

Robert Murray M'Cheyne:

It is five years today, brethren, since I began my ministry among you in this place. It will be good for us today to stand up in the sight of God, and see how we have improved the years that are gone by.

Let us observe, first of all, that faithful ministers preach Christ Jesus the Lord. Verse 5: 'For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.' Now there may be two things implied in preaching not ourselves.

We do not preach the fancies of ourselves, but the truth of Christ. Many men preach themselves—they preach their own theories. Many before the days of the apostles did this—they taught their own fancies. But when the apostles came they took a very different manner. Witness John the Baptist—'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). So the apostles; they said, 'We are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree' (Acts 10:39). And then you remember Philip, when he went down to Samaria, 'preached Christ unto them' (Acts 8:5). And this is exactly what John says in his first epistle: 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you' (1:3). This is the very beginning, middle and end of a gospel ministry. And looking back on the five years we have been together, I think I can lay my hand upon my heart, and feebly think this is what I have done. And why should we do this? Because it is the most awakening truth in the world. One evening lately, I was passing by a building and I heard a man speaking, who seemed in earnest. I stopped and listened—he was preaching about laws and politics. I said that that man may preach to the day of judgment, but he will never make the people holy. But we preach Christ Jesus the Lord, that you may be made holy.

We do not preach ourselves as the end, but Christ. I believe that all worldly teachers preach themselves as the end; but this is not the object of faithful ministers. It is not that you may praise them; but Christ Jesus the Lord. Again, looking back upon our ministry, though I am not more free from fault than other men, I would not be a minister another day, if it were only for a name. But if we are Christ's, he will make us preach himself. I sometimes feel, brethren, that I would willingly lie down beneath the sod in the churchyard, and be forgotten and trampled on, if only you were friends of Christ.

Let us consider, secondly, that all faithful ministers preach from personal experience. Verse 6: 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' There are many teachers, dear friends, and I believe them to be honest worldly men, who do not preach from personal experience; they have been brought up in the ministry, but they know not Christ; they speak like Balaam, of a star they have never seen (Numbers 24:17). This was not the case with Paul. God had shone into his heart. Observe what he got—'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God'. It was not a sight of Christ with the bodily eye. Many saw the face of Christ who will wail in hell. What was it then Paul got? God gave him a true, divine, spiritual knowledge of the power, love and beauty of Christ, that he could not but preach him. O brethren, it was this that enabled him to preach among the Gentiles the 'unsearchable riches of Christ'. It was this that made him stand undaunted before Nero.

Brethren, can you say God has shined into your hearts? Observe where conversion comes from. It comes from God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness. There was a time when the world was all in confusion. What could bring light on such a world? There came a still small voice, saying, 'Let there be light', and there was light: such is conversion. 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Can you say this? If not, you are still in darkness.

O brethren, pray that ministers may preach from personal experience. It is only those that see Christ that can make him known. It is only when the living water is springing up that we can tell of the power that sanctifies. Pray, then, that we may have such ministers.

But I hasten to the third point, and that is, the manner of a faithful minister. Verse 1: 'Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not,' etc.

We preach without fainting. There are many things that are apt to make a minister faint; no natural man could bear what faithful ministers do. One thing that is apt to make us faint is the reproach of the world. You

remember what they called our Master; they called him a 'winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners' (Matthew 11; 19). These words are very bitter. And then again, I do not know anything more difficult to bear than the reproach of rich, worldly men; they look on all our endeavours to save them as hateful. Another thing is, when people leave our ministry; when they go away, and we have the sad thought concerning them that they went back and walked no more with Jesus. Another thing is seeing many of you staying, and yet living unconverted. Brethren, if there is anything that is like to make us faint, it is these things. I have often felt as if I were standing on the sand, and hearing a ship strike on the rock, I have cried that there was a rope, but the wave washed it by. How many have I seen pass away in this way! Ah! Brethren, that is enough to crush a man. Another thing is when we see some of you who are like the stony-ground hearers. But we faint not. I will tell you why we faint not. It is because it is so sweet to preach. I would say with Henry, 'I would beg six days, to be allowed to preach the seventh.' Christ will be glorified, though you are not saved: you will not wear the white robe, but many will.

All faithful ministers preach holy. Verse 2: 'But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty', etc. There are many ministers who are outwardly ceremonious, but inwardly they are not so. But this was not the case with Paul. I believe that we could not preach if we had not an evil heart; but we have gone to the fountain, and got it washed; we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. Pray for holy ministers.

We preach not deceitfully. Verse 2: 'Not handling the word of God deceitfully.' The Word of God is a dangerous thing; and I fear that many ministers handle the Word of God deceitfully, in not letting you see your state. How many times the very best do it! Ah! Brethren, pray that we may lead you where Paul led those he preached to.

Fourthly, I come now to show you that under all faithful ministers many will be lost. Verses 3-4: 'But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' Now, you will see from these words that Paul reckoned upon it that some of his hearers would be lost, and accordingly this was the case. When Paul came to Iconium the city was divided, and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles (Acts 14:4). And what is our experience? Is not this thing true of this congregation? Some have believed, some have believed not. What is the reason of it? Satan has blinded your mind, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto you. Your lusts have been made a thick veil to hide the gospel from you. And what will be the end? You will be lost. Oh! dreadful word—**a lost soul!** Lost to your believing friends; they will look around the innumerable company in heaven; but you will not be there! Lost to Christ—**Christ will not own you!** Lost to God—**God will say, This is not mine.** O brethren, are there any of you who have sat for five years under my ministry and yet are lost! Ah! Brethren, our gospel is hid to you, and you will be a lost soul to all eternity. All the angels could not tell you the misery of that—to be a lost soul! Amen.