there is an independent Baptist church anywhere on this earth that is in danger of paying their preacher too much. Nevertheless, the man of God should not be in the ministry for the money and if he is truly God called, he will continue to serve the Lord whether he receives any wages or not. The man of God is not paid to serve God. He receives salary from the church so that he may minister daily to them, study and pray. However, the way that a church takes care of their pastor financially, is an indication of how much they appreciate this gift from God.

**11. The exemplary pastor must be "patient" (I Timothy 3:3; II Timothy 2:24).**

Oh, my, I wish that the Lord had not said anything about patience. If for no other reason, most of the pastors whom I know on a personal basis would be disqualified because of the lack of patience. This lack of patience is the cause for more grief and unsettledness than any of the other twenty-eight qualifications for the pastor. In years gone by, I heard one very well-known preacher try to explain away his lack of patience, his reputation of being very impatient. But if the truth were known this word patience means exactly what you think it means and most of us have very little or none of it. Zero. Zilch. Totally void of patience.

I remember years ago hearing a missionary to Mexico make a statement which I thought was very good. In acknowledging his impatience he said, "Now, why would the Lord call a German, who wants everything done yesterday, to Mexico, where they don't care if they ever get it done?" Preachers, we cannot be what God wants us to be if we, who are God's men, are not willing to wait upon the Lord and be patient. We grow impatient with our wife, our children, the people we pastor, our fellow preachers; in short, almost everyone we come in contact with. If we take a long look at Isaiah 40:31, it seems to say that impatience, not waiting on God, getting ahead of Him, is a source of discouragement. When we wait upon the Lord, strength will be renewed; we will be on the mountain top where the eagles soar; we will be able to run, get things done, accomplish great tasks and never grow weary or discouraged; and will not faint or fall by the wayside. Impatience is a real "preacher killer" and something of which we are not aware that takes its toll on us.

**12. The man of God is not to be "a brawler" (I Timothy 3:3).**

I have heard preachers boast of their conflicts and end their tale by saying something like, and brother, "I'll knock him through a wall" or "I'll knock his head off." We may think that this is "macho" language and a sign of strength, when in actuality it is unbecoming to the man of God. Moses was the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3). And yet, Moses was no coward. He stood up to Pharaoh; he stood up to Korah and his band; he stood up to the ten unfaithful spies; yet he did not brawl with them. He did not knock them through a wall or knock their heads off. He was bold; he confronted them, rebuked them when necessary, but did not resort to fisticuffs. I am not a pacifist! There is not a pacifistic bone in my body. I pray for holy boldness and believe that the man who cowardly refuses to "take on" the enemies of God is not worthy to be a God called preacher. However, the weapons of our warfare are not made with iron and steel (II Corinthians 10:4), but are much more durable and powerful than they. Our weaponry is the infallible, perfect, pure, preserved, unalterable, invincible, two edged sword of the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12).

**13. The man truly called of God must not be "covetous" (I Timothy 3:3).**

Brethren, covetousness is a sin! Whether it is an adulterer coveting another man's wife, or a man coveting another man's car, home, salary, church, ministry or whatever. Covetousness is a sin! Covetousness stems from dissatisfaction with what God has given us or provided for us, and is more a condition of the heart than anything else. Sometimes, if a church pays their pastor starvation wages, that people is guilty of aiding the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4) defeat God's man by tempting him to covet.

**14. He must be "one that ruleth well his own house" (I Timothy 3:4).**

I wish I could (and probably ought to) stop here, park and preach for a while. So many men do not understand what the Scriptures mean when they speak of the man being the head of his home. Being the head of his home does not give any man the right to abuse (physically, emotionally, verbally, or any other way) his wife. It does not give a husband the right to put down, denigrate, belittle or ridicule his wife. On the contrary, if a man is to be the head of his home, then he must accept the responsibilities that go with the position and be the head like Jesus is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:22 - 25).

First of all, for the man of God, it is imperative that his wife be supportive of his ministry. To have a sweet spirited, submissive wife is a gift from God and how a man treats his wife is a signal to God of what that man actually thinks of His gift. If a man is to be the ruler of the home as Christ is of the church, then he must love his wife more than he loves himself. Christ so loved the church that He was willing to give His life for it. It was that valuable to Him.

The man of God must not be selfish with his wife or always think only of himself and put himself first. No, Jesus put the church above Himself. As Jesus has always had the best interest of the church at heart, so must the man of God emulate the Lord's example. Everything that Christ has done, He has done for the benefit of His bride, the church. His bride is precious to Him. He only seeks what is best for her. He has put her onto a pedestal so that all the world may view her with awe and respect. But, at the same time, the church is to be obedient to the Lord. Read Ephesians 5:24. If a preacher's wife is rebellious, domineering and contentious (Proverbs 21:19), then God is not pleased and the man will always have a difficult time trying to pastor a church (I Timothy 3:5).

**15. It is imperative that the man of God have "his children in subjection" (I Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6).**

It is interesting to note here that God puts more emphasis upon a man's home life, the situation within his own household, than He does on any other part of his life. It seems to me that the Lord must be telling us that a man's family is the most important part of his life and that to have a right relationship at home is more vital to having a successful ministry and being a qualified pastor than perhaps anything else.

This is the age of rebellion and I would say without qualification that more preachers fight this battle at home more than anywhere else. It all revolves around a principle given in Zechariah 13:7, "Smite the shepherd and the sheep will scatter." And where else could our enemy smite us where it would hurt more or do more damage than our homes?

And let me be quick to say that I believe that the devil works harder on the children of the preacher than he does on anyone else's kids. If the wicked one can defeat the pastor through his children, then he has won a very strategic battle. If the man of God must always fight the world, the flesh and the devil and then go home and fight a rebellious child, that man will not be the energetic, enthusiastic, excited example to his people. Churches should not only pray for their pastor, but they should also pray faithfully for his wife and his children. The church family should pray a hedge of protection around the pastor's family. Without his family on his side, the pastor is more susceptible and is a much easier target and prey for the devil.

**16. The God-called pastor should not be a "novice" (I Timothy 3:6).**

After the Lord tells us that a pastor should not be a novice, He then goes on to explain why, "...lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Many years ago I knew of a situation where there was a family who had a very bright son. This boy surrendered his life to preach and his pastor took him under his wings to help him, to guide him and insure that he got on the right path doctrinally. In the course of time, the parents divorced and the boy moved to Texas with his dad. There he joined an independent (?) Baptist church and immediately the pastor of that church sent this young man, still in high school, to pulpit supply for small churches in surrounding towns.

In time this boy was offered the pastorate of a church, and with the urging of his pastor, accepted their call. Now mind you this boy wasn't even out of high school yet. I'm still not sure where the boy's father figured in all of this, but nevertheless he took the church. It was not long before the church was in a mess financially and spiritually. The young man had been very foolish in his conduct with a woman in the church. There were men in that church ready to lynch him, and his pastor had deserted him and left him for the wolves to devour. This boy called me and I tried to get him to see that he was not qualified or mature enough to pastor one of the Lord's churches, but he would not listen. Today, that boy is a total mess. He has dropped completely out of church. The church he attempted to pastor has folded and I have been told that every family in that church has also dropped by the wayside - all this because an older preacher coaxed a novice into the pastorate.

With the complexity of life today, with all of the problems that people are facing, mature adult men have difficulty advising their people which way to jump, let alone a young man who isn't "dry behind the ears." What that older preacher did to that boy was shameful! It just could be that God knew best when He stated that a pastor should not be a novice, but have some experience in life.

**17. "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (I Timothy 3:7).**

Recently I overheard a conversation involving a local businessman who owns several rental properties and another man. I know both of these men; both are members of our church. In the course of their conversation the man who owns the rental properties said that he would rent to anyone but a preacher. I know of the situation that caused him to make that statement, and I understand completely what he is talking about. He rented one of his houses to a Pentecostal preacher and this businessman was truly "taken to the cleaners." Reluctant to evict a preacher, this brother allowed the Pentecostal minister to go on for several months without paying the rent. When the preacher did move out, he left the house in such bad repair that a great deal of money had to be spent getting it ready to rent again.

Now my opinion isn't worth much. (In fact, my opinion and 75 cents will buy you a cup of coffee here at a local cafe). But, I doubt very seriously that God has ever called a Pentecostal to preach His gospel. Nevertheless, that one preacher's actions, being dishonest and shady, has brought reproach to the cause of Christ and added a tremendous burden to the already tarnished public image of true men of God.

It is so important that a preacher maintain a good testimony and reputation! The cause of Christ as a whole suffers tremendous scrutiny under the microscope of those who are lost. And when one, who is supposed to be exemplary in his deportment, is suspect of improprieties morally, financially, etc., well, let me just say, God help us as God's servants to never do anything that would hinder the work of our blessed Redeemer.

**18. The man of God should be "gentle" (II Timothy 2:24).**

Ask my little 5 year old adopted granddaughter (Bro. Prater's little girl, Tiffany), about the fruits of the Spirit and she says, love, joy, peace, longsufferin (longsuffering), gentlemens (gentleness), goodness, faith, meekness (meekness), temperance (temperance). Even she knows that gentleness is a characteristic to be greatly desired and admired, and that its possession is one of the evidences of being controlled by the Holy Spirit.

American men are some of the most emotionally handicapped people on the face of the earth. We are taught from infancy that "real men don't cry", "real men never say I'm sorry", "real men are rough and tough." We have developed what I call "the John Wayne philosophy." The truth is that real men are like Jesus, and Jesus was a real man who showed emotion (John 11:35), was gentle even toward sinners (John 8:6 11), and loved children and displayed affection to them (Mark 10:13-16). When we see the suffering in this old world, it ought to move us more toward compassion knowing that Jesus is the solution. Matthew 9:36 "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Oh, to be more like Jesus and be of a gentle compassionate spirit.

**19. The man of God must "in meekness" instruct "those that oppose themselves"(II Timothy 2:24-25).**

The characteristic of meekness is not to be confused with cowardice. Cowardice is refusing to take a stand for what is right. Cowardice is remaining silent in the presence of wrong and sin. Cowardice is taking one stand when in the presence of friends, and then taking another stand when with a different crowd. Cowardice is knowing that something is sinful and yet not condemning it.

I know many good men who believe right. They are Baptists to the core. They are separated from the world both ecclesiastically and secularly. They believe that God has indeed preserved His Word, and yet, out of fear of rejection from their peers, they refuse to separate themselves from modernists, liberals, apostates and compromisers. It is not being meek when a preacher remains silent while heresy and compromise are being propagated. Meekness is old-fashioned humility, which most of us independent Baptist preachers could really stand a good dose of. Meekness is "freedom from pride and arrogance; humbleness of mind; a modest estimate of one's own worth. In theology, (meekness) consists in lowliness of mind; a deep sense of one's own unworthiness in the sight of God, self-abasement, penitence for sin, and submission to the Divine will" (*Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity*, by David Cloud, pg. 186).

As unfortunate as it is, there are so many preachers who refuse to take a stand. Either they are afraid of criticism from the people they pastor, or afraid of a board of deacons or trustees, or afraid of not receiving a salary, or afraid of their peers. These men who will not preach Biblical standards and convictions because of fear are not in actuality the servants of Christ. Consider what the Apostle said in Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Not only should cowardice not be confused with meekness, but a proud and haughty spirit also reveals a lack of meekness. One of my pet peeves is to sit and listen to a preacher go on and on about his accomplishments. I remember well my days in Bible College when I was privileged (?) to sit under the ministry of one of this country's "big" preachers. I remember a specific instance when a classmate and I grew tired of the speakers usage of personal pronouns, "I did this" and "I did that"

and "my way is best" so we began to count the times he referred to himself. I have many years ago forgotten just how many times it was. Needless to say, this man was truly "full of himself" and not displaying any genuine meekness.

**20. The bishop must not be "self-willed" (Titus 1:7).**

As those of you who have been reading my articles on the pastor know, I believe very firmly in pastoral authority. I believe that God has given the oversight of his churches to their pastors. I believe that a pastor should not be under the domination of a board of deacons, trustees or anyone else. However, a truly God-called New Testament Baptist church pastor has no right whatsoever to lead the church according to his own will. The pastor does not own the church. Even though in casual conversation we may refer to a certain church as "Bro. Smith's church", it really is not the pastor's church; it belongs to God.

Even though there is not one place in all of the Holy Scriptures where the pastor is referred to as an "undershepherd", he still must not be self-willed and in complete submission to God and His Holy Spirit. I remind all the laymen who are reading this article that Paul did indeed command the people to follow him. He said "Be ye followers of me" (I Corinthians 4:16). It is scriptural to follow the leadership of the pastor. It is divine to be in submission to him (Hebrews 13:17). It is as the sin of witchcraft for a church member to rise up in rebellion against the God-ordained authority in the church, the pastor (1 Samuel 15:23). However, it is just as wrong for that pastor to do as he desires without consulting the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11). Yes, the apostle said, "Be ye followers of me", but he was quick to add "...even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

**21. The man of God should be "not soon angry" (Titus 1:7).**

As I have said so many times before, there will be no such thing as a perfect pastor. Because the man of God is exactly that, "a man", he cannot be perfect while still in this flesh. Nevertheless he should constantly strive to be everything that God wants and expects him to be. And this includes having control of his temper. Dear brethren, most of the preachers I know (including the one who sits at this computer) have a rather large keg of powder with a mighty short fuse leading to it. Very likely there is not an Independent Baptist pastor on the earth who hasn't at one time or another had a problem with his temper. It must surely go with the calling.

The Bible is full of examples of God's men who had a hard time with their temper; Moses is perhaps the supreme example of a preacher who lost his temper, and he suffered because of it. Remember that God would not let him take the children of Israel over Jordan to claim the promised land because Moses had lost his temper and disobeyed God (Deuteronomy 32:48-52).

A temper out of control has been the downfall of many good men. Many preachers have had to leave their place of ministry because they have ruined their testimony with a bad temper. God help us in this area. Certainly the man of God should have a fire to him. He ought to have a little "righteousness indignation", but at the same time he should learn to allow the Holy Spirit to rule over his temper.

**22. The man of God should be "a lover of good men" (Titus 1:8).**

I shall not cover this in detail as I am writing another lesson on the manner in which God's servants should be treated, but still it should be noted that the true man of God should have a great, compassionate, compelling, abiding love for his preacher brethren as well as faithful laymen within the church he labors. Too often, a pastor may feel threatened by the men in the church he pastors, but this should not be. I well remember the first little country church I pastored. There were two godly old men, deacons, in that church who were both spiritual giants. I loved them, and to this day, over a quarter of a century later, still revere the memories of those two wonderful New Testament deacons, Bro. William Stradley and Bro. Mack Perry. I learned much from those two men. Even though they were both up in years, (I would guess in their eighties), those great men never made me feel anything less than their pastor. These men were giants of the faith, knowing far more than I about Biblical matters and doctrine, and yet they were so kind and patient with me. Even in the face of church problems, those men stood with their pastor and guided me through very turbulent waters.

Just this last March, Fellowship Baptist Church lost one of our deacons, Bro. Chuck Knudsen. He, too, was a godly giant and perhaps the greatest man I have ever had the privilege of pastoring. His wisdom, counsel and friendship are sorely missed by this preacher. I have been so fortunate over these many years in the pastorate to have been able to serve Christ with great men. Even today, I am in awe when we have our deacon's meetings to be able to work with such precious, godly, loving men. As I travel over the country I have met some of the Lord's finest laymen. The testimony that they have with their pastor causes me to love them. Their faithfulness and loyalty to their pastor is worthy of notation and I believe they will have great reward in heaven.

**23. The pastor should be "just" (Titus 1:8).**

If a man pastors more than one family, and has been pastoring more than a month, he most assuredly has been accused of being partial or of showing favoritism. He may not have heard the accusation, but nevertheless he stands charged with this crime. As pastors, we are to be just and fair with every member of our flock. As human beings, it is just natural that we will be closer to some than we are to others. However, when it comes to dealing with our people, human emotions and feelings are to be cast aside and we are to treat all impartially, kinship or friendship aside. And let me hasten to add, most pastors I know are harder on their own families than on anyone else in the congregation. How wrong this is. We should treat our family with equal tenderness and compassion as any other member. As difficult as this is, we should certainly strive to be just and fair.

**24. The man of God should be "holy" (Titus 1:8).**

Amen and Amen!! I believe if there is one universal need among God's people and God's preachers today, it must be holiness. Regardless of how a preacher interprets this passage of Scripture, God does expect His people to be holy; "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;" (I Peter 1:15). This wicked world of ours (worldliness) has so diluted the testimony of believers that for the most part, we have no witness. There is a universal need for God's people to return to some old-fashioned holiness and preachers must lead the way.

There is a crying need for God's men to realize that if God used only "holy men" in Bible days (II Peter 1:21) and if God never changes (Malachi 3:6), then He is still looking for His men to be holy men. I won't go into a great deal of detail here, but dear friends, anyone with good sense knows what is holy and what is not. I cannot see how one can be holy and let a continuous stream of depravity flow into their home via the television. Yes, my wife and I have a TV, but I will guarantee that we control it; it does not control us. Holiness does indeed contain elements of purity and virtue; looking right, acting right, speaking right, thinking right, dressing right. However, one may do all of these things and still not be holy. Holiness begins in the heart and for God's man this is essential to having the blessings of God upon him and his ministry.

**25. A New Testament pastor should be "temperate" (Titus 1:8).**

To say the least, most preachers I know have tempers, but are not temperate. One Bible commentary says that to be temperate is "having restraint or control over his body, passions, tongue, and impulses". Even though we independent Baptists have no connection whatsoever with the likes of Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart and their ilk, the world nevertheless sees us all as ministers and as a whole, that damages not only our credibility, but even more important our testimony. Would to God that there would never be another preacher fall into moral sin! We should never revel in hearing of a preacher brother who falls, but it should grieve us to no end and force us to our knees to plead with God to help us never be guilty of the same. Immorality comes when preachers begin to think themselves invincible and above sin. My brethren, we are all flesh and blood, subject to the same temptations. We are all capable of the greatest transgressions against God. God help us to be men of temperance.

**26. The truly God-called man must be uncompromising, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught..." (Titus 1:9).**

Regardless of which way others go and regardless of what others may do, if a man is to have the blessings of God upon him, he must stand uncompromising. For 21 years I belonged to an earthly, man-made ecclesiastical organization and for the entire duration of those years I heard a constant stream of "compromise for the sake of unity" preaching. Even though I knew that it was wrong, I, too, was guilty of spouting such garbage; "compromise convictions for the sake of unity", "compromise Baptist doctrine for the sake of unity", compromise, compromise, compromise. How nauseating this must be

to our uncompromising God. Even now, after preaching for the better part of 30 years, I still often go to meetings and hear preachers encourage their brethren to "compromise for the sake of unity." This is not of God. The men whom God has used over the centuries have been those who drew a line in the sand, so to speak, and refused to budge. These men have often paid a tremendous personal price for refusing to compromise their beliefs. They have faced confiscation of personal property, public scorn, ridicule, whippings, beatings, and torture. Many have seen their families torn apart; children snatched from their mother's arms and suffered ostracism by their "brethren."

J.M. Carroll, author of the *Trail of Blood*, states emphatically that over 50,000,000 have paid the ultimate price for refusing to compromise Biblical truths. These were stoned to death, drawn and quartered, drowned, burned at the stake, beheaded, hanged, crucified, shot through with arrows, and any other way that the wicked minds of men could invent to inflict excruciating pain upon those who have died for not compromising. It is an insult to God for a man who claims to have God's calling upon his life to compromise God's Word. It is wicked to do so. The Bible is not a collection of the thoughts of men, nor is it fables. The Bible from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 is wholly, solely and completely the very words of God. Those who change and compromise it, I believe, are under the curse of God.

**27. The God-called pastor is to be "courageous" (Acts 20:22-24).**

This certainly goes along with uncompromising. Whether anyone stands with him, or whether he must stand alone, the man of God must be valiant and courageous in his stand for Christ. Some months back, I had my first one-on-one encounter with a Promise Keepers representative. While I was visiting with him over the phone I told him what we believe at Fellowship Baptist, to which he replied, "Why, there isn't another church in town that believes what you do."

He meant that as an insult. I took it as a compliment. He's right! There isn't another church in town that believes that the Bible is the absolute Word of God, not to be tampered with or polluted by modern thought and philosophies, nor corrupted by modern translation. There isn't another church in Liberal, Kansas that takes the open unapologetic stand against alcohol, homosexuality, abortion, fornication and Promise Keepers that Fellowship Baptist does. I am thankful to have the church I pastor behind me in these stands and on these issues, but whether I have the support of my people or not, I pray that God would give me the courage to still stand on these and other issues. Even in the face of open confrontation, we must be courageous and stand for the truth.

**28. The true New Testament pastor should be "diligent" (2 Corinthians 8:22).**

This word diligent means fervent. We ought to be fervent in the ministry. It deserves the undivided attention and efforts of the one to whom a calling from God has been extended. I know that many pastors have to work a secular job in order to pastor. However, that secular job should only be a means by which he may be able to conduct his ministry. The job should not be the major thrust of his life. His ministry should be.

**29. The man of God should be "prayerful" (Acts 6:4).**

Many years ago, I was well acquainted with a preacher who told me that because he walked closely with God, he did not need to spend great seasons of time in prayer. Many years after that, he was exposed as immoral. I believe that one cannot walk closely with God without investing great amounts of time in prayer. In fact, I believe that prayerlessness is perhaps the single greatest sin among preachers today.

A good prayer life will keep us from immorality. Being constant and consistent in prayer will help us to be faithful to the truth of God's word. Prayer will cause us to be bold, unwavering, steadfast and courageous in our preaching. Perhaps this qualification for a God-called preacher should have been at the first of the list of qualifications. For if a preacher is prayerless; if he has no contact with the source of his calling and the source of power for his ministry, then he actually becomes a liability rather than an asset to the cause of Christ.



# The Pastor

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Hezekiah Harvey  
From the book, *The Church*, 1879

**W**e submit the following propositions:

## 1. The terms presbyter, bishop, pastor, are designations of one office. For,

**(a.) These terms are used interchangeably in Scripture.** The elders of Ephesus are called also overseers or bishops. Paul, in giving charge to Titus respecting the ordination of this class, terms them, interchange-ably, elders and bishops. And Peter exhorts elders to take the oversight, or act as bishops, of the flock (Acts 20:17-28; Tit. 1:5-7; I Pet. 5:1, 2).

**(b.) The qualifications and duties required of these are identical** (I Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5).

**(c.) Ordination, which Episcopacy claims as a prerogative of bishops, was plainly conferred by elders;** for Timothy was set apart to his work by the presbytery, or eldership (I Tim. 4:14). The New Testament gives no intimation of a distinction between bishops and elders, the term bishop being simply the Greek word for designating the person whom the Jews called elder; while pastor indicated the same person, as one to whom God had committed the oversight and guidance of the flock. This view has now the sanction of nearly all biblical scholars, English and German, Episcopal and non-Episcopal, and must be regarded as definitely settled.

## 2. The duties of pastors are the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the ordinances, and the government and spiritual oversight of the church.

**(a.) Preaching the gospel.** In Paul's address to the elders of Ephesus, he plainly implies that their work was substantially identical with his own teaching "publicly and from house to house;" for he proposed to them his own example of labor. "Apt to teach" is made an essential qualification in the pastor, and he is required to be "able by sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers." The highest work of the ministry, as presented in Scripture, is to act as "ambassadors for Christ" in proclaiming God's message to man.

**(b.) The administration of the ordinances.** In the commission Christ makes it the duty of the ministry not only to "teach," but also to baptize, thus including the administration of ordinances in their work. Philip the evangelist, acting under this commission, having made the Ethiopian eunuch a disciple, baptized him. No clear example is found of the administration of ordinances by any person not a minister of the gospel. Indeed, the ordinary discharge of this duty by the pastors may be inferred not only from its inclusion in the ministerial commission and from the example of Scripture, but also from the nature of the case.

For it was a constant and public duty, which must have been committed to some persons, and the officers of the church were the natural administrators. In the absence of precept, therefore, committing it to others, we should infer that it devolved on them. But as there is no express command, nor absolutely decisive example, restricting the administration of ordinances to the ministry, we may conceive that under exceptional circumstances, when an ordained minister cannot be obtained, this service might, under the direction of the church, be performed by others.

**(c.) The government and spiritual oversight of the church.** These functions are indicated in the designations of the office. Elder, derived from Jewish usage, denotes a spiritual ruler. Bishop, from the Greek, designates one who has the oversight of others. Pastor, or shepherd, signifies one who guides, feeds, and protects the flock. Nearly all allusions to pastors refer to them as leaders, guides, overseers of the church, presiding over it and administering its government. Thus, they preside in the assemblies of the church: Paul exhorts the Thessalonians, "We beseech you to know them that labor among you and are over" (preside over) "you in the Lord and admonish you." They inspire and lead the action of the church, and administer its rebukes and discipline: the Hebrew Christians are exhorted, "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account" (Heb. 13:17).

They instruct the church by word and example, in doctrine and duty; as Peter, in his striking charge to the elders says, "Feed"—act as shepherds over—"the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:1-4). Thus divinely appointed as the guides and overseers of the church, they are invested with authority as the executive officers, through whom the power of the body is exercised; and, while they teach and rule according to God's Word, the members are required to submit to them, as the flocks follow the voice of their shepherds.

The powers and duties of pastors, therefore, briefly stated, are as follows:

1. To direct and supervise the public religious instruction of the congregation in the pulpit and in all other departments of church work: they are the spiritual guides of the church, and may not permit the inculcation of false doctrine.
2. To administer the ordinances within the church.
3. To preside in all meetings of the church, whether for devotion or business.
4. To watch over the personal experience and life of the members, exhorting, admonishing, reproofing, rebuking, as those entrusted with the care of souls and expecting to give account. These powers and duties belong to the pastoral office, and within this sphere pastors act with rightful authority, as exercising functions devolved on them by God, but this authority is not absolute and final; for, as they receive their office through the church, so, if these powers are abused, the church may take the office from them.

### **3. Pastors do not constitute a priesthood with mediating, sacrificial, and absolving powers.**

Sacerdotalism, the offspring of clerical ambition, developed itself early in the third century and ultimately triumphed in the patristic church. The three orders of the clergy, then beginning to appear, assumed to be a priesthood, and the church was modeled after Judaism. The bishop became *summus sacerdos*, high priest; the presbyter was *sacerdos*, priest; and the deacon was *Levita*, a Levite. A hierarchy arose with the power of mediating between God and man, of offering sacrifice to God, and of pronouncing absolution from sin. The significant and beautiful ordinances of the gospel were transmuted into sacraments, possessing, when ministered by priestly hands, a magical efficacy to remove sins and impart eternal life. The priesthood, in which were strangely-blended characteristics from both heathenism and Judaism, arrogated to itself the exclusive power of opening and closing the door of heaven. And sacerdotalism, alike in the Papal and the Episcopal Church, has in all ages since asserted these as the true characteristics and functions of the Christian ministry.

Two facts, however, suffice to destroy this assumption:

- 1. Ministers, in the New Testament, are never designated as priests.** All believers are, indeed, "made kings and priests unto God," and constitute a "royal priesthood," since, through the blood of Christ; they all have access through the veil into

the immediate presence of God to offer spiritual sacrifices to him. But the ministry are never called priests, nor in any way indicated as a priestly caste distinct from and above the people. On the contrary, all the titles given them utterly preclude the idea of a priesthood or of priestly functions; for these titles pertain to the synagogue, not to the temple.

**2. Since the Patriarchal age only two orders of priesthood have existed—that of Melchizedek and that of Aaron.** The latter, without question, has been done away. The former still exists. But of this Christ is the one and final Priest, and his priestly work is performed, not on earth, but in the holiest of all, even heaven itself, where, "appearing in the presence of God," "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." The sacrifice he offered of himself was "once for all" complete and final, never to be repeated (Heb. 9 and 10). And it is the completeness of this one, final sacrifice, as at once and for ever putting away sin, which constitutes the message of the Christian ministry. There is, therefore, and in the nature of things there can be, no mediating, sacrificing, and absolving priesthood in the church. Christ is the one ETERNAL PRIEST: the ministry simply point the people to him. The assumption of priestly functions by man, therefore, is an invasion of the prerogatives of Jesus Christ.

**4. The number of pastors in each church is not fixed by Scripture, but it is probable, alike from apostolic example and from history, that in the Apostolic age there were ordinarily several who together constituted the presbytery of the church.**

**(a.) The testimony of Scripture.** We read of "the elders of the church" at Jerusalem, at Ephesus, and at Philippi. Paul and Barnabas "ordained elders in every church." Titus was left in Crete that he might ordain "elders in every city." In the catholic Epistles, James enjoins, in the case of the sick, that they "call for the elders of the church," and Peter exhorts "the elders which are among you;" in both which, as these apostles were addressing a large body of churches, the inference seems a necessary one that, as a common fact, a plurality of elders existed in each church. No clear example is found of a church organized under a single pastor.

Our Lord, in addressing the "seven churches of Asia," directs each epistle to "the angel of the church;" and it has been hence inferred that each of these churches was organized under a single pastor, called "the angel of the church." But this expression is confessedly obscure; there is no certainty that it designates a pastor at all, and standing alone it is wholly inadequate to offset the otherwise uniform example of Scripture. And even were it certain that "the angel of the church" designated the pastor, it would by no means follow that there was no church presbytery; for, in that case, the only legitimate inference would be that in the latter part of the Apostolic age, when the book of Revelation was written, the presiding officer of the church presbytery had already assumed, as he naturally would, a certain degree of prominence, which made him the proper medium through which to address the church.

**(b.) The testimony of history.** This is equally explicit in regard to a plurality in the eldership. Neander, speaking of the apostolic churches, says: "The guidance of the communities was everywhere entrusted to a Council of elders." (*History of the Christian Religion and Church*, Am. ed., vol. i., p. 184)

The earlier Fathers uniformly speak of them in the plural. Clement of Rome (A.D. 96) speaks of the first-fruits of the apostles' labors as having been "appointed to be bishops and deacons." Polycarp (A.D. 140) exhorts the Philippian church to "subject themselves to their presbyters and deacons." Tertullian, speaking of the public worship of the church, says: "Certain approved elders preside." In no instance do the Fathers of the second century speak of a single bishop in a church, except when referring to the president of the church presbytery, who among his fellow-presbyters was only first among equals. The bishop of the second century was simply the presiding officer among the presbyters of a church, and was the pastor over a single congregation.

Jerome states that at Alexandria, "until the middle of the third century, the presbyters always chose one of their own number as president, and gave him the title of bishop." But an extended citation of authorities is needless, for the existence of a presbytery in each church, composed of elders equal in authority, is attested by all the reliable records of the Post-apostolic age.

The question whether such a presbytery remains a part of the permanent constitution of the church, obligatory in all ages, has received different answers. The earlier Baptist confessions of faith—those of 1643 and 1689—recognize the plural eldership. The discipline adopted by the Philadelphia Association in 1743 presents it in the modified form of a ruling eldership, in which form, also, it still exists in some of the English churches.

Among our churches the plural eldership is commonly regarded as a feature peculiar to the Apostolic age, rendered necessary by the absence of a class of men specially trained for the pastoral office, and by the special circumstances of the churches in that period of persecution, when they were often compelled to meet in small companies at separate houses, and their members were scattered in prisons and placed in positions of peril and suffering, thus requiring a larger number of instructors and far greater and more varied labors in the pastoral care.

It is also urged that most churches do not possess several men adapted to such an office, and that the leadership of a single man would be more efficient than that of several men. With this view, in which there is much weight, our churches are generally organized under a single pastor, and many of the duties of the ancient presbytery, in the spiritual watch-care of the church, are transferred to the deacon's office. It is supposed that, in the changed circumstances of our age, this arrangement is not only lawful, but more expedient, especially as under it the pastor and deacons practically constitute a presbytery, and, so far as concerns the spiritual oversight, are often effectively doing its work.

On the other hand, it is said: There is serious reason to doubt whether an institution which rests on what seems the uniform example of the apostles can rightfully be set aside; as also whether, in the absence of such a guiding and conserving body within it, our church organization is not essentially weakened, alike in the purity and power of its church-life and in the wisdom and steadiness of its evangelizing efforts. Certainly, a permanent presbytery within the church, embodying its best experience and intelligence, and specially set apart to conserve its spiritual interests, would seem adapted both to give steadiness to its operations and maintain uninterrupted its worship and ordinances amidst pastoral changes, and to accomplish, far more perfectly than is possible under a single pastor, the spiritual oversight in visitation from house to house and the prompt, intelligent, and effective administration of discipline.

##### **5. A ruling eldership, as it exists under the Presbyterian constitution, has neither precept nor example in Scripture.**

The "ruling elders" in the Presbyterian Church are a body of laymen, presided over by the pastor, to whom are committed the admission and discipline of members and the spiritual oversight of the church. They have no authority to preach or administer ordinances.

Two passages are quoted as authority for this office, which, however, evidently do not refer to permanent offices in the church, but to the gifts exercised in the incipency of Christianity, several of which might be exercised by the same person. Thus, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace given unto us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation;...he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom. 12:6-8). And: "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongue (I Cor. 12:28).

Now, in this enumeration of gifts and functions "he that ruleth" and "governments" are mentioned, and it is inferred that these designate the ruling eldership. But it is plain that the reasoning which would interpret these as designations of a permanent office in the church would require that "he that showeth mercy" and "help," and all the other functions mentioned, be also interpreted as each the designation of a distinct permanent office; and the result would be at least eight permanent officers in the church. Certainly, such an interpretation must be false.

Paul's direction to Timothy is also cited: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor" (compensation), "especially they who labor in word and doctrine;" in which, it is alleged, a distinction is made between the "elders that rule" and the elders that "labor in word and doctrine." On this we remark: The apostolic churches, as already seen, had a plurality of elders; but all of these, though of equal authority and of like functions, did not possess in an equal degree the same gifts.

While one would be eminent in preaching, another would excel in the pastoral care; and another still would be distinguished in both these departments, and, thus specially gifted, would devote his whole time to the office.

It is of this class Paul here speaks—those who not only rule well, but also excel in public instruction, and consequently devote themselves wholly to the office. These, he says, should receive, not the ordinary compensation given to elders, but a double compensation, proportioned to the greater time and labor devoted to the work. The passage does not furnish the slightest evidence of a difference of office between the elders; on the contrary, the Greek adverb, here rendered "especially," in all ordinary usage implies that the persons emphasized after it constitute a part of the class mentioned before it.

Besides, in Scripture an essential qualification for the eldership is that a man be "apt to teach"—a qualification certainly not necessary for ruling. In accordance with this, the Biblical language habitually implies that teaching was combined with ruling in the functions of the elders, as in the following words of Paul: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God" (Heb. 13:7, 17). Plainly, also, a ruling eldership, according to the Presbyterian conception, which assumes authority to admit and discipline and exclude members, is disproved by all those passages, heretofore cited, which show that these functions belong only to the church assembled as a congregation.



## The Duty of a Pastor to His People \_\_\_\_\_

John Gill

Preached at the Ordination of George Braithwaite, March 28, 1734

From the book, *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, Vol. 2, 1773

*Take heed unto thyself; and unto thy doctrine; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.* (II Tim. 4:16)

**T**he part of the work of this day assigned to me is to give a word of exhortation to you, my Brother; who have been at this time solemnly ordained a pastor or overseer of this church. Your long standing, and usefulness in the ministry, might justly excuse everything of this kind, did not custom, and the nature of this day's service, seem to require it. You will therefore suffer a word of exhortation, though it comes from a junior minister, since you know in what situation we are; our senior ministers are gone off the stage of this world, who used to fill up this place, and whole years best became it: Our fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?

Give me leave to address you in the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles to Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Once this epistle was written, not for his sake only; but for the use and service also of other ministers of the gospel in succeeding ages; that they might know how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.

In it the apostle gives a large account of the proper qualifications of the officers of churches, bishops, and deacons; and in this chapter descends to some particular advice and directions to Timothy, and which are designed for the benefit and advantage of other preachers of the word, and pastors of churches. I shall not take any notice of them here, seeing I shall have occasion to make use of them in some parts of the following discourse; and shall therefore immediately attend to the words of my text, in which may be observed,

- I. A charge or exhortation given to Timothy.
- II. Some reasons to support it, and engage his regard unto it.

**I. Here is a charge or exhortation given, which consists of three parts**

*First*, to take heed to himself.

*Secondly*, to take heed to his doctrine.

*Thirdly*, to continue therein.

**First, the apostle exhorts Timothy to take heed to himself.** This is not to be understood of him merely as a man, that he should take care of his bodily health, his outward concerns of life, or make provision for his family, if he had any; not but that these things are to be equally regarded by a minister of the gospel as by any other person. Though he ought to be diligent in his studies, laborious in his work, and preach the gospel in season and out of season; yet he ought to be careful of the health of his body, and not destroy his natural constitution.

The words of the wise man are applicable to our present purpose, be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise, why shouldest thou destroy thyself? (Eccl. 7:16) The apostle Paul, in this epistle, advises Timothy to take care of himself in this sense, seeing he had much work upon his hands, and but of a weakly constitution; he exhorts him, that he would drink no longer water, but use a little wine, for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities (I Tim. 5:23); and it is alike true of a minister as of any other man, what is elsewhere said, If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. (I Tim 5:8) But this is not what the apostle has here in view, when he says "take heed to thyself."

Nor is this exhortation given to Timothy under the character of a believer, or private Christian. There are some things which are common to ministers, and private Christians; their cases in some respects are alike, and cautions to them are equally necessary: they have the same corruptions, are subject to the same temptations, and liable to the same daily failings and infirmities; and therefore such, whether ministers or people, who think they stand, should take heed lest they fall. Unbelief, and distrust of divine providence, presence, power, and assistance have a place in the hearts of ministers as well as others, and sometimes rise to a considerable pitch, and do very much prevail; when such advice as this must be needful, take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. (Heb. 3:12) There are many instances which might be produced, in which this exhortation would appear to be suitable to Timothy, and so to any other gospel minister considered as a believer and a Christian.

But I apprehend that the apostle regards him in his ministerial capacity, as a preacher of the word; and is desirous that he would take heed to himself, as a minister, and to the ministry which he had received in the Lord, that he fulfill it. It becomes a minister of the gospel to take heed to his gifts bestowed upon him, by which he is qualified for his work that he does not lose, but use and improve them; to his time, that he spends it aright, and does not squander it away; of the errors and heresies which are in the world that he is not infected by them; to his spirit, temper, and passions that he is not governed by them; to his life and conversation, that it be exemplary, becoming his office, and makes for the glory of God; and to the flock committed to his care, which is the other part of himself.

**1. A minister ought to take heed to his gifts bestowed upon him, whereby he is qualified for the work of the ministry.**

Jesus Christ, when he ascended on high, received gifts for men, such as were proper to furnish, and fit them for ministerial service; and he has given them to men, he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers (Eph. 4:11) that is, he gave gifts, to qualify them for these several offices; and he still continues to give gifts to some, by which they become capable of discharging the work and office of pastors of churches; and where these are given, they ought to be taken care of.

Now, a minister of the gospel should take heed to his gifts that he does not lose them. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (Rom. 11:29) Gifts of special and saving grace are irreversible; God never repents of them, or revokes them, or calls them in; where they are once bestowed, they are never taken away but gifts fitting men for public work and usefulness, as they may be where true grace is not, so they may be removed, when living grace never will. This we may learn from the parable of the talents, where our Lord says, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him which

hath ten. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath (Matt. 25:29, 30).

Woe therefore to the Idol Shepherd (Zech. 11:17), the shepherd of no account, who is good for nothing; for an idol is nothing in the world; who leaveth the flock, makes no use of his gifts, deserts his station, forsakes the flock; the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened. All his light and knowledge, his abilities and usefulness, shall be taken from him. Hence the apostle exhorts Timothy to keep by the Holy Ghost the good thing which was committed to him; by which he means, not grace, but either the gospel, or the gift of preaching it; grace cannot, gifts may be lost.

Moreover, a gospel minister should take heed to his gifts, that he uses them: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee," says the apostle to Timothy; "which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (I Tim. 4:14). A minister may be tempted to neglect, lay aside, and dilute his gifts, for want of success in his work, or because of the flight and contempt which may be cast upon him, or by reason of the rage, fury, and persecutions of men; something of this nature was discouraging to Timothy in the exercise of his gifts, which occasioned the apostle to put him in remembrance, that, says he; "thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands; for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God (II Tim 1:6-8).

As if he should say, "Let not that gift which God has bestowed upon thee lie dormant, and be neglected by thee, through a timorous and cowardly spirit; but boldly and bravely preach the gospel of the grace of God, though thou art sure to endure much affliction and persecution." Woe to that man, who, from any consideration whatever, wraps up his talent in a napkin, and hides it in the earth; such an one Christ at the great day of account, will call wicked and slothful; and give orders to call such an unprofitable servant into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:26, 30).

Besides, a minister ought not only to take heed that he uses his gifts, but also that he improves them; and, indeed, they are generally improved by using. Gifts, like pieces of armour, through disuse, grow rusty, but the more they are worn the brighter they are. There are several things which have a tendency to improve, and, with the blessing of God, do improve spiritual gifts, such as prayer, meditation, and reading. These the apostle directed Timothy to for the improvement of his mind: "Till I come," says he, "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (I Tim. 4:15); meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, or, be thou in them; be constantly intent upon them, that thy profiting may appear to all, or in all things, that is, in all parts of useful knowledge.

It is the duty of ministers to stir up the gift of God which is in them (II Time 1:6). Gifts are sometimes like coals of fire, covered and buried in ashes, to which there is an allusion in this passage, which must be stirred up, or blown off, that they may revive and be re-inflamed, and so communicate more light and heat. It is true, ministers cannot procure gifts for themselves, nor increase them of themselves; but God is pleased to give to his servants greater abilities, more light and knowledge, in the diligent use of means, for unto every one that-hath, that is, that has gifts, and makes use of all proper methods to improve them, shall be given, and he shall have abundance.

**2. A minister ought to take heed to his time, that he spends it aright, and does not squander it away.** Time is precious, and ought to be redeemed, and diligently improved, by all sorts of men; but by none more than the ministers of the gospel, who should spend it in frequent prayer, constant meditation, and in daily reading the Scriptures, and the writings of good men; which are transmitted to posterity for the benefit and advantage of the churches of Christ. They should give themselves up wholly to these things, and daily and diligently themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). They ought not to spend their time in an unprofitable manner, or in needless and unnecessary visits. It is a mistake which prevails among church-members, that they must be visited, and that very often: if ministers are not continually calling on them they think themselves needled, and are much displeased; not considering, that such a frequency of visits, as is desired by them, must be the bane and ruin of what might otherwise be a very valuable ministry; and at the same time furnishes an idle and lazy preacher with a good excuse to neglect his studies, and that with a great deal of peace and quietness of conscience, whilst he fancies he is about his ministerial work. I

would not be understood, as though I thought that visits were needless things, and that they are no part of a minister's work: I am sensible, that he ought to be diligent to know the state of his flock; and that it is his business to visit the members - of the church, at proper times, and on proper occasions; what I complain of is the too great frequency of visits as is delved, and when they are unnecessary.

**3. A minister ought to take heed to himself, that he is not infected with the errors and heresies which are in the world.**

There always have been, and still are, heresies among men and there must be; that they which are approved, are faithful and approved ministers of Christ, might be made manifest, to the churches, and the world, by their zeal for truth, and against error. And whereas ministers, as well as others, are liable to have their minds corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, and to be led away with the error of the wicked, and so fall from their own steadfastness; it becomes them, therefore, to take heed to themselves. This was the reason of the apostle's advice to the elders of the church at Ephesus, at his taking his leave of them; when he said to them, take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock:—for, says he, I know this, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Take heed, beware, therefore, of these perverse men and things, lest you also be drawn after them, and be carried away by them. Our Lord Jesus Christ thought it necessary to exhort his own disciples, to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees; and to take heed, that they were not deceived by false Christs, and false prophets. Ministers, of all men, ought to be most careful to shun error, and avoid false doctrines; since their seduction may be the means of a greater spread of them, and of the ruin of multitudes of souls.

**4. A minister ought to take heed to his spirit, his temper, and his passions, that he is not governed by them.**

The preachers of the gospel are men of like passions with others: Some of Christ's disciples were very hot, fiery, and passionate; they were for calling for fire from heaven to consume such who had displeased them; hence our Lord said unto them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:55). One that has the government of his passions, and can rule his own spirit and temper, is very fit to rule in the church of God. He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city (Prov. 16:32). But if a man is influenced and governed by his passions, he will be led by them to take indirect and imprudent steps; and to manage affairs with partiality, to the prejudice of the church, and members of it.

**5. A minister ought to take heed to his life and conversation, that it be exemplary to those who are under his care.**

Private Christians may, and ought to be examples one to another; they should be careful to maintain or go before each other in good works; but more especially, ministers ought to be examples to the flock. This is the advice the apostle gave Timothy; be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Tim 4:12).

They ought to be careful how they behave themselves in their families, in the church, and in the world; that they give no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed, and so become useless and unprofitable. This was what the apostle Paul was careful of, with respect to himself, and his ministry; I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection (1 Cor. 9:27); I do not indulge, but deny myself all carnal lusts and pleasures, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away; that is, not one rejected of God, or a reprobate; for he knew whom he had believed, and was persuaded, that nothing could separate him from the love of God; he had no fearful apprehensions of this kind; though he was jealous and cautious, lest he should be guilty of misconduct in his outward conversation among men; and so become rejected, and disapproved of by men, and be useless in his ministry. Every Christian ought to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, but more especially the preachers of it; their lights should so shine before men that they seeing their good works, may glorify their father which is in heaven. The name of God, the ways of Christ, and the truths of the gospel, are blasphemed, and spoken evil of, through the scandalous lives of professors, and especially ministers. Nothing is more abominable than that one, whose business it is to instruct and reprove others, is himself notoriously culpable; to such a person and case, the words of the apostle are very applicable:

Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest, a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest, a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? for the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you (Rom 2: 21-24).

**6. A minister ought to take heed to the flock committed to his care; which is but the other part of himself.** There is a mutual relation, a close union, between a pastor and a church; they are in some sense one, and their interests are one; so that a pastor, by taking heed to himself, takes heed to his flock, and by taking heed to his flock takes heed to himself. Hence these two are joined together in the apostle's advice to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the holy Ghost hath made you over-seers, to feed the church (Acts 20:28). Pastors of churches should be careful that they feed the saints with knowledge and understanding; that they feed the flock, and not themselves; that they perform the whole office of faithful shepherds to them that they strengthen the diseased, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring again that which was driven away, and seek up that which was lost; all which they should take diligent heed unto, since they must be accountable to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, for all those who are under their care. But so much for the first branch of the exhortation; I proceed to consider,

**Secondly, the second part of the charge, which is to take heed to his doctrine, that is, to the doctrine to which he has attained, which he has a knowledge of, and ought to preach to others;** otherwise the doctrine is not his own but another's; as Christ says of himself as man, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me (John 7:16). Christ received his doctrine from his Father, and his ministers receive it from him, and deliver it to the people. The doctrine which a gospel minister preaches, is in the same since his, in which the apostle Paul calls the gospel, my gospel, or our gospel; not that it was a system of doctrines drawn up, and composed by him; but what was given him by the revelation of Christ, was committed to his trust, what he ought to preach, and in which he was made useful to the souls of many.

Now a minister ought to take heed to his doctrine, that it be according to the Scriptures, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine (II Tim. 3:16). True doctrine springs from it, is agreeable to it, and may be confirmed and established by it; therefore if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God (I Pet. 4:11). He should be careful that his doctrine has a place in the Word of God, that it takes its rise from it, is consonant to it, and capable of being proved by it: To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20). Whatever doctrines do not spring from these fountains of light and truth, or are disagreeable to them, must be accounted diverse and strange doctrines.

Care should also be taken by a minister of the gospel that his doctrine be the doctrine of Christ; that is, such as Christ himself preached, which he has delivered out by revelation to others, and of which he is the form and substance. We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness (I Cor. 1:23). This doctrine is most likely to be useful for the conversion of sinners, and comfort of saints; and a man that does not bring this with him is to be discouraged and rejected: Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed (II John 9, 10).

Moreover, a minister should take heed that his doctrine be the same with that of the apostles. It was the glory of the primitive Christians, that they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine; and it muff be the excellency of a man's ministry, that it is agreeable to that faith which was once delivered to the saints. Jesus Christ received his doctrine from his Father, which he delivered to his apostles: I have given unto them says he, the words which thou gave, me, and they have received the (John 17:8); who also were guided by the spirit of truth into all truth, as it is in Jesus; and under the inspiration of the same Spirit have left the whole of it in writing to the churches of Christ; which should be the standard of a gospel ministry throughout all generations.

Besides, it becomes a preacher of the Word to be careful that the doctrine he teaches be according to godliness; that it is not contrary to the moral perfections of God, or has a tendency to promote a loose and licentious life; but that it is agreeable to, and may be a means of increasing, both internal and external holiness. Sin, as it is a transgression of the law, so it is contrary to sound doctrine; which sound doctrine is according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God (I Tim. 1:10, 11).

The gospel no more countenances sin, than the law does; the grace of God, the doctrine of the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, the news of it to sinners, hath appeared to all men, Gentiles as well as Jews; teaching us, that denying

ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Whatever doctrines are subversive of true piety, or strike at the life and power .of godliness, are to be rejected: if any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strifes, railings, evil surmisings, &c (I Tim 6:3-5).

Again, it is highly necessary, that a pastor of a church should be careful that his doctrine be such as makes for the edification of the people; it ought to be solid and substantial, suited to their capacities, and what is food convenient for them; he should not, therefore, give heed to fables, and endless genealogies; he ought, in his ministry, to shun profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called. He should not strive about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers; and should carefully and diligently avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they do gender strifes (I Tim. 1:4 & 6:20).

In a word, he should take heed, that his doctrine be found and incorrupt, pure and, unmixed, and that it be all of a piece, and consistent with itself. He ought to speak the things which become found doctrine; that is, such things as are agreeable to it, and consistent with it, and which are wholesome and healthful to the souls of men. In his doctrine he ought to shew uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, and use found speech, which cannot be condemned (Titus 2:1, 7, 8); he should not teach for doctrines the commandments of men, or join, or mix divine truths with human inventions.

The chaff and the wheat should be kept separate; nor should he blend law and gospel, grace and works together; and so be like them that corrupt the Word of God, "adulterate it, by mixing it with their own fancies;" as unfair dealers in liquors mix water with them, which is the sense of the word here used; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God should a gospel minister speak in Christ. He ought to take heed that what he preaches is consistent with itself; that it has no yea and nay, no contradiction in it, and does not destroy itself; and so bring a reproach upon him, and he become useless to his hearers; for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound; who shall prepare himself for the battle? (I Cor. 14:8) Consistence, harmony, and connection of things with each other, are the beauty and glory of a man's ministry; which must needs recommend it, and make it most useful, profitable and pleasant.

It is also very advisable that he take heed that he express his doctrine in the best manner, and to the best advantage. He ought to be careful about the manner as well as the matter of his ministry; that he speak plainly, intelligibly, and boldly, the gospel, as it ought to be spoken. Elocution, which is a gift of utterance, a freedom of expression, with propriety of language, is one of the gifts fitting for public usefulness in the work of the ministry; and which may be improved by the use of proper means. The example of the royal preacher is worthy of our imitation, because the preacher was wise he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs: the preacher sought to find out acceptable words; and that which was written was upright, even words of truth (Eccl. 12:9, 10). He not only sought for proper and agreeable truths, but was careful to express them in the most acceptable manner.

To conclude this head; when a minister has used his care and diligence about his doctrine, that it be according to the Scriptures, agreeable to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles; that it be according to godliness; and makes for the use of edifying; that it be sound and incorrupt, pure and unmixed, and consistent with itself; and that it be expressed in the best manner, and to the best advantage, he ought to take heed to defend it whenever opposed; for ministers are not only set to preach the gospel, but for the defense of it; they should by sound doctrine both exhort and convince gainsayers; for which purpose, they should use the two-edged sword, the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; and is both an offensive and defensive weapon, by which, at once, error is refuted and truth established.

**Thirdly, the third part of this exhortation, which is, to continue in them.** Some read the words, continue with them that is, with the people at Ephesus, where Timothy was, and where the apostle would have him remain; as appears from what he says to him at the beginning of this epistle I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3). But I choose rather to consider them as they are in our translation rendered, continue in them; that is, in the doctrines which thou dost well to take heed unto. Much such advice does the apostle give to Timothy, in his second epistle to him, continue thou, says he, in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them. It is very

unbecoming ministers of the Word, to be like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; daily shifting sides and changing sentiments.

He that would be a preacher of the gospel to others ought so to study the Scriptures, and learn the doctrines of grace, as to be assured of them, to be at a point at a certainty concerning them; that he may be able to speak them boldly, as they ought to be spoken; and when he has so done, he ought to adhere to them, abide by them, and continue in them; even, though a majority may be against them, for we are not to follow a multitude to do evil (Ex. 23:2). Truth is not to be judged of by the number of its admirers; if this was a sure and safe rule to go by, the Church of Rome would have the best pretensions to the truth of doctrine, discipline, and worship; for all the world wondered after the beast (Rev. 13:3).

It should be no discouragement to a gospel minister to observe that there are but few that receive the doctrines of grace. Yea, he should abide by them though they are opposed by men of learning and reputation. Truth does not always lie among men of that character. God is pleased to hide the mysteries of the gospel from the wise and prudent, and reveal them unto babes; and by the foolishness of preaching confound the wise and save them that believe. It was an objection to our Lord's ministry that not any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him; but this people who knoweth not the law are cursed (John 7:48, 49).

Ministers of the gospel should abide by and continue in the doctrines of it, though it is only received by the poor and ignorant and opposed by the rich and wise. Nay, they ought to do so, though there are some things in them which cannot be comprehended by corrupt and carnal reason; this should be no objection to a reception of them or continuance in them. There are some things in the gospel which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, that is, a natural man, to receive of wherefore it is no wonder that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:9-14).

Nor should the charges and imputations of novelty and licentiousness frighten and deter the ministers of Christ from abiding by the doctrines of grace, since these were the very reproaches and calumnies that the doctrines of Christ and apostles were loaded with, "What thing is this? What new doctrine is this?" (Mark 1:27) Say some concerning Christ's ministry; and so the Athenians to Paul, "May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is?" (Acts 17:19) They looked upon the more substantial truths of the gospel as novelties, upstart notions, such as were never heard of before; nay, they were accounted by some as having a tendency to open a door to all manner of wickedness and looseness of life; which occasioned the apostle to say, And not rather, as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm, that we say, Let us do evil that good may come; whose damnation is just (Rom. 3:8).

In a word, it becomes Christ's ministers to abide by, and continue in the doctrines of grace, though they risk their good name, credit and reputation, are in danger of losing their outward maintenance, -or worldly substance, yea, life itself; for whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it (Mark 8:35).

## **II. The reasons given by the apostle to support the whole of this charge or exhortation; and to engage Timothy's, and so every other gospel minister's regard unto it.**

**First, his first reason is, "For in doing this thou shalt save thyself."** Jesus Christ is the only efficient and procuring cause of salvation: There is no salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Ministers cannot save themselves by any works of righteousness done by them no, not by their ministerial services; it is in vain to expect salvation by any, or from any other than Christ Jesus: But ministers, by taking heed to themselves, may, through a divine blessing, and the influences of the Spirit of God, save themselves from an untoward generation, and be preserved from the pollutions of the world; may keep their garments, their outward conversation garments, so that they do not walk naked, and others see their shame. By taking heed to their doctrine they may save themselves from being infected with false doctrines, errors and heresies; those roots of bitterness which springing up in churches trouble some and defile others. And by continuing in their doctrines, may save themselves from the blood of all men, with whom they are concerned. The work of a minister is an awful, solemn, and weighty, one; if he does not warn and

instruct both the righteous and the wicked, their blood will be required at his hand; but if he performs his office faithfully, he delivers his soul, that is, he saves himself from such a charge against him; as did the apostle Paul, who could say, "I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). Thus, by a minister's taking heed to himself and to his doctrine, and continuing therein, he saves himself from all just blame in his character and office; and may be truly accounted a good minister of Jesus nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto he hath attained.

**Secondly, his other reason is, "thou shalt also save them that hear thee;"** that is by being an example to them both in word and conversation, thou shalt be the means of preserving them both from erroneous principles and immoral practices; or, thou shalt be instrumental in their eternal salvation. Ministers are instruments by whom souls believe, and so are saved; the word preached by them being, by the grace of the Spirit, an engrafted word, is able to save them; and the gospel being attended with the demonstration of the Spirit, is the power of God unto salvation. What can, or does more strongly engage ministers to take heed to themselves to their doctrine and abide therein, than this?

That they may be useful in the conversion and so in the salvation of precious and immortal souls, which are of more worth than a world: He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (James 5:20). A hopeful view of this supports ministers in their work, and carries them cheerfully through many difficulties that attend it; for such souls whom they have been useful to will be their joy, and crown of rejoicing, in the great Day of the Lord. These reasons, I trust, will engage you, my Brother, who have been this day set apart to the pastoral office in this church; to take heed to yourself, your gifts, time, temper, life and conversation, and to the flock now committed to your care.

And I conclude, that these will also engage you to take heed to your doctrine; that it be according to the Scriptures, the doctrine of Christ, his apostles, and true godliness; and such as will be profitable to them that hear it; that it be sound and incorrupt, pure and unmixed, and consistent with itself; that it be delivered out in the best manner you are able, and defended to the utmost of your ability by which you will abide and in which you will continue. In doing this you will be most likely to be instrumental in the conversion of sinners and edification of saints. God give success to all your ministrations



## The Duties of Church Members to Their Pastors

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J. A. James

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It is the will and appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ, the king and head of his churches, that they should behave towards their pastors as his ministers, who come in his name, bear his commands, and transact his business; and who are to be treated in every respect in a manner that corresponds with their office. In a subordinate sense, they are ambassadors for Christ, and are to be received and esteemed in a way that corresponds with the authority and glory of him who commissions them. Whoever slights, insults, or neglects them, in the discharge of their official duties, disobeys and despises their divine Master, who will keenly resent all the injuries that are offered them.

No earthly government will allow its messengers to be rejected and insulted with impunity; much less will the Lord of the church. Those who entertain low thoughts of the pastoral office, and neglect its ministrations; who speak contemptuously of their ministers; who excite a spirit of resistance to their counsels, admonitions, and reproofs; who endeavour to lessen that just reverence, to which for their works' sake, and on their Master's behalf they are entitled, certainly despise them,

and not only them, but Him that sent them also, and for such conduct will incur the heavy displeasure of Christ (Luke 10:16; 1 Thess. 5:13).

But to descend so particulars; the duty of church members towards their pastors includes:

### **I. Submission to their just and scriptural authority.**

It is readily admitted that the unscriptural, and therefore usurped domination of the priesthood is the root whence arose the whole system of papal tyranny; which, springing up like a tree of poison in the garden of the Lord, withered by its shadow, and blighted by its influence, almost every plant and flower of genuine Christianity. It is matter of no regret, therefore, nor of surprise, if a ceaseless jealousy should be maintained by those who understand the principles of religious liberty against the encroachments of pastoral authority.

Still, however, there is authority belonging to the pastor; for office without authority is a solecism. "Remember them that have the rule over you," (ver. 7) said Paul to the Hebrews in chapter 13. "Obey them that have the rule over you. Submit your-selves, for they watch for your souls" (ver. 17). "They addicted themselves to the ministry; submit yourselves to such" (I Cor. 16:15, 16). These are inspired injunctions, and they enjoin obedience and submission on Christian churches to their pastors. The authority of pastors, however, is not legislative or coercive, but simply declarative and executive. To define with precision its limits, is as difficult as to mark the boundaries of the several colours of the rainbow, or those of light and darkness at the hour of twilight in the hemisphere.

The minister is to command, yet he is not to "lord it over God's heritage" (I Pet. 5:3). This is not the only case, in which the precise limits of authority are left undefined by the Scriptures. The duties of the conjugal union are laid down in the same general manner: the husband is to rule and the wife to obey; yet it is difficult to declare where in this instance authority and submission end. In each of these instances, the union is founded on mutual love, confidence, and esteem, and it might therefore be rationally supposed that under these circumstances general terms are sufficient, and that there would arise no contests for power.

If the people see that all the authority of their pastor is employed for their benefit, they will not be inclined to ascertain by measurement whether he has passed its limits. The very circumstance of his prerogative being thus undefined, should on the one hand make him afraid of extending it, and on the other, render his church cautious of diminishing it. It is my decided conviction, that in some of our churches, the pastor is depressed far below his just level. He is considered merely in the light of a speaking brother. He has no official distinction or authority. He may flatter like a sycophant, he may beg like a servant, he may woo like a lover; but he is not permitted to enjoin like a ruler. His opinion is received with no deference; his person treated with no respect, and in the presence of some of his lay tyrants, if he say anything at all, it must be somewhat similar to the ancient soothsayers, for he is only permitted to peep and mutter from the dust.

Those persons who are anxious to strip their pastors of all just elevation cannot expect to derive much edification from their labours; for instruction and advice, like substances falling to the earth, impress the mind with a momentum, proportionate to the height from which they descend.

### **II. Church members should treat their pastors with distinguishing honour, esteem, and love.**

"Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially they that labour in the word and doctrine." (I Tim. 5:17). "Know them that have the rule over you, and esteem them very highly in love, for their works' sake." (I Thess. 5:11, 12). To prescribe in what way our love should express itself, is almost needless, as love is the most inventive passion of the heart, and will find or make a thousand opportunities for displaying its power. Love is also practical, as well as ingenious, and does not confine itself either to the speculations of the judgment, or the feelings of the heart. It breathes in kind words, and lives in kind deeds.

Where a minister is properly esteemed and loved, there will be the greatest deference for his opinions, the most delicate attention to his comfort, a scrupulous respect for his character. Some people treat their minister as if he could feel nothing but blows. They are rude, discourteous, and churlish. Instead of this, let him see the most studious and constant care to promote his happiness and usefulness. When he is in sickness, visit him; in trouble, sympathise with him; when absent from home, take a kind interest in his family; when he returns, greet him with a smile; at the close of the labours of the Sabbath, let the members gather round him, and not suffer him to retire from his scene of public labours without the reward of some tokens of their approbation, if it be only one friendly pressure of the hand. Let him see that his prayers, and sermons, and solicitude, render him dear to the hearts of his flock. It is astonishing what an influence is sometimes produced upon a minister's mind and comfort even by the least expression of his people's regard.

Of this we have a beautiful instance in the life of Paul. On that important journey to Rome, which was to decide the question of life or death, he appears to have felt a season of temporary depression when the imperial city presented itself to his view. In silent meditation he revolved, not without some degree of dismay, his approaching appeal to a tribunal from which he had nothing in the way of clemency to expect. For a little while the heroism of this exalted man was somewhat affected by his situation. At this juncture some of the Roman Christians, who had been apprised of his approach, came out as far as the Appii-forum, and the three taverns to meet him, "whom, when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage" (Acts 28:15). From that moment fears of Nero, of prison, and of death, all left him. He sprung forward with new ardour in his career, prepared to offer himself in sacrifice on the altar of martyrdom.

If then the love of these brethren, who had travelled a few stages to meet Paul, produced so happy an effect upon the mind of this illustrious apostle, how certainly might the members of our churches calculate upon a similar influence being produced upon the hearts of their pastors by even the smaller expressions of their affection.

### **III. Attendance upon their ministration is another duty which church members owe their pastors.**

This attendance should be constant, not occasional. Some of our members give unspeakable pain to their pastors by the irregularity of their visits to the house of God. A little inclemency of weather, or the slightest indisposition of body, is sure to render their seats vacant. Sometimes a still more guilty cause than this exists. Oh! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines triumph." Many professors do not scruple to devote a part of the Sabbath to travelling. They do not probably set off upon a journey in the morning of the Sabbath, and travel all day, but they set off perhaps on Saturday evening, and arrive at home late on Sunday morning; or they leave home after tea on Sunday evening, and thus take only a part of the hallowed day from its destined purpose. This practice, it is to be feared, has much increased of late, and is become one of the prevailing sins of the religious world. Such persons deserve to be brought under the censures of the church.

Some persons are irregular in their attendance through the distance at which they live from their place of public worship. Oftentimes this is unavoidable; but it is a great inconsistency for professing Christians voluntarily to choose a residence which from its remoteness from the house of God must often deprive them of the communion of the saints. Such a disposition to sacrifice spiritual privileges to mere temporal enjoyment does not afford much evidence that religion is with them the one thing needful, or that they have the mind of David, who thought the threshold of the sanctuary was to be preferred to the saloon and the park of the palace. Injurious as the practice necessarily must be to the individuals themselves, it is still more so to their servants and children.

Professing Christians should feel the obligations to attend week day services. Most ministers have often to complain, that they are half deserted on these occasions. Surely, with such hearts and amidst such circumstances as ours, it is too long to go from Sabbath to Sabbath without the aid of public worship. All persons have not the command of their own time; but in the case of those who have, the neglect is inexcusable, and argues a very low state of religion in the soul.

A minister has a right to expect his members at the meetings for social prayer. The Christian that neglects these betrays such an utter indifference to the interests of the church, and the comfort of the pastor, as well as so much lukewarmness in his own personal religion, as to be a fit subject for the exercise of discipline.

**IV. Earnest prayer.**

How often and how earnestly did the great apostle of the Gentiles repeat that sentence which contained at once the authority of a command and the tenderness of a petition—"Brethren pray for us." In another place, he ascribes his deliverance and preservation to the prayers of the churches—"You also helping together by prayer for us" (II Cor. 2:11). Surely then if this illustrious man was dependent upon, and indebted to the prayers of Christians, how much more so the ordinary ministers of Christ!

Pray then for your ministers; for the increase of their intellectual attainments, spiritual qualifications, and ministerial success. Pray for them in your private approaches to the throne of grace; pray for them at the family altar; and thus teach your servants and children to respect and love them. Reasons both numerous and cogent enforce this duty. It is enjoined by divine authority It is due to the arduous nature of their employment. Little do our churches know the number and magnitude of our temptations, discouragements, difficulties and trials.

"Tis not a cause of small import  
The pastor's care demands,  
But what might fill an angel's heart,  
And fill'd a Saviour's hands."

Our office is no bed of down or of roses on which the indolent may repose with careless indifference, or uninterrupted slumbers. Far, very far from it. Cares of oppressive weight; anxieties which can be known only by experience; labours of a mental kind almost too strong and incessant for the powers of mind to sustain, fall to our lot, and demand the prayerful sympathy of our flocks. And then as another claim for our people's prayers, we might urge the consideration of their own interest, which is identified with all our efforts. We are to our people just what God makes us, and no more, and he is willing to make us almost what they ask. A regard to their own spiritual profit, if nothing else, should induce them to bear us much on their hearts before the throne of divine grace.

Prayer is a means of assisting a minister which is within the reach of all. They who can do nothing more, can pray. The sick, who cannot encourage their minister by their presence in the sanctuary, can bear him upon their hearts in their lonely chamber. The poor who cannot add to his temporal comfort by pecuniary donations, can supplicate their God "to supply all his needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The timid, who cannot approach to offer him the tribute of their gratitude, can pour their praises into the ear of Jehovah, and entreat him still to encourage the soul of his servant. The ignorant, who cannot hope to add one idea to the stock of his knowledge, can place him by prayer before the fountain of celestial radiance. Even the dying, who can no longer busy themselves as aforesaid for his interests, can gather up their remaining strength, and employ it in the way of prayer for their pastor.

Prayer, if it be sincere, always increases our affection for its object. We never feel even our dearest friends to be so dear as when we have commended them to the goodness of God. It is the best extinguisher of enmity, and the best fuel for the flame of love. If some professing Christians were to take from the time they spend in praising their ministers, and others from that which they employ in blaming them, and both were to devote it to the act of praying for them, the former would find still more cause for admiration, and the latter far less reason for censure.

**V. Members should encourage others to attend upon the ministry of their pastors.**

"Let us go up to the house of the Lord" is an invitation which they should often address to the people of the world, who either attend no place of worship at all, or where the truth is not preached. A minister cannot himself ask people to attend his place of worship, but those who are in the habit of hearing him can; and it is astonishing to what an extent the usefulness of private Christians may be carried in this way.

I have received very many into the fellowship of the church under my care, who were first brought under the sound of the gospel by the kind solicitations of a pious neighbour. To draw away the hearers of one faithful preacher to another is a

despicable ambition—mere sectarian zeal: but to invite those who never hear the gospel to listen to the joyful sound is an effort worthy the mind of an angel. Shall sinners invite one another to iniquity—to the brothel, the theatre, the tavern—and Christians not attempt to draw them to the house of God? This is one way in which every member of every church may be the means of doing great good; the rich, the poor, male and female, masters and servants, young and old, have all some acquaintance over whom they may exert their influence; and how can it be better employed than in attracting them to those places

"Where streams of heavenly mercy flow,  
And words of sweet salvation sound?"

**VI. It is incumbent on church members to make known to their pastor anything of importance that occurs within the scope of their observation, or the course of their experience, relating to his church and congregation.**

For instance, their own spiritual embarrassments, trials, temptations; the declensions, backslidings, and sins of others, which they imagine may have escaped his notice, and which they have first tried by their own personal efforts to deal with. If they perceive any root or bitterness growing up, which they have not strength or skill enough to eradicate, it is then manifestly their duty to inform him of the circumstance. If they perceive any individual whose case has been overlooked, any one in circumstances which need sympathy or relief, any who are struggling with affliction, but are too modest or timid to disclose their situation—they should bring all such occurrences under his notice.

Especially should they encourage by their own personal attentions any persons in the congregation who appear to be under religious concern; in such cases they should put forth all their tenderest solicitude to shelter and cherish these hopeful beginnings, and introduce the subjects of them to their minister. There are some Christians—but do they indeed deserve the name?—who would see all the process of conversion going on in the very next seat to theirs, and observe the fixed attention, the anxious look, the tearful eye, the serious deportment—and all this repeated one Sabbath after another—without the least possible interest, or ever exchanging a single syllable with the inquiring penitent! Shame, shame on such professors! Can the love of Christ dwell in such cold and careless hearts? Can they have ever felt conviction of sin? How easy and how incumbent is it to introduce ourselves to such individuals; a word, a look, would be received with gratitude.

**VII. Zealous cooperation in all schemes of usefulness proposed by the pastor, whether for the benefit of their own society in particular, or the welfare of the church, and the world at large, is the duty of Christians.**

This is an age of restless activity, practical benevolence, and progressive improvement. One scheme of benefit often contains the germs of many more. The love of innovation and the dread of it are equally remote from true wisdom. Zeal, when guided by wisdom, is a noble element of character, and the source of incalculable good.

A church ought always to stand ready to support any scheme which is proved to their judgment to be beneficial either to themselves or others. It is most disheartening to ministers to find all their efforts counteracted by that ignorance which can comprehend nothing strange, that bigotry which is attached to everything old, by that timidity which starts at everything new, or by that avarice which condemns everything expensive. Usages and customs that are venerable for their antiquity, I admit, should not be touched by hot spirits and rude hands, lest in removing the sediment deposited by the stream of time at the base of the fabric, they should touch the foundation itself. But where the Word of God is the line and the plummet; where this line is held by the hand of caution, and watched by the eye of wisdom; in such cases, innovation upon the customs of our churches is a blessing, and ought to receive the support of the people. It is a scandal to any Christian society, when the flame of ministerial zeal is allowed to burn without enkindling a similar fire.

**VIII. A most delicate and tender regard for the pastor's reputation.**

A minister's character is the lock of his strength; and if once this be sacrificed, he is like Samson shorn of his hair, a poor, feeble, faltering creature, the pity of his friends and the derision of his enemies. I would not have bad ministers screened, nor would I have good ones maligned. When a preacher of righteousness has stood in the way of sinners, and walked in the counsel of the ungodly, he should never again open his lips in the great congregation, until his repentance is as notorious as

his sin. But while his character is unsullied, his friends should preserve it with as much care against the tongue of the slanderer as they would his life against the hand of the assassin.

When I consider the restless malignity of the great enemy of God and holiness, and add to this his subtlety and craft; when I consider how much his malice would be gratified, and his schemes promoted, by blackening the character of the ministers of the gospel; when I consider what a multitude of creatures there are who are his vassals, and under his influence, creatures so destitute of moral principle, and so filled with venomous spite against religion, as to be prepared to go any lengths in maligning the righteous, and especially their ministers, I can account for it on no other ground than that of a special interposition of Providence that the reputation of Christian pastors is not more frequently attacked by slander, and destroyed by calumny.

But probably we see in this, as in other cases that wise arrangement of Providence by which things of delicacy and consequence are preserved by calling forth greater solicitude for their safety. Church members should therefore be tremblingly alive to the importance of defending their minister's character. They should neither expect to see him perfect, nor hunt after his imperfections. When they cannot but see his imperfections—imperfections which after all may be consistent with not only real, but eminent piety—they should not take pleasure in either magnifying or looking at them; but make all reasonable excuse for them, and endeavour to lose sight of his infirmities in his virtues as they do the spots of the sun amidst the blaze of radiance with which they are surrounded.

Let them not be the subject of conversation even between yourselves, much less before your children, servants, and the world. If you talk of his faults in derision, who will speak of his excellencies with admiration? Do not look at him with suspicion, but repose an honourable confidence in his character. Do not make him an offender for a word, and refuse to him that charity and candor of judgment, which would be granted to everyone else. Do not magnify indiscretions into immoralities, and exact from him that absolute perfection, which in your own case you find to be unattainable. Beware of whispers, innuendoes, significant nods, and that slanderous silence, which is more defamatory than the broadest accusation.

Defend him against the groundless attacks of others. Never hear him spoken of with undeserved reproach, without indignantly repelling the shafts of calumny. Express your firm and dignified displeasure against the witling that would make him ridiculous, the scorner that would render him contemptible, and the defamer that would brand him as immoral.

Especially guard against those creeping reptiles which infest our churches, and are perpetually insinuating that their ministers do not preach the gospel, merely because they do not incessantly repeat the same truths in the same words; because they do not allegorize and spiritualize all the facts of the Old Testament, until they have found as much gospel in the horses of Pharaoh's chariot as they can in Paul's epistles; and because they have dared to enforce the moral law as the rule of the believer's conduct.

This Antinomian spirit has become the pest of many churches. It is the most mischievous and disgusting of all errors. If the heresies which abound in the spiritual world were to be represented by the noxious animals of the natural world, we could find some errors that would answer to the vulture, the tiger, and the serpent; but we could find nothing that would be an adequate emblem of Antinomianism, except by a creation of our own we had united in some monstrous reptile, the venom of the wasp, with the deformity of the spider, and the slime of the snail.

#### **IX. Liberal support.**

The Scripture is very explicit on this head: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6). "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? --even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel" (I Cor. 9:7, 14). The necessity of this appears from the injunctions delivered to ministers to devote themselves exclusively to the duties of their office (II Tim. 2:4; I Tim. 4:13, 15). I by no means contend that it is unlawful for a minister to engage in secular concerns; for necessity is a law which supersedes the

ordinary rules of human conduct. And what are they to do, whose stipend is too small to support a family, and who have no private source of supply?

A minister is under additional obligations to provide for things honest, not only in the sight of the Lord, but of men; to owe no man anything, to provide for his own house; and if he is not enabled to do this by the liberality of his flock, and has no private fortune, he must have recourse to the labour of his hands.

It is to the deep, and wide, and endless reproach of some churches that although possessed of ability to support their pastors in comfort, they dole out but a wretched pittance from their affluence, leaving them to make up the deficiency by a school; and then with insulting cruelty complain that their sermons are very meager, and have a great sameness. Such congregations, if they were treated as they deserve, would be put upon abstinence for at least a twelve month, or until they were willing to support their pastor in comfort.

They love him dearly with their lips, but hate him as cordially with their pockets. They keep him poor to keep him humble, forgetting that as humility is no less necessary for themselves than for him, this is an argument why the articles which minister to their pride, should be retrenched in order to support his comfort. This is certainly not drawing them with the cords of love and the bands of a man, but treating them like animals who are tamed into submission by hunger, and kept humble by being kept poor. It is curious to hear how some persons will entreat God to bless their minister in his basket and his store, while alas, poor man, they have taken care that his basket should be empty, and his store nothingness itself. Is not this mocking both God and his minister with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue?

Many rich Christians spend more in the needless wine they individually drink than they contribute towards the support of their pastor; and others give more for the sugar that sweetens their tea than they do for all the advantages of public worship. A reproach of this kind yet rests upon multitudes, which it is high time should be rolled away.

It is extremely difficult, where a matter of this kind must be left to voluntary contribution, and the dictates of individual liberty to lay down particular rules; all that can be done is to state general principles and leave these to operate in particular cases. Let all Christians therefore consider what is a just and generous reward for the labours of a man, who is devoting his life to assist them in obtaining an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory! - who, in assisting them to gain eternal life, exerts at the same time an indirect, but a beneficial influence upon all their temporal prosperity—who by his ministrations, soothes their cares, lightens their sorrows, mortifies their sins, throws a radiance over their darkest scenes, and gilds their brightest ones with additional splendor. Who brings heaven down to earth for their comfort, and elevates them from earth to heaven; and who, after mitigating for them the ills of time with an anticipation of the joys of eternity, is prepared to attend them to the verge of the dark valley, and irradiate its gloom with the visions of immortality.

Let it not be thought that what is given to a minister is a charitable donation; it is the payment of a just debt. It is what Christ claims for his faithful servants, and which cannot be withheld without robbery. I spurn for myself and for my brethren, the degrading apprehension that we are supported by charity. We are not pensioners upon mere bounty. Our appeal is to justice; and if our claims are denied on this ground, we refuse to plead before any other tribunal.



"The heart makes the preacher. Men of great hearts are great preachers...We have emphasized sermon-preparation until we have lost sight of the important thing to be prepared -- the heart. A prepared heart is much better than a prepared sermon. A prepared heart will make a prepared sermon...It would not do to say that preachers study too much. Some of them do not study at all; others do not study enough. Numbers do not study the right way to show themselves workmen approved of God. But our great lack is not in head culture, but in heart culture; not lack of knowledge but lack of holiness is our sad and telling defect -- not that we know too much, but that we do not meditate on God and His Word and watch and fast and pray enough. The heart is the great hindrance to our preaching..." *E.M. Bounds*

# Duties Owing to a Pastor

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J. Fletcher

From *The Baptist Pulpit of the United States*, 1850

The first duty of a church to its pastor is that of submission to his righteous and scriptural authority. That the exhortation addressed by Paul to the Hebrew believers to obey them that had the rule over them was intended to refer to ministers is evident from the fact that the word here expressive of authority corresponds with one of the titles applied to them—that of bishop or overseer; and that the churches are exhorted to remember them that had spoken to them the Word of God, or in other words, preached to them the gospel.

Everyone acknowledges a minister to be an officer, and the principal officer in the church; and an office without authority is a solecism. But the authority of a pastor is neither that of a lord, nor a lawgiver; but he is the organ of the Divine law and possesses executive power. The rule, then, to which a church is required to yield obedience and subjection, is not the will of the minister, but the will of Christ. The minister goes forth as the ambassador of Christ to enforce his laws, and preside over the interests of his militant kingdom. He is clothed with authority from the throne, and whosoever refuses to obey him, while he adheres to his written instructions, refuses to hear and obey Him that sent him.

It is the duty of the members of a church to attend regularly upon the ministrations of their pastor. The great object for which a church call and settle a pastor is that he may prepare for them from week to week a spiritual repast; and if he fails to do this, rather than treat his ministrations with contempt, and thus bring into disrepute the sacred office, let him be dismissed from his charge.

It is said by an eminent writer on etiquette, that "a dinner engagement should be regarded as particularly binding and as imposing an obligation to be strictly punctual." But how many church members are there who in such a case would allow no ordinary incident to disappoint the expectations of a friend, and who for no trifling reason would violate the rules of etiquette? Yet, for the slightest cause they do not hesitate to absent themselves from the spiritual repast prepared for them by their pastor, and thus treat him who has cherished the most anxious solicitude for their eternal welfare, and tasked his powers to the utmost for their good as though he had no sensibility.

Suppose a neighbor should express a wish to dine with you, and you had been at the trouble and expense of making suitable preparation, and fixing on a day named by him. Would it not wound your feelings were he subsequently to make another engagement for the same time, and comply therewith to the neglect of the previous one? How then do you suppose the steward of the mysteries of God feels when you slight the entertainment which, by the direction of the Great Master of the feast, he has prepared, and in the preparation had special regard to your highest, your eternal interests?

It is not only the duty of church members to attend upon the ministrations of their pastor, but they should attend to them. Their decorous deportment and serious attention should evince an ardent desire to receive the truth in the love of it. No listlessness or sleeping should be indulged during the solemnities of divine worship. A member of a church, who sleeps under the dispensations of Divine truth, not only renders God a spiritless sacrifice, but offers a public insult to his pastor, and owes a public apology to the congregation.

Another duty of church members to this pastor is to remember him in their prayers. It indeed appears strange that so plain a duty as this need be enjoined upon any church or any Christian. We would naturally suppose if a professor of religion ever prayed at all, or for anything, it would be for him from whom he expected spiritual instruction and Divine consolation. But alas! It is not so. How often do the members of our churches assemble together professedly for prayer, and offer their supplications before the throne, without even remembering him on whom rests the responsibility of feeding them with knowledge and understanding? Can such Christians feel their dependence upon Divine influences? Do they realize that without Christ their pastor can do nothing? The duty of a church to pray for their pastor is most forcibly enjoined by Divine

authority. We hear an inspired apostle, with great importunity, saying, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." (Rom. 15:30)

As though the prayers of the church were of the greatest, yea, of the very last importance to the successful labors of a minister of the gospel, we hear even the chief of the apostles with much entreaty, saying to the church at Thessalonica, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." (II Thess. 3:1) Yea, these ancient preachers, though inspired, did not expect any freedom in their ministrations without an interest in the prayers of the saints. Hence we hear them saying, "Praying always...for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel." (Eph. 6:18, 19)

If, then, these inspired men of God were so dependent on the Spirit's influences for success in preaching the gospel, and those influences were secured only in answer to the prayers of their brethren, how can the ministers of the present day even hope for a blessing to accompany their labors, unless the church help together by prayer to God for them? Oh then, my brethren, if you would have the labors of your pastor prove a blessing to you, and a blessing to the world, remember him in your prayers.

But remembering them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God means something more than merely praying for them; or merely saying, "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled, while you give them not the things which are needful in this life." (James 2:16)

Hence we remark that it is the duty of a church to give their minister a competent support. This is a duty founded upon the principles of common justice, and enforced by the express authority of the sacred Scriptures. Hence the apostle reasons, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?" (I Cor. 9:11)

If an individual should risk his life to save your child's, would it be too great a demand on your gratitude for him to require of you the hospitalities of your house, or a suit of clothes even if his necessities demanded? And shall the servant of God, who devotes all his energies to your spiritual benefit, and to the eternal salvation of your children, have less claim on your gratitude, than he who saved the life of your child? The duty of supporting a minister is enjoined upon the church, both under the old and the new dispensations.



## The Value of the Minister's Work: An Argument for His Support

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An extract from Professor Hillter's Sermon  
From *The Baptist Preacher*, June, 1847

**T**he minister's work is, however, infinitely more valuable than even the preceding facts would indicate. For there is a hereafter—death is not an eternal sleep; and the range of this great work reaches far beyond the confines of time.

Let us then consider its value, in view of this important truth. The object which the preacher labors to accomplish is the salvation of the soul. No other profession aims so high. The most precious thing which God has created on this earth is the human soul. Though marred and defaced, it still wears the likeness of its author. Its wonderful powers invest it with greatness, and its indestructible nature insures its immortality. Its capacities for happiness and misery, and its exposure to an infinite ruin make it an object of intense interest. All the worlds in the universe are as the small dust of the balance,

compared with one immortal soul. They shall perish, but it shall endure; they shall wax old, and as a vesture shall they be changed, but, like its author, its years shall have no end. Yet it is lost.

I cannot pause to tell you how or why. Suffice it to say, that it wanders estranged from God, covered with guilt and shame, with the curse of a holy law resting upon it. In this condition, it is doomed to suffer the penalties of that world, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Yes, remaining unchanged, the soul must go down, with all its noble faculties, into that lake of fire which is the second death, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and whence the smoke of its torment shall ascend up forever and ever.

The great God could not look on unmoved, and see it consummate its awful destiny. His compassion went out towards the creature of his hands. The soul, which he had formed in the beauty of his own image, he loved too well, to cast of forever from his presence. Therefore, the scheme of redemption was devised to save it. I need not detain you to unfold its principles, for you, my brethren, already know them. It will be sufficient to remind you, that while this scheme embraces the paramount agency of God, in the revelation of his word, in the gift of his Son, and in the operations of his Holy Spirit, it also includes, by his own arrangement, the employment of human instrumentality.

For, by the foolishness of preaching he is pleased to save them that believe. This is his most usual and successful mode of gathering his elect. Preaching is the lamp of gospel light that throws along the dark pathway of the sinner its life-giving beams—revealing to his knowledge, on the one hand, "the terrors of the Lord," and on the other, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." But preaching is the minister's appropriate work, and to save the soul is his high and holy purpose.

It is not too much to say that this noble object is ever before him. When he reads the word of God, it is there to stimulate his researches; when he seeks his closet, it is there to burden his heart, and to bedew his cheeks; and when he ascends the sacred desk, behold it is here, to remind him of the terms of his commission, and to impress him with the solemnities of the coming judgment. Now, shall the minister who is thus engaged, be compelled to come away from his great work to seek for bread? Shall his spirit be forced back from its hold on the soul's salvation, by the wants of nature and the cares of life?

But let me press this subject a little nearer home. You, my hearers, have a deeper interest in the preacher's work, perhaps, than has yet occurred to you. Are your sins forgiven? Have you been washed in the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness? And have you, therefore, a pleasant and sweet hope of heaven? If so, for all these you are indebted, under God, to a preached gospel. You may tell me, perhaps, that you are an exception—that you received your serious impressions from another instrumentality. Allow me to ask, what other? Was it a tract, or pious book? Was it a prayer meeting or Sabbath school? Was it the family altar, or a parent's counsel? Or was it yet some other means of grace? I answer, no matter what may have been the particular thing to which your impressions may be ascribed; you are still indebted for them to a preached gospel.

It is true, there are other and very useful instrumentalities, but they are all subordinate to that one ordained of God. The minister's work is the source of all the rest. Nay, all others receive from it the vital energy that renders them efficient. Let this be removed, and the religious press would stand still; the colporteur would abandon his employment; the Sabbath school would close its doors; the prayer meeting would be forsaken; and even the sacred flame upon the family altar would by and by expire.

The minister's work is the centre around which these revolve; should it be extinguished, they would be rapt in darkness. Whatever, then, may have been the immediate cause of one's attention to his spiritual interests, let him not overlook his dependence upon the public ministrations of the word. The wayfarer may see, and avoid the serpent in his path by the light of the moon, but this he could not do, if the sun were not to shine.

Hence, if you are able to live in hope, to die without fear, and to commit your body to the dust in the expectation of a glorious resurrection, it is because he has thrown about you the influences of a preached gospel. In this view of the case, how will you value the privileges you have enjoyed? Can you make an adequate return to the good man by whose labors

you have been so highly blessed? I put it to your conscience, do you owe him nothing? And looking away from the particular instrument of your conversion, do you owe nothing to that system of means, by which you have been made the recipient of such abundant mercies?

Should not the believer exclaim, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" Thus we may see, that the minister's work, by the grace of God, has conferred upon each one of us a personal good of infinite value; and yet this is not all we are more than personally concerned in this interesting work. The Christian is not content to be saved alone. The relations of life originate the most tender associations, and the most endearing ties, that wind themselves about his heart, and awaken the deepest sympathies of his soul.

Such is true, for instance, of the pious parent. How intense is that anxiety which he feels for the salvation of his children? How fervent, how deep is the prayer that he offers unto God on their behalf? Perhaps an ungodly son is, like the prodigal, wasting his substance in riotous living, and running through the various stages of excess to ruin. Perhaps a thoughtless daughter, spell-bound by the seductive charms of the world, may be intent only upon its attractive pleasures, wholly forgetful of her soul and of her God. Let such a parent remember that his "door of hope" for these dear children of his love is to be found within the compass of the preached gospel. This is the means that God most usually employs to answer the prayers of his people.

Hence the practical effect which preaching exerts upon the eternal destiny of those whom we love, invests the minister's work with additional value. All the dear objects of our affections, however near to us by the ties of nature, must be separated from us forever, unless they can be united to us in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. It is to promote this union that the preacher labors. Suppose that he succeeds. Make the case your own, my brethren, suppose that he does restore to your arms as alive from the dead that beloved child for whom you have so long prayed.

Can that soul be valued in dollars and cents? How will the paltry price, paid for the minister's services, compare with the benefit received? Would you not have given your entire fortune to insure the salvation of your child? How then shall we estimate the value of that work, the end, and aim, and effect of which is to save the soul; and how shall we compensate the laborer who is the instrument of conferring upon mankind such unmeasured blessings for time and for eternity? Compensation full and equal you cannot render. It would bankrupt Christendom to attempt to return an equivalent for a single soul.



## The Essential Priesthood of All True Christians

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Thomas F. Curtis  
From *The Progress of Baptist Principles in the Last Hundred Years, 1855*

**T**wo of the most deservedly popular writers of Ecclesiastical history in the present day, Neander and Merle D'Aubigne, consider "the essential priesthood of all true Christians" as one of the most important and original features presented in the history of the Christian Church.

In his "History of the Reformation" the latter of these says, "At the beginning the Church was a society of brethren. All Christians were priests of the living God with humble pastors for their guidance. But in popery the holy and primitive equality of souls before God is lost sight of, Christians are divided into two strangely unequal camps, on the one side, a separate class of priests, on the other, timid flocks reduced to blind submission."

Indeed he declares that one of the two most important features in which Christianity differed from all the human systems which fell before it was, that "whereas the priests of Paganism were almost the gods of the people, Jesus Christ dethroned those living idols, abolished this proud hierarchy—took from man what man had taken from God, and re-established the soul in direct communication with the Divine fountain of truth, proclaiming himself the only Master and Mediator. One is your Master, even Christ, and ye are all brethren."

Neander traces out the departure from this principle as one of the first great corruptions—"revolutionizing," in fact, the Christian Church.' He speaks of "the formation of a sacerdotal caste in the Christian Church" as "an idea alien to the Christian principle—an idea which could not fail to bring about a revolution of views, destined to last for ages, and even to unfold itself in a wider circle from the germ which had once been implanted." "The great principle of the New Testament, the universal priestly character, grounded in that common and immediate relation of all to Christ as the source of the divine life was repressed, the idea interposing itself of a particular mediatory priesthood attached to a distinct order."

After this "Although the idea of the (universal) priesthood, in the purely evangelical sense, grew continually more obscure and was thrust further into the background, in proportion as that unevangelical point of view became more and more predominant, yet it was too deeply rooted in the very essence of Christianity to be totally suppressed. When the idea of this universal priesthood retired into the background, that of the priestly consecration which all Christians should make of their entire life went along with it."

But a higher authority among Christians than Neander addressed himself to the members generally of the first Churches of Christ, and said, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5, 9)

All true Christians, then, are by nature and inheritance, priests, and as such it is their highest privilege and imperative duty to pray for and teach all mankind the knowledge of the true God.

That which in this country forms the basis of all our liberties, is the acknowledged fact of the sovereignty residing in the people, and not in the rulers. So, that which constitutes the liberty and excellency of true Christianity as opposed to false, is the essential priesthood of all true Christians. In heaven the souls of the blessed continually do praise the Redeemer, not only that He hath redeemed them to God by his blood, but hath made them kings and priests to "God and to the Lamb."

The universal priesthood of the Church does not do away with distinct ministries and pastor-ships. But there is much work in the Church which never can be adequately performed by ministers alone, or while all other Christians forget that they, too, have sacrifices to offer and duties to accomplish. For many a man might easily afford to give his hundreds or his thousands, if he could thus buy himself off from the duty of personal labors and services for the cause of Christ. While the Christian, however, as a priest, has got to present the sacrifices and the thank offerings of his gold and his silver upon the altar of God, he has far more than this all to do. He has first of all to present himself a living sacrifice. His time, his talents, his personal labors, and instructions, must all be fully consecrated to the service of his Master.

The greatest difficulty is not to find men who are willing to contribute for the support of all church and missionary expenses cheerfully. There are thousands who will pay a minister liberally to pray for them and preach to them, and to the whole world besides, if they may but sit still in spiritual idleness or follow their wonted pursuits from Monday morning to Saturday night, unmolested by the claims of religion and by the duties of this universal priesthood. We cannot help asking whether those who are in Scripture addressed as "a holy priesthood," have not got some spiritual sacrifices to offer up themselves, whether it is not their duty to instruct their children at home in the ways of piety, and to pray in their families and in the prayer meetings, and to take part in Bible classes. It is as truly their prerogative to labor directly for the conversion of souls to God as it is of those who preach.

