

The King's Highway

AN ADVOCATE OF SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS

VOL. XXXIX

MONCTON, N. B., FEBRUARY 15, 1962

No. 3

The Marks of a Good Pastor

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"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" (2 Tim. 2:24).

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

The office of a Christian minister is of all others the most important. No language can adequately describe the minister's great responsibilities. Ministers are laborers, watchmen, stewards, and ambassadors. Saint Paul, in the fullest sense, sustained the honor of this high office. When he wrote this epistle he was drawing near the close of his ministerial career; consequently he was anxious that Timothy might be a good minister of Jesus Christ and instructed him in every part of his duty. Let us note some of the marks of a good pastor.

The pastor, of all men, should be an exemplary Christian. This is the main requisite in his life. He must have the experience of the new birth and be sanctified wholly. How can a preacher lead folks to God if he does not know God himself? He can not lead the people any farther than he, himself, has gone. He is to be an example of the believer in doctrine, in practice and in conversation. His life must be above reproach; blameless and harmless, shunning the very appearance of evil. Like Barnabas, he must be a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and faith.

No man can succeed long in the pastorate if he does not spend regular hours in study, meditation and prayer. Every pastor should have a place to pray and study God's word. Here he lives with his Bible, his textbook. The pastor must build up his reserve power. He must not just prepare for the present, but for the future as well; therefore, he must dig. He must be a student of Divine revelations, human nature and history. As the preacher visits his people, walks among the lilies of the field, or travels, the lessons gathered provide material for building his sermons. Dr. Theodore Cuyler said, "Study God's word in the morning and the door posts in the afternoon." Paul said to Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

No pastor can adequately interpret the spiritual need of a congregation from the pulpit alone. As a pastor meets his people in their homes he becomes acquainted with their problems, he shares their joys, sorrows, and difficulties, and understands their hearts' need.

There are only a few homes where a pastor is not welcome. His visits elevate the moral tone of the home, break down reserves, bless the children and give the people understanding and respect for the church. They also tie the family life into the church life. Most people

appreciate and value the presence of a good man of God in their home.

After having prayerfully, seriously, and faithfully ministered to the people in their homes, no Spirit-filled preacher can enter his pulpit without having his heart drawn out to his people in understanding and sympathy. His being becomes permeated with the shepherd-love for his flock. Then he breaks the Bread of Life to them for he is preaching out of a full heart into the hearts and lives of his people. Only through faithful pastoral calling can a pastor make himself indispensable to his people.

The pastor ought to be able to preach. Preaching is not only foretelling but forthtelling. He should preach with unction and in the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. He may not be an orator, but he can come before his congregation blessed, filled and sent. He can have God with him. The pastor should be fearless in denouncing sin. His messages should be doctrinal, inspirational, and evangelistic. Every time he preaches he should do it with only one thought in mind and that is to persuade men.

The pastor should be a man of wisdom, able to set things in order. In the church and parish world we find people of all types. A good pastor should be able to discern and with a sympathetic spirit do his best to help all. There are those who have been cast aside, those who are discouraged, and those who have given up hope. Paul said, "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received . . . For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Paul said to Timothy, and to our present-day preachers as well, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained."

It is said that leaders are born, not made. A great man defined a leader as, "One who leads, who goes before to guide, or show, or who precedes or directs in some action, opinion or movement; a guide, a conductor, one having authority to precede and direct."

The pastor must lead his people to God and he must lead them deeper in Christ. He must lead them from conquest to conquest. Whether his church is large or small he must take the lead. He must show himself a man of faith, courageous in heart and possession steady strength. The people have to be led. They will not be driven, and the pastor is the one to lead them.

—Pilgrim Holiness Advocate