

Holiness Rejected Produces a Worldly and Barren Ministry

~Other Speakers G-L: Aaron Hills:

Every worthy man will seek to magnify his calling and make it honorable. Every true soul craves success. The nobler the occupation, the more honorable the ambition to succeed. Of all human callings, the most sacred and the most important is to stand as God's mouthpiece and ambassador, to plead with guilty souls to be reconciled to God. A man is dead indeed who would not be anxious to succeed in a work which rescues men from eternal ruin, and gets the smile of God and heaven for a reward. People with monumental courage climb burning buildings to rescue the helpless from the flames; they dash through the breakers to rescue the shipwrecked from the billows. What ought we to do to snatch men and women from an endless hell?

And yet there is not such zeal, we are pained to confess, in the ministry in general as there ought to be. Lawyers often plead with more enthusiasm and eloquence when only the value of an old cow is at stake than preachers manifest in pleading for souls for whom Christ died. Richard Baxter once said: "Nothing is more sad than to see a dead minister in to dead souls the living gospel of the living God."

There are two difficulties or perils that confront every minister:

1. The world puts upon his spirit a steady pressure, a devitalizing influence. Its temptations beat upon him from every quarter as the surf beats upon the rock that rises out of the deep. His very position multiplies his perils. His gifts and character make him welcome and sought after by his fellows. The prizes of life appeal to his ambition. The smiles of society greet him, and the blandishments of the world charm him and bribe him to forget the seriousness of his purpose. Honor waves her magic wand, and self-indulgence, like a sorceress, whispers her incantations to his tempted soul. All these together, by a constant leaking away of spiritual forces, exhaust the life, and the from his loving Lord.

Then other things than God become his reliance. Fraternities invite him to depend upon their friendly help. Culture in the head is substituted for Christ in the heart. Eloquence and oratory rather than Holy Spirit are deemed more essential to success. The newspaper and the supplant the Holy Word, and the flashy to hungry hearts in the place of the gospel of the atoning Christ. Gradually, but none the less surely, the life becomes self-centered rather than Christ-centered. The holy abandon of the being to Christ in self-sacrifice, like a seed sown in the soil, is unknown. The sublime truth of Jesus, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal," is not understood. Selfishness becomes the law of action, and it consumes the heart of piety like a canker.

2. As an outgrowth of this state of heart and life, truth itself becomes nebulous and unreal. Speculation takes the place of a "Thus saith the Lord." Failure in preaching the old gospel, because a lack of dependence upon God, nurses the foolish idea that changed; that new truths and new measures are essential to the new conditions. The "gospel of Christ" which Paul was "not ashamed of" is relegated to the lumber-room, or stake of criticism. The young preacher is given to by the theological professor that he must be "up to date" in evolution, higher criticism, and social settlements; he goes from the seminary to his first pastorate with supercilious contempt of old-fashioned is wholly unphilosophical, and as for SANCTIFICATION, why should there be a second blessing when the first is quite superfluous? Education and confirmation are entirely sufficient for this wonderful new generation coming on from our Sabbath schools and our cultured homes! Thus it comes to pass that revivals in many quarters are spurned; full salvation, or, for that matter, any salvation, is discounted; and the old concern for lost souls does not press, like an ever-present sorrow, upon the pastor's heart. The church becomes a social club, and the pastor its leading lecturer and the toastmaster at periodical suppers!!

God forbid that I should say that this is the universal condition of the Church! But that this is the condition in some quarters, and that the tendency is toward it in many, cannot be denied.

Hence we have an educated, polite, fashionable, worldly ministry whose conspicuous barrenness, in all denominations, is the astonishment of men.

Recently I was told of a minister who is talented and brilliant, and once was famous as a soul winner. At one time he led one of the greatest revivals that ever occurred in the Southwest, in which six hundred people found God. After that he was brought face to face with Pentecost. After deep deliberation he refused to pay the price of sanctification. Since then, during several years, I am informed, it is doubtful if he has won a soul, and he has said with bitterness "I hate the very word sanctification." In other words, he deliberately rejected Pentecost and

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he is left in barrenness and bitterness of soul, even hating "the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14, A. S. V.).