



Articles and Sermons :: As he snuffs the gale of popular applause!-J. A. James

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(J. A. James, "Ministerial Duties Stated and Enforced")

"In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God." 2 Corinthians 6:4.

This verse implies that ministers are to labor for God—surely not for the preacher's fame. SELF is an idol which has been worshiped by far greater multitudes than any other deity of either ancient or modern heathenism. A minister is the last man in the world who should be seen at the altar of this vile abomination—SELF. And yet without great care he is likely to be the first one there, to linger there the longest, to bow the lowest, and to express his devotion by the costliest sacrifices!

Many become ministers merely to acquire popular applause. 'Fame' is their motive and their aim. To commend themselves, is the secret but powerful spring of all they do. SELF is with them in the study directing their reading, selecting their texts, arranging their thoughts, forming their illustrations—and all with a view to 'shine in public'. Thus prepared, they ascend the pulpit with the same object which conducts the actor to the stage—to secure the applause of approving spectators. Every tone is modulated, every emphasis laid, every attitude regulated—to please the audience, rather than to profit their souls; to commend themselves, and not Jesus Christ. The service ended, this bosom idol returns with them to their own abode, and renders them restless and uneasy to know how they have succeeded. If they are admired, they receive their reward; if not, the first prize is lost!

It is nothing in abatement of the sin, that all this while evangelical sentiments are uttered. Orthodoxy is the most direct road to popularity. Christ may be the text—when SELF is the sermon! And dreadful as it seems, it is to be feared that many have elevated the cross only to suspend upon the 'sacred tree' their own honors! and have employed all the glories of redemption—merely to emblazon their own name!

The ministry is not intended to be a platform, where the petty manufacturer of 'tinsel eloquence' and 'rhetorical flowers' shall display to a gaping crowd his gaudy wares!

When carried to this height, this is the direst, deepest tragedy that was ever performed by man, since it ends in the actual and eternal death of the performer, who forgets, as he snuffs the gale of popular applause,

that it bears the vapors of damnation!

"The Spirit took me to the north gate of the temple's inner courtyard, where there was an idol that disgusted the Lord and made Him furious!"
(Ezekiel 8:3)