

# Seek Ye First...

"...the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

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## PUTTING PREACHERS ON PEDESTALS

Michael Light

This issue of *Seek Ye First...* is dealing with the subject of preachers and preaching. There has always been a tendency to go to extremes when it comes to attitudes toward men who preach the gospel. On the one hand there are those who get "preacher-itis" (an inordinate trust in one particular man), and on the other hand there are those who have virtually no respect for (even disdain toward) those who spread the light of the word of Jesus. Hopefully this collection of articles on different aspects of preachers and their work will help us maintain a proper attitude toward this category of servants of God.

### Misplaced Trust

Since the inception of the Lord's church there have been problems with preachers. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians he addressed this subject. There were different factions in the congregation. Apparently the members were bickering over who had been baptized by the best preacher. Note what Paul says in response to the report of the contentions in the congregation, "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12) This problem was the result of member having too much confidence in men (preachers). Paul reminds them that it is Jesus, not preachers, that save.

It is sad to see members who are more interested in what their favorite preacher thinks (or writes) than what the Bible teaches. This is a sure recipe for disaster. Jeremiah 10:23 states, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Members often lose heart (and hope), when a preacher they've idolized fails into sin (which happens more often than it should). We should not put preachers on a pedestal.

### Lack of Respect

While we shouldn't be so smitten with a preacher that we lose sight of the Lord, we should respect them. It is unfortunate that some people seem to resent preachers. I know that preaching in general (including denominational preachers) has had some poor characters gain notoriety for their hypocrisy and sinful lives. Men like, Robert Tilton, Jimmy Swaggert, Jim Baker and others of their stripe have hurt preachers in the eyes of the public.

Sometimes we talk to members who apparently have a disdain for preachers, displaying a poor attitude toward preachers. While I personally don't care for these "poor me" articles that some preachers write, I do understand why some do it. Preachers should not feel sorry for themselves, or have the types of egos that have to be stroked continually. The Bible does teach that preachers are to be respected. Preaching the "whole council of God" takes courage and commitment. A preacher (if he is what he is supposed to be) knows he will never be popular with everyone, and will in fact be very unpopular with a large segment of the community in which he lives.

Members should help their local preacher by encouraging him. While preachers do not preach for the praise of men, a kind comment does help spur preachers on to a more dedicated work. Brethren we are all in the vineyard of the Lord together. Remember that the preacher is simple a member that preachers. He has the same struggles as you do. He worries about family, finances, and health problems just like every other member. He is a teacher (Ephesians 4:11, 15) and a minister (Acts 21:8). He pours himself into the lives of the people of the local congregation. He tries to help you raise your children, influence your marriage for good, and help the elderly members with the struggle of old age. As such he is worthy of our respect.

### Humble Preachers

There is a trap preachers need to avoid. Due to the nature of the work, ego can become a major problem. Since a congregation is constantly bragging on you, turning to you for answers, trusting you to defend the faith, and to represent them in the community, an attitude of self-importance is often the result. Nothing is more distasteful than an arrogant, self-centered, self-aggrandizing preacher. The words that Jesus spoke to the apostles in Luke 17:10, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Preachers should remember the fact that meekness and humility are character traits for all members (including preachers).

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# Seek Ye First...

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## Our Purpose

The editors of *Seek Ye First* produce this biblical journal to provide scriptural material dealing with the issues that are currently affecting our families, our nation and the world. Our intent is to challenge souls to return to the "old paths" (Jeremiah 6:16) for their sole source of authority in religious matters. Our policy is to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), encouraging people to study to show themselves approved unto God, enabling them to rightly divide the word (2 Timothy 2:15). We make every effort to deal boldly with the issues that confront Christianity, with no apology, and strive to do so "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

# A PREACHER'S WORK ETHIC

Tom Moore

Preachers have been the brunt of many a joke with regard to his labors. Every preacher has been told (jokingly, I hope) that, "Preachers only work two hours on Sunday and an hour on Wednesday." Sadly, in the Lord's church there are many lazy preachers, men who are "hirelings" and really do not care for the sheep (John 10:11-12). Many preachers are content to labor just enough to get by. Many preachers sleep late, study little, do little, and spend their day wasting time.

But friends, any preacher worth his salt will spend much, Much, MUCH more time in his labors for the Lord and His church than most Christians will ever realize. In this article I plan to help our readers realize the work ethic needed to be a God-pleasing gospel preacher.

What kind of work ethic do many brethren evidently think that a preacher needs? To answer this, consider a survey that was completed several years ago, which asked church members to state the percentage of time a preacher out to spend in different works. Here are the percentages: sermon preparation 65%; general church work 25%; administration 0%; public relations 45%; counseling 60%; visiting non-members 80%; visiting members 85%. Friends, all this adds up to 360% of a preacher's time in church work. This leaves very little to no time for sleeping or for one's family. There are 168 hours in the week and thus one would need to add 436 more hours to his week in order for a preacher to accomplish what the brethren think he should. What kind of work ethic would you say a preacher needs?

To further help us realize the work ethic that is needed to be a God-pleasing gospel preacher, let me review with you what most good and busy gospel preachers will do each year. Gospel preachers preach 104 sermons (this does not include Gospel Meetings and Lectureships—that is extra); teach 104 formal Bible Classes (Sunday a.m. and Wednesday p.m.); teach 52 Ladies Bible Classes; write at least 52 bulletin articles that are interesting, instructive, and timely; write anywhere from three to twelve articles for brotherhood journals, write two to four fifteen-page manuscripts for various lectureships; direct and/or work in a yearly Vacation Bible School; study their Bibles in order to compile sermons and Bible classes needed to be taught (a good rule of thumb is for every 30 minutes of teaching or preaching there should be at least four hours of uninterrupted study depending on the complexity of the topic); attends every meeting held in the congregation; attends as many gospel meetings, classes, and youth functions as he can; makes home and hospital visits; conducts funerals and weddings; does premarital and regular counseling; has home Bible studies; runs an office which requires filing, record keeping and organization; maintains a complete library; tries to manage some sort of home life; and look for a moment to relax. With many preachers much could be added to the above list. The point is: it takes a preacher with a great work ethic to accomplish what needs to be done each year.

The kind of work ethic needed for gospel preachers is seen in Paul's charges to the young preacher, Timothy. Let us note just a few of these charges. A

preacher is to charge men not to teach a different doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3). An evangelist is not to give heed to fables and endless genealogies and things which do no good (1 Timothy 1:4). They must be characterized by love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned (1 Timothy 1:5). A proclaimer of the gospel must war the good warfare (1 Timothy 1:18) and fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). A preacher, by studying the Scriptures, will know and teach how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God (1 Timothy 3:14-15). A herald of the truth will be a “good minister of Jesus” by putting the brethren in mind of their duties and responsibilities (1 Timothy 4:6). An evangelist will exercise himself unto godliness (1 Timothy 4:7), and will give heed to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine (1 Timothy 4:13). A minister will not neglect his blessings, privileges, or his opportunities—but will keep growing in the Lord’s service (1 Timothy 4:14-15). A preacher will “take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16), and “them that sin (he will) rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Timothy 5:20). He will also flee the wrong attitudes, follow after righteousness, and “fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:11-12). He will be a faithful steward and guard the gospel (1 Timothy 6:20). A gospel preacher will never be ashamed of the gospel, and will be willing to suffer hardship in connection with the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8). A “man of God” (1 Timothy 6:11) will “hold the pattern of sound words” (2 Timothy 1;13), train faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2), be a good soldier of Christ (2 Timothy 2:8), keep brethren in remembrance of the rightly divided word (2 Timothy 2:14-15), and will be faithful to the word of God (2 Timothy 3:15-17). An evangelist will preach the word (2 Timothy 4:1-4) and will fight the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7-8). A good work ethic is needed to accomplish the work of a preacher as spelled out by Paul.

It is easy to see that a gospel preacher must have a good work ethic is he is to be successful in the work of the Lord, and be pleasing to God. A lazy, unmotivated, unprepared preacher is a detriment to the Lord’s church. How one successfully accomplishes his work will vary from one preacher to another. Some preachers get their day started early in the morning, others work late into the night, and many start early and work late. A key verse for every preacher is Ephesians 5:15-17, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Every preacher must work on his time management skills, he must “redeem the time” he has—for there is so much that needs to be accomplished for the Lord. For a preacher who wants to improve his time management and people skills I recommend the reading of Steven R. Covey’s 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Friends, the bottom line is that a preacher will have a good work ethic if he is “truly” committed to the cause of Christ.

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Theme This Issue:

## PREACHERS AND PREACHING

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# EVANGELISTS AND ELDERS

Jeff Sweeten

Preachers and elders have a relationship unlike any other in the spiritual or secular world. They both strive toward church growth (numerical and spiritual), as well as maintaining a constant concern for doctrinal purity. From the evangelist's perspective, the relationship is one of brother to brother (1 Corinthians 12:25), son to father (1 Timothy 5:1) member to elder (Hebrews 13:7), but also of employee to employer (Acts 15:2; Titus 3:1). Technically, the local evangelist works for the Lord (Acts 20:19) while simultaneously submitting to the authority of local elders (Hebrews 13:17). This circumstance can create challenges that will either cement bonds of fellowship in preparation for eternal bliss or build walls of bitterness and regret that will ultimately damn the soul to Hell.

Because of the importance of an evangelist's work, the following might be recommended in an effort to foster a better working environment, in which elders and evangelists can thrive in their respective responsibilities in the Lord's Kingdom.

First, there is communication (Acts 15:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:12). One might assume that a man who lives by communicating publicly would be adept in this department but this is, unfortunately, rarely the case. Many preachers are apathetic or lackadaisical in their attempts to communicate; a few even seem to resent it as though building an information bridge is an unnecessary, idle imposition (1 Thessalonians 5:13). A host of rationalizations exist to excuse this unfortunate reality and all of them are detrimental to a productive evangelist/elder relationship. If an elder in question is not a "talker," learn to read his body language and ask a lot of questions. If an elder is given to verbosity, learn to be a good listener and develop a concise method of conveying your ideas so as to give the elder the maximum allotment of time during a conversation. As a side note, never play one elder against another. Party politics within an eldership is an embarrassment to the church and any preacher that would incite, contribute, or encourage such conduct is a child of Hell.

Understanding a preacher's profession is always a good idea. Elders, quite often and through no fault of their own, have little knowledge of what it is to live the life of an evangelist. Barring their own excursion into this field, their only exposure to that unique lifestyle may be in your willingness to share the joys and woes of preaching. Find the time to express what is on your heart and be willing to share your experiences, struggles, and victories from an evangelist's perspective. I have done so with mixed results

but with no regrets. Poor elders will use their knowledge of your situation to undermine your work and belittle you but they will do this regardless; let it not be a shortfall on your part that contributes to your being forced to resign or being fired. Good elders will use the information to enhance your strengths and increase your effectiveness; they can make you look very good! A preacher does not have to compromise the truth in either instance; you will merely see different results depending upon the character of the eldership. Wise elders know an edified, informed, and maturing church is easier to rule over, so maximizing a preacher's ability contributes to the general harmony of the body and makes their job easier in the long run. Foolish elders who misuse an evangelist's efforts to communicate will eventually shoot themselves in the foot anyway. A preacher satisfied with playacting at elder communication in order to maintain his job is begging to become cannon fodder, the collateral damage of some foolish elder's stray bullet. Remember, if elders are kept in the dark about what weighs on the evangelist's mind, one can hardly fault them for making decisions in which the preacher's plight is marginalized.

Finally, be ready to appreciate the elders' burden (Hebrews 13:17). "Eldering" can be a thankless job and, as a fact, is often made more difficult by an able conduit of God's truth (Matthew 10:34ff). Even truth-loving elders do not necessarily revel in the controversy that is inevitable when it falls on hard hearts. And, while they appreciate, support, and encourage the preaching of the truth, the frustration expressed by an elder over "something you said" may genuinely be an area where, as an evangelist, you can improve your delivery thus making the elder's job easier (Ephesians 4:15). Every request to increase the quality of your homiletics is not a sure sign of weakness or apostasy. By the same token, being thankful and, especially, recognizing the strength of an elder that is willing to stand in the gap and take the flak of weak-minded members that resent your truth-teaching, is essential; and such an elder is worthy of the highest accolades. As an evangelist, you should count your blessings when you have an elder that stands firm in the face of criticism for the truth you preach!

Evangelists and elders share the greatest work on the planet: the increase and maintenance of the Lord's precious saved. With this somber fact in mind, preachers should take seriously their responsibilities in developing, nurturing, and maintaining a healthy relationship with their elders, both as individual fellow-laborers and as an authoritative body.

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# SEVEN WOES TO PREACHERS

Charles Jones

Having been in the pulpit for 49 years, as a missionary in two nations and in local work in America, I may have a few words of wisdom to offer this generation about a preacher and his work. I would like to consider the portrait of a preacher and his work in a series of "woes."

First, "woe unto me if I preach not" (1 Corinthians 1:16). Paul described a preaching as a personal obligation. Isaiah was just as willing with his "Here am I send me" (Isaiah 6:8) and Jeremiah could do nothing else because "His word was in my heart as a burning fire" (Jeremiah 20:9). Preachers are God's minutemen; "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Psalm 45:1). Claude Hall (Professor at FHC in the 50s) used to tell his students, "Boys, if you can do anything else besides preach, do it, otherwise, you will never be successful." We are not called by the Spirit, as denominational preachers claim, but reckon it a debt. "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also" (Romans 1:14-15).

Second, "woe unto me if I preach not the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Nothing must be heard from the pulpit but the gospel of Jesus Christ, both with its "positives" and "negatives." Preachers should not concern themselves with worldly eloquence as much as with the truths of God. Also, one should preach in so simple a manner that the common people are able to understand. Then, they will be following the example of the Master Teacher.

Third, "woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel willingly" (1 Corinthians 9:17). Do not enter the ministry because your parents want you to preach, you have a great voice, etc. Your commitment to preach must be based on a right relationship with Christ and your desire to reach out to a lost world. The willingness to preach may come from many sources but as a minimum, it should be motivated by the truth that we have a message from God that will save the world from an eternal Hell.

Fourth, "woe unto me if I preach the gospel for hire" (1 Corinthians 9:18). Preachers should be properly paid (Galatians 6:6), along with forms of compensation like social security, retirement, etc., especially considering the many sacrifices some men make to preach. However, preaching strictly for the salary is just reaching for the easy life. Some decide to preach because they can't make it in the secular world and they won't be successful in the Lord's work, either. To those who are sacrificing, God will reward you abundantly, for "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and

inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29). I am a living example that God blesses a hundred fold materially.

Fifth, "woe unto me if I preach the gospel for self-glory" (1 Corinthians 9:16). A preacher is not a CEO; God will judge such a violation of the pulpit. Preachers work under the oversight of an eldership and together with the brethren of the congregation, not for selfish glory. Preach to glorify God and Jesus Christ who died for us. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Sixth, "woe unto me if I am not a servant of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:19). The preacher's work is not exclusively the pulpit. Visiting, personal evangelism, fellowshiping the brethren (in groups and individually) are all a part of the preacher's work. Work performed outside the pulpit is as important as preaching, and complements the pulpit. Sadly, some elderships are forced to set office hours and visitation requirements because they lack initiative and energy. This should be embarrassing for any preacher.

Seventh, "woe unto me if I preach the gospel without trying to save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Preachers must challenge the audience, both Christian and non-Christian, to respond, either privately or publicly. The gospel of Jesus Christ challenges audiences to a higher standard of living. We must preach, not to fill thirty minutes, but to teach, encourage, and rebuke (2 Timothy 4:1-2) with the intention of saving lost souls. Preach expecting a response to heaven's invitation and never underestimate the power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16).

The preacher's ministry will be successful if five things are observed: he completely surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians. 2:20), he has confidence that Jesus Christ is the answer to every problem (John 8:32), he loves the lost, in spite of their sins (Matthew 5:43-48), he learns contentment (Philippians 4:10-12), and he always remembers that he is a servant of God and His people, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, etc. (2 Timothy 4:5).

A fulltime position in the Lord's work is honorable labor and we must treat it so. It is, in fact, the greatest work in the world because "if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

(Charles Jones has retired after many faithful years of service in the Lord's Kingdom. He is currently an active member at Eisenhower church of Christ in Odessa, TX. -Editors)

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# PREACHING WITH COURAGE

Jeff Sweeten

There are many pitfalls along the preacher's path. Temptation has snared many who bow to fleshly lusts, to the disappointment of their brethren and to the shame of the church (Exodus 32:25; 2 Timothy 2:22). Discouragement dampens a preachers spirit when he has to deal with spiritually weak brethren, who (ironically) press preachers to profess love for the brethren while at the same time treat those preachers with whom they disagree like dirt (as one preacher observed, "You ain't been loved 'til you've been loved by a liberal"). Financial strangulation has driven many a preacher into the arms of secular work; and that takes into account that sound gospel preachers are not preaching for riches but still must provide for their family (1 Timothy 5:8).

Amidst these pressures, a thousand rationalizations for a thousand compromises might be made for failing to "declare to (people) the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Instead of speaking "as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11), preachers are pushed, cajoled, intimidated, and terrorized into ear tickling, being warned: "speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:10; cf. 2 Timothy 4:3). Worse, many elderships are no longer strong enough to abide Bible teaching or stand up to dissenters and dividers to defend the truth of the Gospel (Proverbs 6:16, 19). The preaching profession in our day and time is often an exercise of swimming with sharks amidst a sea of spineless jellyfish. But, before we start the pity party, let's note the circumstances in which God's prophets, preachers, and proclaimers have always found themselves.

Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5) in a time when "every imagination of the thoughts of (man's) heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Moses was frequently frustrated by a people that had "been rebellious against the LORD" from day one (Deuteronomy 9:24). Samuel took rejection personally, prompting God to explain, "they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7). Jeremiah once became so flustered, he vowed, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name" (Jeremiah 20:9). And, John the Immerser lost his head over one sermon... one sermon (Matthew 14:3ff)! The point is: preachers need to preach the word - regardless!

To a large degree, the sorry situation in which the church finds itself today can be laid at the feet of our "Christian" colleges and preaching schools. We seem to have bred a generation of professional "clerics," trained in the art of prevarication and accommodation (Ephesians 4:14). Their loyalties are to the alma mater and that is all that matters

(John 12:42). Their career and connections are the priority and the Christ is merely a chip with which to barter for job security and status (Acts 20:30). They study duplicity, in lieu of "the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). They can turn a phrase on a dime and, instead of increasing its value beyond gold and silver (Psalm 119:72), the "prophets divine for money" (Micah 3:11). Yet, the most eloquent elocution ever will never hold a candle to courage and conviction in preaching the truth.

Fervor and zeal for truth must conquer fear, and preachers must commit to truth long before the challenges of preaching arise. Courage in preaching finds its strength in God's word, not in the magnanimity of men. Preachers are mere tools in the hand of the Master Carpenter "to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Our power as preachers is not personal, it is divine (1 Corinthians 2:1-5) and unless the evangelist realizes the true source of his strength, fear and trepidation will mark his ministry for failure (Deuteronomy 31:6-8; 2 Corinthians 4:7). The persecution of preachers will never defeat divine truth (Mark 13:31; Luke 11:51) but until this fact is ingrained within every sermon, speech, and scriptural communication, the temptation "to turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25) will overwhelm us (cf. Balaam, Numbers 22).

To be a courageous preacher, one must be able to assimilate the "big picture." The fact that "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28) does not mean the sailing will be smooth. With so many compromises assailing the fellowship through popular speeches from apostate pirates who prostitute the bride of Christ (Romans 16:18), a faithful Gospel preacher will be bailing brine from the boat with one hand while reaching out with the other to those drowning in the sea of sin. Our motivation in ministry must be obligation and our goal, eternity (1 Corinthians 9:15-23).

What then can defeat us? We "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Jesus revealed, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Therefore, with the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), let us hew the enemy asunder and "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

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# PREACHING WITH COMPASSION

Michael Light

No doubt thousands of articles have been written about preaching, and no doubt thousands more will be. In this piece we are going to notice one aspect or attitude that preachers should have in their preaching. We should (and far too few do) preach against specific sins, *i.e.* abortion, adultery, fornication, immodesty, drunkenness, gambling, dancing, polluted worship, women's role in the church, and various other false doctrines. I respect greatly men who have the courage to defend the truth against all comers. However, we must always be mindful of our attitudes in the preaching of the truth.

## Attitude Trouble

Perhaps the most difficult line for a preacher to walk is that of contending for the faith yet not becoming contentious in the doing of it. Brethren, preachers never have the scriptural right to become venomous in their dealings with others. It matters not one bit how vile the person with whom we are dealing is. We are to be faithful to the principles of Christ because of who we are and not based on how others are toward us. It is never right to come across as unloving or unkind in our preaching.

Biblical love is not the same as what passes for love in the syrupy way many define it today. Biblical love tells the truth even when it hurts. Paul told Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:2-4). The truth and only the truth can save mankind from sin (Romans 1:16). We are in no way advocating compromising the truth. In fact, some of the modern day "apostles of love" among us have used the concept (or better styled misconception) of compassion to absolve themselves of any responsibility in preaching the whole truth. They have become experts at saying nothing of substance in their lessons. No sins are ever truly dealt with and the basic doctrines of the Lord's church are forgotten. We must never get away from preaching the entire truth with all its power and intensity.

## Two Wrongs

While those on the left (the liberal element in the church) have sacrificed truth for false emotional fidelity. Some on the right (the conservative element - those trying to hold to the old paths) have sacrificed certain biblical attitudes in a misguided attempt to stand for the truth. I suspect that most preachers if asked would say that they are compassionate and loving members of the Lord's church. But do their

sermons and article bear this out? This point in the article is what I would call a soul searching section. Only the reader (especially preachers) can determine for themselves how they are doing in their personal attitudes toward others.

As a preacher we are to be followers of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:22-27); sincere (2 Corinthians 5:1-2); an example of the believers (1 Timothy 4:1f; 6:3f); meek and gentle in spirit (2 Timothy 2:22-26). He is to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22ff). He must strive to possess the Christian graces and virtues (2 Peter 1:1-11). The idea of being a faithful (even a hell fire and brimstone) preacher and being a kind gentle Christian are in no way incompatible. We are to be both at the same time. Jesus is our example. He was the most kind and tender man who ever lived. Yet, He was also the most scathing and pointed preacher who ever taught a lesson. We should strive to measure up to His standard. We can do it through diligent work. Study and teach on morals and doctrines. And study and apply to ourselves what the book of books teaches concerning righteous attitudes.

## Passion and Compassion

As preachers take to the pulpit every week they should pour themselves into their sermons. The word of God is to be the basis for the subject matter and the preacher's heart is to be the catalyst to motivate the crowd to turn to God and His way. When Jesus preached people took note and even commented on how no other man ever so spoke. Though we cannot preach better than Jesus, we can attempt to give the pure unadulterated word of God to masses in a way they are not used to. We should preach the whole truth to the whole world from a whole heart. We need to remind ourselves of the eternal torment that awaits those who die lost and be touched by their dreadful plight. Our hearts should be inflamed with a deep desire to save as many as we can. I am reminded of the apostle Paul as he lingered in Athens. When he saw that the city was wholly given to idolatry his spirit was stirred within him. While we do need to fight the ungodly within the church we need to guard against becoming belligerent and bitter toward anyone. There are over six billion people on this earth and we need to stay focused on that. We should love them enough to seek them out and teach them the truth in love. I'll close with the words of Paul in Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

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