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The Preacher and his Work

[This treatise by Prediger of St. Petersburg, though very brief, is the result of many years' reading. It lays no claim to originality; the thoughts it contains are gathered from or suggested by others. May He, whose servants it seeks to help, but without whose blessing it will be in vain, graciously use it !]

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THE MINISTER.

A minister is set apart to glorify God and help men.

A true minister dares not be other than a minister.

Few men are so closely watched as ministers, and there are none whose inconsistencies do so much harm.

Ministers are put in charge of souls, and will have to give account of them.

No man is fit to be a minister who would not joyfully live and die in the lowest sphere so long as he can serve his Lord.

No one can so easily do harm as a minister.

If you are seeking to be admired, it will *at last* be better for you had you been a ploughman than a pastor.

A trifling and inconsistent minister is a laughing-stock to bad men, and a sorrow to good ones.

RESPONSIBILITY.

“If thou speakest not to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but his blood will I require at thine hand.*”

As a minister, when I think who I am, and who sent me, and how awful the account I must soon render, I tremble.

Our opportunities of doing *harm* are immense. My

brother, a million years hence your influence will tell on souls ! Take care lest *you* lead men to ruin.

If there be one sight in the universe calculated to inspire terror and dismay, it is that of a faithless minister about to be consigned to his doom.

PRIVATE PRAYER.

Public teaching is useless without private prayer.

A minister is in duty bound to bear his people daily to the throne of grace.

If you wish to preach well you must pray much.

Generalities are the death of prayer.

Plead *with* God before you plead *for* God.

Better neglect your body than your soul, your meals than your prayers.

He that lives most in prayer grows most in grace.

Let prayer ascend when you wish blessing to descend.

Neglect of prayer arises from want of faith ; he who believes will pray.

A little prayer does more than a great deal of study.

THE SPHERE.

You turn the helm of your life when you choose the sphere of your work.

Go where you can do most *for* men, not where you can get most *from* men.

Be more concerned about your ability than about your opportunity, and about your walk with God than either.

Your sphere is where you are most needed.

He who called you to the ministry will give you a sphere of service.

There is no place without its difficulties ; by removing you may change them, it may be you will increase them ; but you cannot escape them.

Those who push themselves into a sphere they are not fitted for in this life will regret it in the next.

Christ knows best where you can serve His people ; *trust Him, and He will place you there.*

THE PULPIT.

The moments you spend in the pulpit will tell on the ages you must spend in eternity.

The *piety* of the pulpit decides the piety of the pew.
 Never go into the pulpit without Christ.

In the pulpit, self and the concerns of time must be forgotten.

There is no place where Christ is more ready to reveal himself to His servants than in the pulpit.

How easy it is to dishonor God in the pulpit!

Thousands of souls have been lost through the mistakes of the pulpit.

Every moment spent in the pulpit is privileged time.

PUBLIC PRAYER.

Remember that you are in the presence of God, and that you address HIM. Never pray to be admired of men.

Let the sermon be omitted rather than the prayers be slurred.

The prayers should make the people feel *the reality of prayer*.

The prayers prepare the ground, the sermon sows the seed.

The manner in praying does more than the matter in preaching.

THE VOICE.

A gentle voice is of untold value. All can attain it.

Feigned voices are the great causes of relaxed throats.

He who seeks, by a feigned voice, to make men wonder, makes them smile.

Speak oftener, and your voice will not fail so often.

The voice depends on the heart.

If we think *how* we are saying a thing, our hearers will see it, and despise us for it.

A man cannot walk well when he thinks *how* he is walking, nor speak well when he thinks *how* he is speaking.

A man's own heart is influenced by the tone of his voice, and the tone of his voice is affected by the state of his heart.

PREACHING.

You must live *with* God if you would preach *for* God.

Manner tells quite as much as matter.

Preach as you will wish you had preached when you stand before God.

Ask often, "What does *Christ* think of my preaching?"

One earnest man does more than ten eloquent ones.

Live well, and you will not preach badly.

PREPARATION.

Without God's blessing you can never prepare a sermon that you will not regret in eternity.

The state of the heart decides the fate of the sermon.

Never begin to prepare till you have clearly decided whether you want to gain men's praise or save men's souls.

Prepare your heart, then your sermon.

Prepare your sermon with the judgment-seat in view.

In your preparation, remember that it may be the last sermon some who listen to you will ever hear.

When preparing your sermon, forget yourself.

If you desire to make a useless sermon, make a beautiful one.

THE SERMON.

Heart-sermons reach hearts.

One weak point will injure ten strong ones.

The Bible reiterates the same things again and again.

Great sermons are given, not made.

Harshness will produce resentment, gentleness contrition.

The strongest part of all great sermons is the close.

More depends on the last two minutes than on the first ten.

The aim of our sermons should be to reform the heart rather than to inform the mind.

Every sermon may be your last.

No sermon is a success which does not touch the heart and move the will.

Make men remember the text.

TEXTS AND DIVISIONS.

Choose your texts for usefulness.

Reject every division which might strike, but would not help.

It is God's Word, not our word, that convicts and converts.

Some can only be won to God by love, some can only be driven from sin by fear ; use pleading and threatening, as the Scriptures do.

Value truth more than taste, souls more than symmetry.

Let divisions always be: 1. Useful. 2. Simple. 3. Concise.

STYLE.

Simple language alone reaches the heart.

Vanity will make a man speak grandly, piety plainly.

Striking and special are synonyms, when used respecting sermons.

Don't whip with a switch that has the leaves on.

You will not move a man if you do not make him understand you.

The great Teacher never used a big word.

DELIVERY.

To keep attention, mix questions with statements.

Think of your hearers' needs, and it will help you ; of their criticism, and it will hinder you.

In large assemblies speak more slowly than in smaller ones.

Make each one feel that you are speaking to *him*.

Your hearers think about what you think about.

Address the lowest, and you will reach the highest.

Make men listen, and do not let them misunderstand.

For whom do you preach, for *Christ*, or for *yourself*?

THE CONGREGATION.

Think more of the people than of the preacher.

Nearly three-fourths of every audience do not understand the great truths of salvation.

Get a great heart if you would like a large congregation.

Twenty are hungry of heart to one hungry of head.

It is easy to manage a congregation when they are kept near to Christ.

Forsake God, and your congregation will forsake you.

VISITING.

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto *Me*.”

It is not the time of sickness so much as the time of convalescence that decides the future life. Remember this, and seize opportunities.

Let each one feel that you are his personal friend.

Get others to talk. What a man says to you has more influence upon *him* than all you can say to him.

“If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?”

If you neglect the sick and they die, it will be sad to think that you lost the last opportunity of helping them; if you neglect the sick and they recover, your power to influence them will be weakened forever.

HABITS.

“Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Principles and habits are as readily taught as Greek and Latin, and they are of vastly more importance.

Evil habits begin in cobwebs, and end in chains.

Good habits are begun with difficulty, but continue with joy.

He who sees little does less.

Read no book, do no act, harbor no thought, that makes God less near, Christ less precious, eternity less real.

If piety decay, zeal will die.

Have no self.

Be actuated in *everything* by principle.

A minister's habits should be such as to impress men with the truth of his character and the dignity of his calling.

BOOKS AND READING.

The books you read will decide the life you live.

The greater the man the fewer the books.

A man of one book is a man of power.

He who wants to preach well should read Baxter's “Reformed Pastor,” and read it often.

No book published within the last thousand years has done so much to promote good preaching as Fénelon's “Dialogues on Eloquence.”

Whitefield and Jay were great students of Matthew Henry.

No man has ever become a truly great preacher who did not know and love the Bible.

Read with a purpose, or read not at all.

No one can estimate the result of giving or lending a book.

PRAISE.

He who seeks praise seldom gains it.

Praise makes a wise man humble, a fool proud.

A minister should be saddened by some men's praise.

When men praise thee, ask, Will Christ accept me?

Life praise is better than lip praise.

Christ praised Mary more than Martha.

“As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold ; so is a man to his praise.”

Some men will praise thee to try thee.

If a good man praise *thee*, praise God.

Seek souls for Christ, not praise for self.

“How can ye believe which receive honor one of another?”

SUCCESS.

He who grasps authority seldom gains influence.

He who wishes to succeed must seek men's welfare, not their “well done.”

Do not prove truth too much, or you will make men doubt it.

Affectation spoils good sermons, and makes bad ones ridiculous.

The successful man is the man who has done most for others.

You *can* do all God calls you to do.

What we *do* depends on what we *are*.

If our words are to have power with men, our lives must convince them of our sincerity.

MISCELLANEOUS.

All changes in life begin by a change in thought.

You will not succeed if you have two objects.

Aim to be a good public reader ; few are, but all ought to be.

A wise man may be in haste, but not in a hurry.
God helps by hindering.

Nothing is good with God's frown, nothing bad with His smile.

Manner is something with all, everything with some.
Contradict lies by life.

Be always at leisure to do good.

If you are a hireling, flee when danger threatens.

When you are willing to bear the guilt of a sin, it is not necessary to reprove it.

You need not flee from temptation if you are willing to commit the sin.

Here are some of your Lord's own words as a finish :
"Ye are my friends." "Lo, I am with you always." "My reward is with me." "Watch and pray."

How to Preach.

MAKE no apologies. If you have the Lord's message, deliver it; if not, hold your peace. Have short prefaces and introductions. Say your best things first, and stop before you get prosy. Do not spoil the appetite for dinner by too much thin soup. Leave self out of the pulpit, and take Jesus in. Defend the Gospel, and let the Lord defend you and your character. If you are lied about, thank the devil for putting you on your guard, and take care that the story shall never come true. If you do not want to "break," make your shirt-collar an inch larger, and give your blood a chance to flow back to the heart. Do not get excited too soon. Do not run away from your hearers. Engine driving-wheels fly fast with no load, but when they draw anything they go slower. It takes a cold hammer to bend a hot iron. Heat up the people, but keep the hammer cool. Do not bawl and scream. Too much water stops mill-wheels, and too much noise drowns sense. Empty vessels ring the loudest. Powder isn't shot. Thunder isn't lightning. Lightning kills. If you have lightning, you can afford to thunder; but do not try to thunder out of an empty cloud.

Do not scold the people. Do not abuse the faithful souls who come to meeting rainy days, because of the others who do not come. Preach the best to small congregations. Jesus preached to one woman at the well, and she got all Samaria out to hear Him next time. Ventilate your meeting-room. Sleeping in church is due to bad air oftener than to bad manners. Do not repeat, saying, "As I said before." If you said it before, say something else after. Leave out words you cannot define. Stop your declamation and talk to folks. Come down from stilted and sacred tones, and become a little child. Change the subject if it goes hard. Do not tire yourself and everyone else out. Do not preach till the middle of your sermon buries the beginning, and is buried by the end. Look people in the face, and live so that you are not afraid of them. Take long breaths, fill your lungs, and keep them full. Stop to breathe before the air is exhausted. Then you will not finish off each sentence-ah, with a terrible gasp-ah, as if you were dying for air-ah, as some preachers do-ah, and so strain their lungs-ah, and never find it out-ah, because their friends dare not tell them-ah, and so leave them to make sport of the Philistines-ah. Inflate your lungs. It is easier to run a mill with a full pond than an empty one. Be moderate at first. Hoist the gate a little way; when you are half through, raise a little more; when nearly done, put on a full head of water. Aim at the mark. Hit it. Stop and see where the shot struck, and then fire another broadside. Pack your sermons. Make your words like bullets. A board hurts a man worse if it strikes him edgewise.—*Selected.*

Incentives to Soul-Saving Work.

First.—The command of our Lord.

Second.—The reward for the service.

Third.—The good that comes to those saved.

Fourth.—The greater praise that comes to God.

Fifth.—The blessing that comes to society.

Sixth.—The joy in three worlds.

Seventh.—The defeat of Satan.

THE COMMAND.

This is explicit and direct. Mark xvi. 15 ; John xv. 16 ; 2 Cor. v. 12-20 ; Ezekiel xxxiii. 8.

Have we been saved if we deny the cup of salvation to others ?

Can we be saved if we fail in this command ? See that awful warning in Ezekiel xxxiii. 12.

To neglect to give the patient the medicine and he die thereby, are we not responsible for his death ?

Consider the result of a Levite who should refuse to tell the serpent-bitten Israelites that Moses had lifted the brazen serpent as a remedy and he that would look should live. Read John iii. 14, 15.

Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me."

It's ours to lift Him up that the whole world may see Him. See John xvii. 20, 21.

THE REWARD.

James v. 20. Here is the promise of a double reward. Daniel xii. 3 gives the eternal reward. John xii. 26 has a depth of meaning in it which only heaven can reveal.

Think of meeting those you have led to Christ in heaven. Consider Hebrews xii. 2—who "for the joy"—ours the same.

There is a reward here, as well as hereafter.

1. There is no joy like that of soul-saving.
2. We grow mighty in grace thereby.
3. We make friendships that are eternal.
4. It brings gladness next to our own conversion.
5. We gain the love and esteem of the Church.
6. It helps to answer prayer.
7. It sets all heaven singing for joy (Luke xv.).

THE GOOD THAT COMES.

A soul saved from hell.

A wicked life changed to one of righteousness.

The fires of a burning conscience put out and peace like a river put in.

A soul set free from the service of Satan.

Good influences let loose, bad influences changed.

A soul reconciled to God. "Harmony once more."

Hope restored, manhood regained, life found.
 Condemnation gone; victory over death.
 Companionship of Jesus.
 The indwelling God and power of the Holy Ghost.
 Love the controlling motive, and not self or selfishness.

THE GREATER PRAISE OF GOD.

A soul saved will sing forever.

“He will never hear the last of saving a sinner like me.”

Everlasting praise for everlasting salvation.

One can set a multitude on fire.—*John B. Gough.*

God’s love for the individual reveals man’s power to praise.

Said one sinner, “Every world shall hear of my conversion, and there is not an angel or an archangel whose hand I will not shake, and say, ‘Glory to God, and sing Hallelujah.’”

SOCIETY AND ITS BLESSINGS.

Hatred, malice and strife lessened, and love, joy and peace increased.

There is no true Christianity without morality.

Convert the race and prisons close, two-thirds of all asylums and hospitals will not be needed.

One judge will do for every fifty we now have.

War will be known only in memory, and every soldier can beat his gun into a pruning hook and go to work. The cry of the poor will be stopped by mouthfuls of meat, and the destitute will sing for joy of plenty.

“One policeman can watch a ward in New York or London, and sleep whenever he likes.”

JOY IN THREE WORLDS.

Heaven will rejoice. God on the throne will be glad. Angels and archangels will shout the praise and wonder of Christ’s salvation. The redeemed ones there will run the streets of gold, wild with delight that one has tasted of the good gift of eternal life.

Earth will rejoice. Some mother will weep tears of joy over her boy, saved at last. Wife will have the glad knowledge that she and her husband will not part forever

at the grave. Brother and sister will sing the same songs of salvation. Children will clasp their hands with merry glee over papa's conversion, and mother's being washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Hell will rejoice. Yes, strange as it may seem, lost brothers, like the one in Luke xvi. 27-30, will be glad to know that others of the same household have escaped the torments of the wicked. This Scripture certainly teaches this.

THE DEFEAT OF SATAN.

The enemy of Christ foiled at last.

Seeking whom he may devour he has lost his prey.

Christ and the angels victorious.

Satan and the devils defeated.

The glory of triumph in battle.

One more in heaven—one less in hell.—*Selected from "Lessons for Christian Workers," by Chas. H. Yatman.*

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REV. A. SIMS, Kingston, Ont., Canada.

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