

MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD PREACHERS

by Donald E. Howard in "Wesleyan Methodist"

The need of the Church in this hour is for preachers who are loyal to God, loyal to the Scriptures, and true to the souls of men.

Some say, "If you are in the middle of the road you will have a head-on collision." But this could not happen on "Holiness Road" for it is a one-way street. Nobody on this street is headed in the other direction.

Some say, "If you are in the middle of the road, you are a fence-straddler." But there is a difference. A fence-straddler is always on the side of the crowd he is with; he talks out of both sides of his mouth; he doesn't know where he stands, what he stands for, or what he stands against. On the other hand the fellow in the middle of the road knows where he stands, what he stands for, and what he stands against, and he stands there whichever crowd he is with. He finds it convenient and proper to keep all the wheels on the gospel car on the holiness highway and sees no necessity of driving with two wheels in the ditch of extremism either on the right side or on the left. He stays in the middle of the road and heads for the Celestial City.

This kind of a preacher is in a position to declare the "whole counsel of God." He preaches a well balanced, Scriptural, God-anointed message. He rides no hobbies and respects neither persons nor positions of men. His ministry carries the weight of Scriptural authority. The Bible, not the notions of men, is the source of his preaching material. He gives his hearers what they need rather than what they want, unless they want what they need.

He never caters to the abnormal appetites of the folk who must hear certain things or "the preacher is a compromiser." Neither does he cater to the folk who must not hear certain things or "the preacher is a fanatic." He refuses to be owned or controlled by any person or group of persons who must hear certain shibboleths before they can give their approval. Since he does not belong to the pharisaical crowd that deals in notions and extremes he is fearless to uncover and expose their inconsistencies, prejudices, and carnal attitudes. He never takes sides with either the carnal legalists or the carnal worldlings of his congregation.

He has no pets or favorites. He is just as quick to uncover the sins of the fellow that puts the big bills in the offering plate as he is the fellow that puts in nickles. He keeps the wheels of the "gospel car" well oiled with the anointing of the Spirit; he keeps all the wheels on the highway, and runs the race with patience."

To take and hold this position is not easy, neither is it popular in the church today, for he who does will bear the criticism of some in both the extreme camps. He will be shot at from both sides. But soldiers are made to shoot and be shot at, therefore he will need to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

If this position is taken and maintained in the spirit of divine love, he will be rewarded with a following of humble, sincere, praying possessors of full salvation, and he will see his church prosper in revival fires and evangelism rather than see it torn apart by strife and confusion.

As I see it, any other position than this in this day will either divide and split the church, or else the whole church will be led by the pastor into the ditch of compromise or the ditch of legalism. In either case its service for salvation of a lost world will be ineffective if not destroyed. May God give us middle-of-the-road preachers who have a burning passion to please only Him who called us to this ministry.

The King's Highway

"HAVING THEREFORE OBTAINED HELP OF GOD"

N. W. Churchill*

These words are taken from Acts 26:22 and were spoken by Paul the Apostle when he was making his defense before King Agrippa.

In this verse I believe he is speaking of the time in Jerusalem when the Roman soldiers rescued him from the Jewish mob.

As I read this scripture, Paul's words stood out before me and I feel they are important to us to-day. If we could ask Paul about his secret of success as a Christian missionary, he probably would repeat this verse.

As he preached and suffered persecution in many cities, I think we will agree that without this help from God he would never have been able to say "I have fought a good fight."

Therefore if Paul required this, how important it is that we obtain God's help through prayer before we make decisions and attempt any work for him.

Of course there are many ways that we as individuals and churches need help from the Lord; I would mention two.

FIRST—would be the POWER that has been promised through the coming of the Holy Spirit. If Paul needed this power to help establish the early church, we surely require the same to spread the "Word of God" in the world to-day.

Conditions in our world have a tendency to make people self-sufficient. I am afraid Christians can drift that way and trust in the church as an organization rather than wait upon God for power from above.

SECONDLY—I believe to-day we need the DIRECTION of the Holy Spirit somewhat like Paul had. To know what cities to visit, how to witness there, and when to leave, he needed to be led of the Spirit and we know he was in a wonderful way.

The call to "Come over into Macedonia and help us" was a good example.

Especially young people need to pray for God's direction in making important decisions which will mean so much in their lives.

In summing up, this is the message I need and perhaps it will help others too; that all our efforts, plans, and hopes for the advancement of the Christian church, will be of no avail unless we like Paul can say, "Having obtained help of God."

*Sandford, Nova Scotia.

HOW TO GET RID OF AN UNDESIRABLE PREACHER!

1. Look him straight in the eye while he is preaching and say "Amen" once in awhile. He will preach himself to death in a few weeks.

2. Pat him on the back and brag on his good points. He'll soon work himself to death.

3. Start paying him a living wage. Perhaps he is one of those many preachers who have gone on starvation wages for so long, he'd eat enough to kill himself if he ever got the chance.

4. Rededicate your own life to Christ, and ask the preacher for a job to do, preferable some lost person you could win to Christ. He'll die of heart failure.

5. Get the church to unite in prayer for the preacher, and he'll soon become so effective, some larger church will take him off your hands.

—Selected.