

## THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

"Now then we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." II Corinthians 5:20.

No calling possesses the sacred dignity and solemn prerogatives of the Christian ministry, and he may truly be regarded a happy man who rises to the full conception of his calling. Usually the first anticipations of it fills the mind with a strange recoil, and many an ingenious device is resorted to in extenuation of the fault of disobedience to the heavenly vision. One, like Moses, will plead want of eloquence, slowness of speech, and slowness of tongue; and another with Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?" No one is sufficient, unaided, for such a trust.

One of great needs today is for a ministry strong and vigorous, and broadly developed in all the elements of a noble Christian manhood. The minister of today is to go forth in the power and spirit of the One who appeared on the Judean hills over nineteen centuries ago. He is to represent Him; to be His ambassador, and not only give himself to the spread of the gospel, but to do nothing else but spread it. To do this one must lay time, talents and education on the altar of sacrifice. The cause is worthy of it.

If men have died for gold, as in the expeditions into India, and to California in early days; if men have perished for an idea, as in the Crusades, when Peter the Hermit precipitated a million of men, the best blood of Europe, upon Palestine; if men have died for liberty, as at Thermopylae and on the many battlefields of the old Roman republic; if men have died for a dogma under the reign of tyrants, and have been hunted in dens, caves and deserts, how willingly and gladly should the Christian soldier surrender his all to the service of Him who first gave His life a ransom for him, and then honored him with such a distinguishing calling that even angels might well covet its glory.

An outstanding need today is for men, who are strong and broadly developed, to call the multitudes to repentance and faith. The truth needs strong men for its propagation. To accomplish God's will in this regard, there must be superadded to these attributes of physical, intellectual and spiritual manhood, the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. This gift, above all gifts, the Lord alone can impart to those who love Him. A minister may get a complete education, be beautifully attired, put on an official aire, assume the professional dignity, prepare splendid sermons, and display marvelous oratory, but all of these will not atone for his lack of the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The minister must be a leader of the Lord's hosts. A worthy leader will make for worthy followers. Ministers must be practical exhibitors of the principles and doctrines which they teach. Every minister should be able to say, "I declare unto you that which I do know," and his knowledge should be such as to furnish a fair sample of what grace can do to save a sinner from "the world, the flesh, and the devil." Then God can use him and take the glory of results to Himself. If one would successfully proclaim Christianity, he must first have it wrought into his own soul, and illustrated in his own life and character as a living, vitalizing principle.

In breadth of thought, power of analysis, wealth of illustration, irresistibility of argument, graphicness of picturing, and sublimities of imagination, the minister should be at least the peer, if not the superior, of any in his congregation.

The Christian minister is an ambassador. He stands in the place of another. He is not to speak for himself, but for the One whom he represents. He is sent by the Prince of Glory to represent Him. What a responsibility! A responsibility which no true minister of Christ can evade. He is a representative of Christ. He must forget his personal interests for the interests of Christ. He is to have no interests of his own as against Christ's. The interests of Christ are to be paramount to all other interests.

To follow Christ's leadership and to appear in His stead implies:

1. That the minister be a Christ-like man.  
He is an undershepherd of the Great Shepherd, and if he is not like his Master he is

sadly out of his place. Paul carried the Master's brand mark, and so must we.

2. That the minister be a consecrated man.  
Your great aim is to win souls. Life or death to immortal souls is gathered up in your agency.
3. That the minister be a firm man.  
He has God's truth to guard, and God's honor to maintain. If he is one who yields to the last impression he is under, every trust will be betrayed in his hands, and every precious interest of the Lord will be sacrificed. He must have unflinching fidelity to duty. He must never seek to accommodate the doctrines which he is sent to preach to the prejudices of his hearers. Never compromise the truth.
4. That the minister be an humble man.  
In Christ's stead demands that he shall let Christ be seen rather than himself. The Saviour is the light that burns and shines; the minister is only the glass through which the light shines and by which it is reflected. The most faithful minister of Christ is he who keeps the closest to the Bible, and who out of it draws forth the life and spirit which breathe out from the name and character of its Author.
5. That the minister be a persuasive man.  
He must have the power of divine persuasiveness. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead." You cannot drive people into the Kingdom of God. You will never have any compulsory power--you can only beseech, pray, and persuade.

Christ has a work to be done on earth, and He has left it to living men. In order to make men feel that He loves them, and waits for them, He sends in His stead living, speaking messengers. The mission of the living preacher will never be superseded, so long as he represents Christ. No power on earth can take his place, so long as he can truly say, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead."