

The Preacher's Attitude

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Attitudes affect everyone to some degree. Attitude is developed from one's environment, from the influences of others and from our goals. The environment alters our attitudes toward ourselves and everyone else. The influence of parents, teachers, our peers and associates help develop attitudes of the heart toward life. Our goals influence such emotions as prejudice, hate, envy and strife. They also help develop good attitudes. Prejudice is shown in the inspired record of God sending Paul to the Gentiles, which incited the prejudice of the Jews in Acts 22:22: "And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live."

When one believes he should have the preeminence over others, attitudes develop to accommodate his desires. Self-love and power surface in language and conduct when his attitude centers on this appraisal of himself. "Pride goeth before destruction." One becomes arrogant in his dealings with others when self importance is locked in his heart. His attitudes will change toward those who stand in his way. All who stand in his way become enemies!

The preacher whose self-importance boils over into his preaching will develop a bad attitude toward gospel preaching. He will conclude that the wisdom of this world is much more desirable than the simple word of God. The plain gospel will not permit the glory upon self as will worldly wisdom. He sees the Bible as too old and stale, whereas the power of a Dale Carnegie approach with a philosophical base will "catch more flies".

The Holy Spirit well describes this attitude as He empowers the apostle Paul to write: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

The attitude toward sin changes when one is seeking the approval of men rather than the approval of God. Seeking the approval of men is usually the outgrowth of self-loving.

What is sin? It is the transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4). All unrighteousness is sin, i.e., all *iniquity*: *all unrighteousness*. Unrighteousness is iniquity: without law, and embraces all thoughts, words and deeds without divine law (1 John 5:11). Sin is knowing to do good and not doing it; not doing what is right to do (Jas. 4:17).

The word of God requires us to come out from among those who engage in sin (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 John 1:9-11). Not only should we come out from such, but we are to oppose it (Eph. 5:11; Acts 15:2; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; Gal. 2:11-14). We must withdraw ourselves from those who walk in sin (Rom. 6:17-18; 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5:9-13).

Attitudes Toward Preachers and Preaching

There are attitudes and problems peculiar to young preachers because they are young. Likewise, there are attitudes and problems peculiar to old preachers because they are old. Each one must guard his heart and life to avoid bad attitudes peculiar to his age and the times. The *attitudes* of preachers, regardless of age, are extremely important to their success in getting the truth into the hearts of men and women to influence their lives for good. The message they proclaim must be free from the contaminating influence of human wisdom and ambition (1 Cor. 1:19-25); the message must be pure and complete as it comes from the word of God.

The manner in which both the speaker and hearer view the message, and the attitude and conduct of the one who does the preaching, are all extremely vital to the success of the preacher. There are several attributes that any young man (old men as well) must have if he is to succeed in preaching the gospel of Christ. And there are certain characteristics which he must NOT possess if he is to be scripturally successful as a gospel preacher. Some of these attributes are deserving of more than just a casual mention. In this study I have space for only a few of them which I hope will be helpful to some young men as they try to prepare themselves to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The dangerous attitude of self-importance. I have met many young preachers who were so enchanted by their imagined self-importance and ability that they were disgustingly arrogant. Their pride prophesied their destruction; "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit" (Prov. 29:23). God will resist the proud (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).

I can understand how a young man who tends toward self-conceit, fresh from the school room, is very likely to have accumulated all the elements and impressions that would give him the idea that as an *educated, professional* preacher, he would have all the answers to all the problems of the brotherhood. It is so easy for a young mind to lay hold upon the fascinating vision that he holds the key to scriptural knowledge his predecessors never imagined.

I do not condemn all young preachers with this statement; I speak of a very small group whose attitude is self-destructing. This attitude of self-importance includes a demand for almost any amount of income and side benefits that would rival most union leaders at the negotiating table. I am not opposing young preachers being well supported as they preach the gospel; I am pointing the finger at the unworthy demands of an arrogant, self-inflated, useless preacher because he has an attitude that must be changed if he is to be successful as a servant for Christ.

Moreover, this over-bearing young man presents his credentials to establish the fact that he is a full fledged evangelist, and as such he is entitled to his share of meetings, lectures, debates, and various other significant personal appearances. He demands this of churches. This "importance of self" is his down-fall and finally the collapse of the career of many young men. (Some older ones as well). Such young men (and old men) have never learned the elementary lesson that the *power* to convert people to Christ is not in the personality or greatness of the speaker, whoever he may be, but in the word of God. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

I must insist that the reader keep in mind that I am not opposing preachers, preaching or young preachers. I am discussing *Attitudes* that hinder the good work of preaching the powerful gospel.

Preachers Think Too Highly Of Themselves

Many preachers have an elevated opinion of themselves and their ability. It shows in their attitudes, speech and actions. This lofty opinion of oneself is the product of a misguided standard of greatness and power.

It has become mandatory for preachers to have a college education. The more degrees the greater their opportunities for more money and the bigger churches. Not only that, but they will hold a distinguished position among other preachers. If one has a Master's degree from a popular college, he is assured of a first class job with a big church. He can indeed sit in one of the chief seats in the synagogue. If he can go on to obtain a Doctor's degree in Theology or law or some other field, he can rise to the choice jobs with executive salary, and a position of as a dignitary among the whole brotherhood. Higher education is likely to give a preacher the big head if he has the tendency to seek the preeminence in the church. He portrays the haughty mind when he carefully brags upon himself and his superior knowledge. He resents anyone challenging him on any issue. He can hardly preach without telling the people how "many" of his friends and brethren "constantly urge" him to publish his sermons or other works for the multitudes. He is compelled to publicly talk about how people praised him for his skill in debating or lecturing on some subject. He tells how churches sought after him for months or years to come and work with them.

I am very serious about what I am saying. Do not misunderstand me, I am not ridiculing education, even higher education. To the contrary, I urge and encourage all young men and women to get all the formal education they can get. It will help them in whatever profession or skill they enter for their livelihood. But I urge them always to realize the difference between human wisdom and the revelation of God. All worldly wisdom will not save one soul. Read 1 Corinthians, chapters 1 and 2. What I am about to say has to do with preaching the gospel of Christ and not with other fields of endeavor. A dozen degrees will not help one who wants to preach the gospel of Christ. The wisdom of this world has been made nothing by God because by worldly wisdom no man knows the mind of God. How would a doctor's degree in Theology help me to tell people what to do to be saved and how to live godly in this world, and to know the will of God? How would a doctor's degree in philosophy help me to preach the divine truth which comes from the word of God only? There is no knowledge or wisdom I need that does not come from the word of God. The power of preaching to save is in the word of God, not in the wisdom of men (Rom. 1:16).

In New Testament times the apostles were humble men who did not have the education in the wisdom of this world. The New Testament teaches that the wisdom of this world has no place in the preaching of the gospel. Peter and John were observed to be unlearned, unlettered men. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). The wise and educated men of the synagogue from different places disputed with Stephen. "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10). The apostles needed nothing more than the revelation of the Holy Spirit. They wrote down what they were told

and it remains today as that same revelation which will perfect a man unto all good works. “. . . that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17).

Usually the most important question brethren have to ask of a preacher they expect to secure to work with them is, "Where did you go to school?" Then they want to know how many degrees he has. After that they watch carefully how he dots his "i's" and crosses his "t's". They are more interested in HOW he says a thing than in WHAT he says. This is often the effect of formal education upon the minds of preachers and those who are impressed with higher education in preaching the gospel.

Eloquence Does Not Make a Preacher

Paul indicated his lack of eloquence in 2 Cor. 11:6, but did not apologize for it. "But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things." He made knowledge the important thing. Many make the eloquent speech of the preacher the most important asset he has. He will be secured for meetings because he is an eloquent man, when he does not teach the truth in a forceful manner.

Paul said he did not come with excellency of speech, or of persuasive words of wisdom, but with the power of the gospel (1 Cor. chapters 1, 2 and 3). Preachers need only the power of God's words and not the beauty of oratory and excellency of speech. Some of the greatest preachers of all times were not mighty speakers. They spoke with the convincing knowledge of God's truth and not with the entertaining words of eloquence.

The Man With Magnetism As a Preacher

Does he have a good personality? Is he a good mixer? The personal life of the preacher should not be measured by worldly standards "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

Some young men stress their personal magnetism in preaching, and try to imitate those men whom they feel to have dynamic personality and high pressure selling techniques. But all those powerful traits will not take the place of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16).

Promotional Ability

Churches are looking for a promoter. They want a man who can pack them in with his personality and his promotional ability. If he can get people coming to worship and keep them happy and involved, he is the man they want. It seems of little consequence what technique he uses, or why the people are happy and content. If the preacher can only keep the attendance high and the contribution high enough to support such a man, the church is happy. The divine goal of the church and the preaching of the gospel is to save souls. Persuasion must be based upon God' word, not upon any other approach. Promoters do not need Bible knowledge or dedication to the faith; they need only have the ability to work numbers. Sincere, dedicated gospel preachers will "provoke unto love and good works" (Heb. 10:24); and "reprove, rebuke and exhort" (2 Tim. 4:2); and encourage the church

"in word and deed" (Rom. 12:8).

False Standards For Preachers

The church in Corinth had some false ideas of preachers. Preachers are sometimes made too important in the church. They are made the commander-in-chief of the work. They are the business managers, the law makers and revisers. The false standards that are demanded to make preachers do not make them as God intended. Since preaching has become a profession which looks for the best price, these standard by churches and brethren in general become important in selecting preachers. And since preachers want to work with churches, they try to develop these conditions. They do not make a good preacher, because they take away the very characteristics that make one a preacher of the gospel. The standards of God's word are different from those of man. These qualifications make him what he must be to be successful in God's sight.

I close with this heavenly charge to Timothy: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 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. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Preachers, go and learn what that means, then do it!

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