

the great duty of preachers or ministers to preach Jesus Christ to the people * Thomas Brooks - posted by hmmm (

A chapter from the book ~ The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

Thomas Brooks, 1655

I shall now proceed to the sixth doctrine, namely—That it is the great duty of preachers to preach Jesus Christ to the people.

"To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Ephesians 3:8

I shall prove it, and then open it to you.

The proof. In Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach." What? Jesus Christ. So in Acts 3:20, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you." So in 1 Cor. 1:23-24, and 2 Cor. 4:5, "We preach not ourselves—but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." So in Acts 4:2, and 2:35, and 9:20. As soon as Paul was converted, straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he was the Son of God.

Now for the opening of the point, I shall only attempt two things.

(1.) Give you the reasons WHY it is the great duty of ministers to preach Christ to the people.

(2.) Which will be the main point—to show HOW they are to preach Christ to the people.

I confess this a very useful point in these days, wherein many men preach anything, yes, everything but a crucified Jesus. Well, Christians, remember this, as it is your duty to take heed how you hear, so it is as much your duty to take heed who you hear. Many there are, who count and call themselves the ministers of Christ, and yet have neither skill nor will to preach Jesus Christ, to exalt and lift up Jesus Christ in lip or life, in word or work. A sad reckoning these will have to make up at last!

I. WHY it is the great duty of ministers to preach Christ to the people.

Because this is the only way to save and to win souls to Jesus Christ.

There is no other way of winning and saving souls—but by the preaching of Christ to the people. In Acts 4:10-12 compared, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." You may preach this and that, and a thousand things to the people, and yet never better them, never win them. It is only preaching of Christ, that allures and draws souls to Christ: John 17:3, "This is life eternal, to know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Ah, nothing melts the hearts of sinners, nor wins upon the hearts of sinners, like the preaching of the Lord Jesus. It is true, the teaching of this and that opinion, may please many a man's fancy—but it is only the preaching of Christ that changes the heart, that conquers the heart, that turns the heart, etc. Peter, by preaching of a crucified Christ, converts three thousand souls at once, Acts 2:14-42. Were Christ more preached, men would be more enamored with him. He is only precious to those who hear of him, and who believe in him. Christ is in all respects incomparable; and therefore, as you would honor him, and win upon others, make him more and more known to the world, 1 Peter 2:7, etc.

They are to preach Christ to the people, because it is the choicest and the chief way to ingratiate Christ with poor souls.

This brings Christ and the soul together, and this keeps Christ and the soul together. Nothing endears Christ to the

soul like this. We see, by woeful experience, Christ neglected, despised, scorned, and trampled upon by most; and no wonder, for many preach themselves more than Christ, and they preach men more than Christ, and their own notions and impressions more than Christ. Surely Christ is but little indebted to such ministers; and, I think, the souls of men as little. Oh that they were so wise as to consider of it, and lay it to heart! Surely a real Christian cares nothing for that which has nothing of Christ in it. There is a strange and strong energy or forcibleness in hearing Christ and his beauties and excellencies displayed and discovered.

The daughters of Jerusalem, by hearing the church presenting Christ in so high a character, and by describing and painting him out in such lively colors, are so enchanted and inflamed that, might they but know where to find him, they would be at any pains to seek him. When Christ is set forth in his glories, with much affection and admiration, others fall in love with him, as you may see by comparing Cant. 5:10, seq., with chapter 6:1.

It is their great duty to preach Jesus Christ to the people, because the preaching up of Christ is the only way to preach down antichrist, or whatever makes against Christ.

Some would have antichrist down, yes, they would have him down root and branch—but there is no such way for his total and final overthrow as the preaching of Christ; for the more the glory, fullness, perfection, and excellency of Christ is discovered, the more the horrid vileness and matchless wickedness of the man of sin will be discovered and abhorred, etc.: 2 Thes. 2:3-4, 7-10, "And then shall that wicked one be revealed." The Greek word properly signifies a lawless monster; one that holds himself subject to no law. Pope Nicholas the First said "that he was above law," because Constantine styled the pope God; and of the same opinion were most of the popes.

"Whom he shall consume." The Greek word signifies to consume little by little, until a thing comes to nothing.

"With the spirit of his mouth." That is, with the evidence and glory of his word in the mouths of his messengers. The ministers of the word are as a mouth whereby the Lord breathes out that glorious, mighty, and everlasting gospel which shall by degrees bruise antichrist and all his adherents, and break them in sunder like a rod of iron, etc.

When Christ was born, all the idols that were set up in the world, as historians write, fell down. When Jesus Christ comes to be lifted up in a nation, in a city, in a town, in a family, yes, in any heart—then all idols without and within will fall all before the power, presence, and glory of Jesus. Since Luther began to lift up Christ in the gospel, what a deal of ground has antichrist lost! and he does and will lose more and more, as Christ comes to be more and more manifested and lifted up in the chariot of his word.

Many in these days that speak much against antichrist, have much of antichrist within them. And certainly there is no such way to cast him out of men's hearts, and out of the world, as the preaching and making known of Christ, as the exalting or lifting up of Christ in the gospel of grace.

A fourth reason why they are to preach Christ to the people is this, because else they contract upon themselves the blood of souls.

There is no other way for them to avoid the contracting of the blood of men and women's souls upon them—but the preaching of Christ unto them. Now, a man were better to have all the blood of the world upon him than the blood of one soul. The blood of souls, of all blood, cries loudest and wounds deepest. The lowest, the darkest, and the hottest place in hell will be the sad and dreadful portion of such upon whose skirts the blood of souls shall be found at last.

Hence that passage of Paul in 1 Cor. 9:16, "Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel." The motto that should be written upon preachers' study-doors, and on their walls, and on all the books they look on, on the beds they lie on, and on the seats they sit on, etc., should be this, "The blood of souls, the blood of souls!" The soul is the better, the noble part of man; it bears most of the image of God; it is capable of union and communion with God. Christ sweat for it, and bled for it; and therefore woe to those who make merchandise of the souls of men. This was a comfort and an honor to Paul, that he kept himself from the blood of souls, Acts 20:25-27. He appeals to them that they were witnesses that "he was free from the blood of all men." Paul had held out Jesus Christ in his natures, in his names, in his offices, and in all his excellencies and perfections—and so frees himself from the blood of all men. And ministers can no way secure themselves from the blood of souls—but by preaching up and living out a crucified Jesus.

The last reason is this, because the preaching of Christ contributes most to their comfort here, and to their reward hereafter; therefore they are to preach the Lord Christ to the people.

When Luther was upon a dying bed, this was no small joy and comfort to his spirit. "You, O Lord," says he, "have I known, you have I loved, you have I taught, you have I trusted—and now into your hand I commend my spirit." There can be no greater joy to a minister than, by preaching Christ, to win souls to Christ: 1 Thes. 2:19-20, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. You are our glory and joy." Those who by preaching Christ win souls to Christ shall shine as the stars in the skies, Dan. 12:3. Every soul won to Christ is a glorious pearl added to a preacher's crown: 1 Peter 5:4, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory." A crown imports perpetuity, plenty, and dignity, the height of human ambition.

It is the opinion of some that there are three places of exaltation in heaven:

The first and highest is for converting ministers.

The second is for suffering martyrs.

The third is for persevering Christians.

Without doubt, those ministers shall be high in heaven who make it their heaven to hold forth Christ, and to win souls to Christ; who are willing to be anything, to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all to poor souls. And thus I have given you the reasons of the point.

I shall now come to the second thing, which is the main thing, and that is, to show you,

II. HOW ministers are to preach Christ to the people.

Many weak and slight spirits in these days think that it is as easy to preach as to play, and so they hop from one thing to another, and those who are not qualified nor fit for the least and lowest employment—yet judge themselves fit enough for the greatest and the weightiest employment in the world, and that which would certainly break the backs, not only of the best and strongest men—but even of the very angels, should not God put under his "everlasting arms." No labor to that of the mind, no travail to that of the soul—and those who are faithful in the Lord's vineyard find it so. Luther was accustomed to say that if he were again to choose his calling, he would dig, or do anything, rather than take upon him the office of a minister. And many other eminent lights have been of the same opinion with him.

But what are those rules that every preacher is to observe in his preaching of Christ to the people? I answer, These eleven:

Jesus Christ must be preached PLAINLY and CLEARLY, so that the lowest capacity may understand what they say concerning Christ. They must preach Christ for edification of others, and not to work admiration of themselves—as too many do in these days. Paul was excellent at this kind of preaching, 1 Cor. 14:18-19. He had rather speak five words to edification than ten thousand words to work admiration in ignorant people. So in 1 Cor. 2:4-5, "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;" as if he should say, such preach with little power who come with the excellency of speech, or with the enticing words of man's wisdom.

Ah! many there are—I speak it with grief, and to their shame, that delight to soar aloft in obscure discourses, and to express themselves in new-minted words and phrases, and to show high strains and flashes of wit, and all to work in the ignorant, admiration of themselves. Such kind of preachers are as clouds, and painted glass windows, that hinder the light from shining in upon souls, that hinder the sun of righteousness from breaking forth in his beauty and glory upon the spirits of poor creatures. Woe unto these men in the day when such souls shall plead against them, when they shall say, Lord, here are the people whose office and work was to make dark things plain, and they have made plain things dark and obscure, that we might rather esteem them—than any ways profit by them.

Aaron's bells were of pure gold. Our whole preaching must be Scripture proof, or we and our works must burn together. The profoundest prophets accommodated themselves to their hearers' capacities. Holy Moses covers his glistening face with a veil when he was to speak to the people. Yes, it is very observable that the evangelists spoke simply many times for their hearers' sake, even to manifest incongruity, as you may see in John 17:2, Rev. 1:4. But above all, it is most observable concerning God the Father, who is the great Master of speech, when he spoke from heaven, he makes use

of three different texts of Scripture in one breath: Mat. 17:5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him." "This is my beloved Son," that scripture you have in Psalm 2:7; "In whom I am well pleased," this you have in Isaiah 42:1; "Hear him," this you have in Deut. 18:15; all which may bespeak them to blush, who through curious wiseness disdain at the stately plainness of the Scripture!

Oh how unlike to God are such preachers, who think to correct the divine wisdom and eloquence with their own infamy, vanity, novelty, and sophistry! Yes, Jesus Christ himself, the great doctor of the church, teaches this lesson: Mark 4:33, "And with many such parables spoke he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it;" not as he was able to have spoken. He could have expressed himself at a higher rate than all mortals can! he could have been in the clouds. He knew how to knit such knots that they could never untie—but he would not. He delights to speak to his hearers' shallow capacities. So in John 16:12, "I have many things to say unto you—but you cannot bear them now." He who speaks not to the hearers' capacities is as a barbarian to them, and they to him.

"He is the best teacher," says Luther, "who preaches simply, who preaches most plainly." He is not the best preacher who tickles the ear, or that works upon the imagination, etc.—but he who breaks the heart and awakens the conscience. It is sad to consider how many preachers in these days are like Heraclitus, who was called "the dark doctor," because he affected dark speeches. Oh how do many in these days affect sublime notions, uncouth phrases—making plain truths difficult, and easy truths hard! "They darken counsel by words without knowledge," Job 38:2. But how unlike to Christ, the prophets, and apostles these dark doctors are, I will leave you to judge; nor would I have their reckonings for all the world; I will leave them to stand or fall to their own Master. God loves, owns, and crowns plain preaching. Though some account it foolishness—yet "to those who are saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 1:20-30. I have stayed the longer upon this first direction, because of its great usefulness in these deluding days.

As they must preach Christ plainly, so they must preach Christ FAITHFULLY. Proverbs 13:17, 25:13, Job 33:23. Ministers are stewards, 1 Cor. 4:2; and you know it is the duty of a steward to be faithful in his stewardship, to give to every man the portion that is due to him, cheering up those hearts that God would have cheered, and weakening those wicked hands that God would have weakened, and strengthening those feeble knees that God would have strengthened. Ministers are ambassadors; and you know it is the great concern of ambassadors to be very faithful in their master's messages. God looks more, and is affected and pleased more, with a minister's faithfulness than with anything else. A great voice, an affected tone, studied notions, and silken expressions, may affect and please poor weak souls; but it is only the faithfulness of a minister in his ministerial work that pleases God, that wins upon God: Mat. 25:21-23, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of the Lord:" a joy too big to enter into you, and therefore you must enter into it. This was Paul's glory, Acts 20:27, that he "had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God." Neither fear nor favor swayed him one way or another—but he was faithful in his Master's work, and usually God crowns him and his labors most, and sends most fish into his net—who is most faithful, though he be less skillful; who has more of the heart in the work, though he has less of the brain.

The maid was looking for employment, when a man asked her, "Will you be faithful if I buy you?" "Ay," said she, "that I will though you do not buy me." So ministers must be faithful, though God should not buy them, though he should not thus and thus encourage them in their work. Their very feet are beautiful who are faithful, and their message most comfortable to those who sigh and mourn—who labor and languish under the sense of sin and fear of wrath, Isaiah 52:7.

They must preach Christ HUMBLY as well as faithfully.

"For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Corinthians 4:5. Paul does not compliment as the men of the world do, but he spoke as it was, for there are no greater servants than those who are servants to the souls of men for Jesus' sake. So John was very humble in the exercise of his ministry: John 3:30-31, "He must increase—but I must decrease," etc.

Luther used to say, "that a minister must take heed of bringing three dogs into the pulpit, namely, pride, covetousness, and envy." The friends of the bridegroom must not woo and sue for themselves—but for the bridegroom. Dispensers of the gospel are the bridegroom's friends, and they must not speak one word for the bridegroom and two for themselves, as has been the trade of many weak and worthless men. It is the greatest glory of a minister in this world to be high in spiritual work and humble in heart. Vain-glory is a pleasant thief; it is the sweet spoiler of spiritual excellencies. Paul was very humble in the exercise of his ministry: none so high in worth as he, nor any so low and humble in heart as he. Though he was the greatest among the apostles—but yet he accounts himself "less than the least of all saints;" yes, he counted it not only his duty but his glory, to be a servant to the weakest saints: "To the weak I became as weak;" "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not," 1 Cor. 9:22, 2 Cor. 11:29.

As they are to preach the Lord Jesus Christ humbly, so they are to preach him WISELY. In Proverbs 11:30, "He who wins souls is wise;" and indeed the greatest wisdom in the world is requisite to the winning of souls to Christ. He who wins souls, or he who catches souls, as the fowler does birds, as the Hebrew word imports, or fishermen fishes, "he is wise." There is a holy and a heavenly craft required in the winning of souls to Christ: 2 Cor. 12:16, "Nevertheless being crafty," says the apostle. He speaks of a holy and heavenly craft.

It is written of the fox, that when he is very hungry for prey, and can find none, that he lies down and pretends himself dead, and so the fowls light upon him, and then he catches them. Paul, hungering after the welfare of the Corinthians' souls, makes use of his heavenly craft to catch them. There is a great deal of wisdom required to hold out Christ unto the people, not only as a good—but as the greatest good, as the choicest good, as the chief good, as the most suitable good, as an immutable good, as an independent good, as a total good, and as an eternal good. Christ must thus be held forth to draw souls to fall in love with him, and to work their hearts to run out after him. There is wisdom required to answer all cavils and objections which keep Christ and poor souls asunder. There is wisdom required to take souls off from all false foundations that they are apt to build upon; there is wisdom required to present Christ freely to souls, in opposition to all unrighteousness, and to all unworthiness in man; there is wisdom required to suit things to the capacities and conditions of poor souls, to make dark things plain, and hard things easy. Ministers must not be like him in the emblem, who gave straw to the dog and a bone to the donkey; but they must suit all their discourses to the conditions and capacities of poor creatures, or else all will be lost: time lost, pains lost, God lost, heaven lost, and souls lost forever.

They must preach Christ, ZEALOUSLY, BOLDLY, as well as wisely. Acts 4:20. When they had charged them that they should preach no more in the name of Christ, Why, say they! what do you tell us of the whip, or of prisons, or of this and that? "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." So in Jer. 20:9, "Your word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot." Isaiah 58:1, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Israel their sins." And Isaiah had his tongue touched with a coal of fire from the altar, chapter 6:6-7. And when the disciples were to go and preach the gospel, the fire sat upon their tongues, Acts 2:34.

The worst of men are in a dead sleep, and the best of men are too often in a sinful slumber, as the spouse in Cant. 5:2, and the wise virgins in Mat. 25; and therefore faithful ministers had need cry aloud; they had need to be courageous and zealous, to awaken both sinners and saints, that none may go sleeping to hell. Every coward is a murderer, as the philosopher well observed. The cowardice of the minister is cruelty; if he fears the faces of men he is a murderer of the souls of men. Ministers must say, as Hector in Homer, "I will combat with him, though his hands were as fire, and his strength as iron." Let men's hands be as fire and their strength as iron—yet ministers must deal with them, and strive to make a conquest on them, Ezek. 2:3, seq.

Luther professed that he had rather be accounted anything than be accused of wicked silence in Christ's cause. "Let me be accounted," says he, "proud, let me be accounted covetous, let me be accounted a murderer, yes, guilty of all vices—just so that I be not proved guilty of wicked silence for the Lord Jesus Christ."

Themistocles being about to speak to the general of the Greek's army, against Xerxes, he held up his staff, as if he had been about to strike him, "Strike," said Themistocles, "but yet hear." So should ministers say, strike—but yet hear; rail—but yet hear; despise—but yet hear; censure—but yet hear; oppose—but yet hear; do what you will—but yet hear. Says Augustine, "He is no friend to God, who is not zealous for him."

When one desired to know what kind of man Basil was, there was, presented to him in a dream, a pillar of fire with this motto, Basil is such a one, all on a-light fire for God. So every minister should be all on a-fire for God.

They are to preach Christ LABORIOUSLY, PAINSTAKINGLY, FREQUENTLY. A minister must be like the bee, that is still a-flying from one flower to another to suck out honey for the good of others. Should not that dreadful word make every idle shepherd tremble: Jer. 48:10, "Cursed be he who does the work of the Lord negligently." 1 Cor. 15:58, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Oh the dreadful woes which are pronounced in Scripture against idle shepherds! Jer. 23:1, "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds, the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: Destruction is certain for you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep? You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve. Ezekiel 34:2-3 (Zech. 11:17; Mat. 23:13-16, 23, 25, 27.)

The great Shepherd of our souls, the Lord Jesus, was still a-feeding of his flock, and much in provoking others to the same work: John 21:15, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep;" 2 Tim. 4:2, "Preach the word in season, and out of season." Christ wept for souls, and bled for souls, and prayed for souls; and shall not ministers sweat much for souls, and work much for the good of souls? Doubtless they will give but a sad account to Christ, who make anything serve to fill up the hour; that spend only two or three hours at the end of a week to fit themselves for Sabbath exercises. Idleness is hateful in any—^{but} most abominable and intolerable in ministers; and sooner or later none shall pay so dear for it as such. Witness the frequent woes which are denounced in Scripture against them. Where should a soldier die but in the field? And where should a minister die but in the pulpit?

Pompey, in a great dearth at Rome, having provided store of provisions for his citizens that were ready to perish, and being ready to put to sea, he commanded the pilot to hoist sail and be gone. The pilot told him that the sea was tempestuous, and that the voyage was likely to be dangerous. "It matters not," said Pompey, "hoist up sail; it is not necessary that we should live, it is necessary that they should be preserved from ruin and famine." So should ministers say, it is not necessary that we should live—^{but} it is necessary that poor souls should live and be happy forever; it is necessary that they should be acquainted with the things of their peace; it is necessary that they should be delivered from the power of Satan and from wrath to come; and therefore it is necessary that we should be frequent and "abundant in the work of the Lord," and not plead storms and tempests, or that a lion is in the way.

It was Vespasian the emperor's speech, and may well be applied to ministers, An emperor ought to die standing.

As they are to preach Christ laboriously, so they are to preach Christ EXEMPLARILY. 1 Peter 5:3, "Be an example to the flock." They must preach Christ as well in their life—^{as} in their doctrine. Ministers must not be hot in the pulpit, and cold and careless in their lives. They must say, as Gideon said to his soldiers: Judges 17:17, "Look on me and do likewise;" Mat. 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Ministers are called angels, and they are called stars, because they should shine in righteousness and holiness.

What Caesar once said of his wife, "that it was not enough for her to be without fault—^{but} she should be without all suspicion of fault," may well be applied to ministers, who, of all men in the world, should be most free from the very appearances of evil. The lives of ministers oftentimes convince more strongly than their words; their tongues may persuade—^{but} their lives command.

"Talk not of a good life," said the heathen, "but let your life speak." God appointed that both the weights and measures of the sanctuary should be twice as large as those of the commonwealth, to show, that he expects much more of those who wait upon him in the sanctuary than he does of others. Ministers should be like musk among linen, which casts a fragrant smell, or like that box of spikenard, which being broken open, filled the house with its odor.

Gregory says of Athanasius, that his life was a continual sermon and wooing men to Christ. Aristotle requires this in an orator—^{that} he be a good man; how much more then should God's orators be good and gracious? When Eli's sons were wicked, the people abhorred the offering of the Lord, 1 Sam. 2:17; and what is that that renders the things of God so contemptuous and odious in the eyes of many people in this nation—^{but} the ignorance, looseness, profaneness, and baseness of those who are the dispensers of them. Unholy ministers pull down instead of building up. Oh the souls who their lives destroy! These, by their loose lives, lead their flocks to hell, where they themselves must lie lowermost.

A painter being blamed by a cardinal for putting too much red upon the visages of Peter and Paul, tartly replied, that he painted them so, as blushing at the lives of those men who styled themselves their successors. Ah how do the lewd and wicked lives of many who are called and accounted ministers, make others to blush!

Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who by their ungodly lives, made the gospel of Christ to be a reproach: "Where," said they, "is that good law which they do believe? Where are those rules of godliness which they do learn? They read the holy Gospel—^{and} yet are unclean; they hear the apostle's writings—^{and} yet are drunk; they follow Christ—^{and} yet disobey Christ; they possess a holy law—^{and} yet do lead impure lives." As this is very applicable to many professors in those days, so it is applicable to many preachers also.

I have read of a scandalous minister that was struck at the heart, and converted in reading those words: Romans 2:21, "You who teach another, teach you not yourself?" If this treatise should fall into any such hand, oh that it might have the same operation! Wicked ministers do more hurt by their lives than they do good by their doctrine.

I have read of a woman who turned atheist because she lived under a great learned doctor who preached excellently—but lived very licentiously.

The heathen brings in a young man, who hearing of the adulteries and wickedness of the gods, said, "What! do they do so, and shall I stick at it?" So say most, when their teachers and leaders are lewd and wicked, what! do they do such and such abominations, and shall we stick at it?

When one debauched in life among the Lacedemonians stepped up and gave good counsel, they would not receive it; but when another of a better life stepped up and gave the same counsel, they presently followed it. The application is easy. Every minister's life should be a commentary upon Christ's life; nothing wins and builds like this. "Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity." 1 Timothy 4:12. "Watch your life and doctrine closely." 1 Timothy 4:16

Ministers must preach FEELINGLY, EXPERIMENTALLY, as well as exemplarily. They must speak from the heart—to the heart; they must feel the worth, the weight, the sweet of those things upon their own souls who they give out to others. 1 John 1:1-3, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard." The highest goal in preaching, is to feel what a man speaks, and then speak what a man feels.

Praxiteles exquisitely drew love, taking the pattern from that passion which he felt in his own heart.

It was said of Luther, that he spoke as if he had been within a man. Ministers must so speak to the people, as if they lived in the very hearts of the people; as if they had been told all their needs, and all their ways, all their sins, and all their doubts. No preaching compared to this, no preachers compared to these.

Ministers should not be like Caesar's soldier—who dug a fountain for Caesar, and himself perished for lack of water. Yet many such there are in these days, who dig and draw water out of the wells of salvation for others, and yet themselves eternally perish, by their non-drinking of the waters of life. If they are monsters, and not to be named among men, that feed and feast their servants—but starve their wives, then what monsters are those who feed and feast other men's souls, with the dainties and delicacies of heaven—but starve their own? No misery, no hell to this!

As ministers must preach the word feelingly, experimentally, so they must preach the word RIGHTLY. They must divide and distribute the word according to everyone's spiritual estate and condition. They must give comfort to whom comfort belongs, and counsel to whom counsel belongs, and reproof to whom reproof belongs, and terror to whom terror belongs: 2 Tim. 2:15, "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;" or, "Rightly cutting into parts the word of truth," Isaiah 40:1-2, 50:4; 2 Cor. 5:10-12. Some say the metaphor is taken from the priests of the Old Testament, who having slain the beasts that were to be sacrificed, did divide the same in an accurate manner. Others say it is a metaphor taken from a cutter of leather, who cuts off that which is superfluous. So in the handling of the word, questions which are superfluous and unprofitable, ought to be cut off; and that only is to be held forth which makes for the hearer's instruction, edification and consolation. Others say the metaphor is taken from the cutting and squaring out of the streets and highways, and setting out the bounds of men's lands and possessions. Others by cutting the word of truth aright, understand the raising of right instructions, by following the rule of the word, only as a ploughman who draws or cuts a right furrow in the ground.

To divide the word aright, is to cut out to everyone his portion, as a parent cuts out bread to his children. A general doctrine not applied, is as a sword without an edge, not in itself—but to the people, who by reason of their own singular senselessness and weakness, are not able to apply it to their own estates and conditions; or as a whole loaf set before children, that will do them no good. A garment fitted for all bodies, is fit for no body; and that which is spoken to all is taken as spoken to none.

Doctrine is but the drawing of the bow; application is the hitting of the mark. How many are wise in generals—but vain in their practical inferences! Such preachers are fitter for Rome than England. Souls may go sleeping and dreaming to hell before such preaching, before such preachers will awaken them and show them their danger. Oh that therefore the people were so wise—that when sin is reprov'd, judgments threatened, miseries promised, and Christ freely and fully offered—they would apply all to their own souls! This is the misery of many in our days; they come to sermons as be

ggers come to banquets, carrying nothing but the scraps away with them.

They must preach the word ACCEPTABLY, as well as rightly. Eccles. 12:10, "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words;" or words of delight, as the Hebrew has it, "and that which was written was upright, even words of truth." Ministers' words should be divinely delectable and desirable; they should divinely please, and divinely profit; they should divinely tickle, and divinely please both ear and heart. A minister should be a weighty speaker; he should clothe his doctrine in such a lovely dress, as that he may by it slide insensibly into his hearers' hearts. Ministers should clothe their matter with decent words. The leaves give some beauty to the tree. Good matter in an unfitting language, is like a bright candle in a detestable candlestick; or like a lovely body in tattered clothes; or like a gold ring on a leprous hand.

"Truth," says one, "loves to be plain—but not repugantly stated." As she loves not to be clad in mirthful colors, like a wanton strumpet—so not in repulsive rags like a nasty creature. Aaron's bells were golden bells, sounding pleasantly, and not as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals. Holy eloquence is a gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 18:24, and may doubtless, as well as other gifts of the Spirit, be made prudently useful to the setting forth of divine truth, and the catching of souls by craft, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 12:16. Surely where it is, it may be made use of, as an Egyptian jewel to adorn the tabernacle.

Lactantius has well observed, that philosophers, orators, and poets, were therefore very insightful, in that they easily ensnared incautious minds with sweetness of speech. Therefore his advice is, even in delivering the truth of Christ, to sweeten the speech for the winning of them to Christ, who will neither hear, nor read, nor value, nor regard the truth, except it be polished and trimmed up in a lovely dress.

In the last place, and so to add no more, as they must preach the word acceptably, so they must preach the word CONSTANTLY. 1 Cor. 7:10, 24; they must not leave the word to serve tables, Acts 6:1, as some have done for worldly advantages; they must not change their black cloaks, for scarlet cloaks; they must abide and continue in their places and employments; they must neither change their work nor their master: Acts 6:4, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." They would not assign their charge to some surrogates or deputies—that themselves might live at ease. No! they were peremptorily resolved to hold on, to continue in these two choice duties, prayer and ministry of the word.

So in chapter 26:22, "I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen." 1 Tim. 4:15, 16, "Meditate upon these things; give yourself wholly to them, that your profiting may appear to all, or in all things. Take heed unto yourself, and unto your doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this you shall both save yourself, and those who hear you." 2 Tim. 3:14, "But continue you in the things which you have learned, and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them." Eccles. 12:9, "Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs."

Hosea was eighty years a prophet in Israel, and yet did not convert them; yet notwithstanding all discouragements he continued constant, and that with abundance of freshness and liveliness.

Chrysostom compares good pastors to fountains that ever send forth waters, or conduits which are always running, though no pail be put under.

Erasmus says of Jerome, He allowed least time for sleep, little for food, none for idleness. It best becomes a minister to die preaching in a pulpit.

Now if this be so, then by way of use let me say, That this truth looks very sourly and badly upon all those who preach anything rather than Christ.

The Lord be merciful to them! How have they forgotten the great work about which their heads and hearts should be most exercised, namely—the bringing in of souls to Christ, and the building up of souls in Christ. Where do we find in all the Scripture, that Christ, his prophets or apostles, did ever in their preaching meddle with businesses of state, or things of a mere civil concernment? "My kingdom is not of this world. Who has made me a judge?" says Christ.

I hope it will not be counted presumption in me if I shall propound a few rules for such to observe, who are willing to preach Christ to poor souls. I will only propound three.

If you would preach Christ to the people, according to the rules last mentioned—then you must get Christ within you.

There is nothing that makes a man indeed so able to preach Christ to the people, as the getting of Christ within him; and it is very observable, that the great Rabbis and doctors who lack Christ within, they do but bungle in the work of the Lord, in the preaching of a crucified Jesus. What sad, dead, and pitiful work would they make! Yes, for lack of Christ within, how little of Christ do they understand! How little of Christ do they make known, notwithstanding all their borrowed helps! Paul was a man who had got a Christ within him: Gal. 2:20, "I live; yet not I—but Christ lives in me: and the life that I live is by faith in the Son of God," etc.

Compare this with Gal. 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you." A Christ within, makes him travail in birth. The Greek word translated, "I travail in birth," signifies not only the travail of the woman at the birth of the child—but also the painful bearing thereof before the birth. The pains of travail breed not a greater desire to see a child born into the world—than Paul's love bred in him, until Christ were anew formed in them, 2 Cor. 11:23. No man did so much for the winning of souls to Christ as Paul, nor any man had so much of a Christ within him as Paul. Nothing will naturalise a minister's heart to his work—like Christ within; nothing will make him so wise, so painstaking, so watchful, so careful to win souls—as Christ within; nothing will make him hold out and hold on in the work of the Lord, in the face of all oppositions, persecutions, dangers, and deaths—as Christ within; nothing will make a man strive with sinners, and weep over sinners, and wait upon sinners for their return—as Christ within. Such ministers as have not Christ within them, will find no comfort, and as little success, in their preaching of Christ. Above all gettings, get Christ within—or else after all your preaching, and yourself—will be a cast-away.

Those who would preach Christ to the people, must study more Scripture truths, Scripture mysteries—than human writings.

They must study God's book more than all other books. The truth and antiquity of the book of God has no equal, either in age or authority. No writings are comparable to the writings of the scriptures, for,

- 1, antiquity ;
- 2, rarity ;
- 3, variety;
- 4, brevity;
- 5, perspicuity;
- 6, harmony;
- 7, verity .

Gregory calls the Scripture, the heart and soul of God; for in the Scriptures, as in a mirror, we may see how the heart and soul of God stands towards his poor creatures. It was the glory of Apollos that he was mighty in the Scripture, Acts 18:24; John 5:39, "Search the Scriptures," says Christ. The Greek word signifies to search as men search for gold in mines. You must search the Scriptures, not superficially but narrowly. The Scriptures are a great depth, wherein the choicest treasures are hid; therefore you must dig deep if you will find. Col. 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you;" or as the Greek has it, "Let the word of Christ indwell in you, as an engrafted word, incorporated into your souls." Let the word be so ingested and digested by you, as that you turn it into a part of yourselves. You must be familiarly acquainted with the word; you must not let it pass by you as a stranger, or lodge and sojourn with you as a wayfaring man; it must continually abide with you, and dwell richly in you.

2 Tim. 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." All books and helps are not comparable to the Bible, for the completing and perfecting of a man for the work of the ministry.

That which a papist reports of their sacrament of the mass, that there are as many mysteries in it as there are drops in the sea, dust on the earth, angels in heaven, stars in the sky, atoms in the sunbeams, or sands on the sea-shore, et

c., may be truly asserted of the word of God; no study like the study of the Scripture—[^]for profit and comfort. Count Anhalt, that princely preacher, was accustomed to say, "That the whole Scriptures were the swaddling bands of the child Jesus," he being to be found almost in every page, in every verse, in every line.

Luther would often say, "That he had rather that all his books should be burned, than that they should be a means to hinder people from studying of the Scripture."

Such as would preach Christ aright to the people, had need dwell much upon the vanity of human doctrines.

The vanity of which doctrines may be thus discovered:

First, They do not discover sin in its ugliness and filthiness as the Scriptures do. They search but to the skin, they reach not to the heart; they do not do as the master did in Jonah's ship, when they were in a storm.

Secondly, Human doctrines have no humbling power in them. They may a little tickle you[^]—but they can never humble you; they cannot cast down Satan's strongholds; they cannot melt nor break the heart of a sinner; they cannot make him cry out with the leper, "Unclean, unclean!"

Thirdly, Human doctrines nourish not the noble part, the soul of man. The prodigal was likely to starve before he returned to his father's house. A man may study much, and labor much, and lay out much of his time and spirits about human doctrines, and yet after all be like Pharaoh's lean kine. A man who studies human doctrines does but feed upon ashes.

Fourthly, Human doctrines cannot cure a wound in the conscience. The diseased woman spent all she had upon physicians[^]—but was not a penny the better. The remedy is too weak for the disease. Conscience, like Prometheus' vulture, will still lie gnawing, notwithstanding all that such doctrines can do.

Fifthly, Human doctrines are so far from enriching the soul, that they usually impoverish the soul. They weaken the soul; they expose the soul to the greatest needs and to the greatest weaknesses; they play the harlot with the soul; they impoverish it, and bring it to "a morsel of bread." Who so poor in spiritual experiences and heavenly enjoyments[^]—as such that sit under the droppings of human doctrines?

Sixthly, Human doctrines make men servants to the whims and corruptions of men; they make men-pleasers of men rather than pleasers of God; yes, they make men set up themselves and others, sometimes in the place of Christ[^]—and sometimes above Christ.

I hope these few short hints may prevail with some to fall in with this counsel, that so they may the better preach the Lord Jesus to the people. And so much for this doctrine.

Re: the great duty of preachers or ministers to preach Jesus Christ to the people * T - posted by Ruach34 (), on: 2008/3/

What a devout and Holy word for preachers. This causes me to tremble and confirms that I am not, "sufficient for these things." Christ is!

And it is "Christ **in me** the hope of Glory!"

It is tremendous how these words confirm Scripture. I have read those scriptures many times before, but in the context of Brooks' word they come alive.

ThIS confirms also, that men who are in a sinful slumber and preach, give no life to their counterparts. They are as unflo wing streams that benefit nothing. the blood or souls are heaped upon them.

O, for the souls of men...