

## GOD'S MINISTER

"The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." Malachi 2:6.

When Dr. Lansing Burrows was pastor in Nashville, he received a telephone call to come to a certain address immediately as a lost woman was dying and wanted him to read the Bible to her and to pray for her. Going as quickly as possible, he was ushered into a dark and dismal room where lay a scarlet woman, dying in that red-light district of the city. As he approached the pale form of the dying woman, she asked in subdued voice: "Are you God's man?" Dr. Burrows replied, "I am." She said, "Then tell me if there is hope for such a sinner as I am before your God?" Then the preacher, with an open Bible unfolded the story of redeeming grace through the finished work of Christ on the cross.

After leaving the scene, the preacher could not get away from the woman's question. Over and over in his mind he turned her words, "Are you God's man?" After much heart-searching and self-examination, he reasoned thus: "If I am God's man, then I am expected to represent Him rightly. Both God and man expect that. Is my preaching God-like? Is my living like His? Are my messages according to His Book? Have I given Him the right-of-way in my life?" Brother preacher, take time to think whose man you are, and then consider how you are serving Him.

I want you to remember that God's Man is divinely called, divinely commissioned, and divinely sustained. If you are called of God to the work of the ministry, your authority is from heaven, and you have back of you the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who will provide for you and sustain you.

Preaching the Gospel of Christ is the greatest task that has ever engaged the mind and the energies of mortal man. This task is great because of Him who said go and preach. It is great because of the value of that with which it deals. Who can calculate the value of an immortal soul? It is great because it deals with that which man cannot give and money cannot purchase. It is great to be an ambassador, to cross the ocean and have the prominent people to pay you homage. But it is far greater to be an ambassador of Christ and have people to ask you, "What must I do to be saved?" It is great to see men and women turn from death unto life, from darkness unto light, and from punishment unto bliss. It is great to have the Lord's seal of approval stamped on your work.

Concerning God's minister, who is mentioned in our text, certain things are obvious.

1. He taught the truths of the law.  
"The law of truth was in his mouth." He studied God's law. He made it his business to know all that God had commanded, and was faithful in his proclamation of the same.
2. He lived an exemplary life.  
"He walked with me in peace and equity." The Bible order is first truth and belief, and then follows right living and exemplary walk. You can't live right unless you believe right. What you believe will determine your manner of living. A man will not live right unless he believes right. Allow no one to live a cleaner and more wholesome life than you. Be God's man in believing and in living. The greatest argument for Christianity is a godly man.
3. He was a soul-winner.  
"He turned many away from iniquity." Whatever the achievements of your life may be, if you fail here, you have failed in the essential for which you have been called. You have been saved and placed in the ministry in order that you may win souls to Christ. May He give us a real yearning for the salvation of the lost.

In the light of the things which I have just said, I want to make some personal and practical suggestions in the form of some don'ts and do's as to your work in the ministry.

I. Don'ts:

1. Don't be pessimistic.
2. Don't be lazy.
3. Don't run from difficulties.
4. Don't scorn advice.
5. Don't minimize sin.
6. Don't preach about yourself and your family.
7. Don't ride a hobby.
8. Don't fail to study.
9. Don't forget the main thing--Christ.
10. Don't let the evangelistic fires die.

II. Do's:

1. Be a Christian gentleman.
2. Live in the atmosphere of prayer.
3. Be adequately prepared for your task.
4. Be a shining light rather than a bag of gas.
5. Be fearless, but affectionate, in preaching the truth.
6. Come to your pulpit with a message carefully, prayerfully and diligently prepared. It is a shameful thing for any minister to be obliged to say that he must move because he is "preached out." Any minister who digs deeply and diligently into the inexhaustible mine of Biblical truth will never have to say that.
7. Pronounce the benediction when you have nothing more to say.
8. Be ethical in all your relations to churches and fellow ministers. People admire any man who is ethical. They want him to practice what he preaches. This applies to the moving of church letters. You will lose the respect of others if you are unethical.
9. Remember that you are an ambassador of Christ.
10. Expound the Word of God.  
"Preach the Word." I Timothy 4:2. The Apostles said, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." Acts 6:4.

In "Divine Art of Preaching," Arthur T. Pierson tells of a young preacher who received the following letter from a member of his audience: "Reverend Brother: I listened very attentively to your clever essay on history this morning, and hoped to find some features of a Gospel sermon. Was it my fault that I did not find or detect anything in it: first, to convict men of sin: second, to conduct the penitent to Christ: third, to quicken the backslider: fourth, to comfort the afflicted: fifth, to guide the perplexed: sixth, to encourage the desponding: seventh, to caution the unwary: eighth, to remove doubt: ninth, to stimulate zeal: tenth, to fortify patience: eleventh to arouse aspirations: twelfth, to kindle devotion: thirteenth, to expose the wiles of the devil: fourteenth, to broaden charity: fifteenth, to develop faith: sixteenth, to instruct in any of the duties of the Christian life: or finally, to impart information needed for practical utilization in the Christian life. You may reply, 'I did not design to do any of these things.' But, my brother, as a Christian minister and not a literary essayist, can you afford to misuse any such occasion by not designing to do some of these things? You are a minister of the Word, which is to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Pardon these kindly suggestions from one, who tired of business, goes to church to be helped." It is His Word which He has promised to bless.

11. Preach the Gospel.  
Paul exhorted Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. Preach the atoning death of Christ, the cross in its power to save, and in its imperious calls to duty and self-denial.
12. Magnify Christ.  
He is the essence of the Gospel message, and the only Hope of lost men. The chief

aim of the divinely commissioned and Spirit-filled preacher is to send his hearers away saying, "What a wonderful Saviour! What amazing grace!" You will have failed if they go away saying, "Isn't he a clever preacher?" Preach Christ. Let Him be the central theme of your message. Preach Him in all the glories of His incomparable Person; preach Him in the manifold excellencies of His redemptive work; whatever be the occasion, whatever the audience, preach Christ. Preach Christ and your message will be glorifying to God and profitable to men. No problem arises for which He is not the adequate solution.

13. Depend on the Holy Spirit.  
He is the One to help us in our understanding of the Bible, in our prayer ministry, in our Christian witness bearing, and in our evangelization of the lost. We must not grieve the Holy Spirit by ignoring Him.
14. Comfort the sad.  
Today there are many bewildered minds and sorrowful hearts. They need the enlightenment of Divine truth and the consolations of Divine grace. In practically every pew you will find a burdened soul or a broken heart. Preach more comforting sermons. There is an attentive audience for such a message. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My People."
15. Warn the careless.  
There is a judgment of God as well as the love of God. Not to warn people of their danger is being untrue to them, unfaithful to Christ, and is helping Satan in his work. See people as sinners needing to be saved from hell.
16. Teach Baptist principles.  
Everything may not be right with Baptist people, but there is nothing wrong with Baptist principles.
17. Be an example.  
Paul's message to Timothy was: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in manner of life, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Dr. Joseph Parker said of Dr. F. B. Meyer: "He brings a benediction with him, a better air than earth's poor murky climate, and he never leaves me without the impression that I have been face to face with a man of God."