

HUMANLY COPING

with a

GODLY CALLING

Encouragement for Ministers
and Christian Workers

W. A. DILLARD

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HUMANLY COPING WITH A GODLY CALLING

W. A. Dillard, D.B.L.

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By
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PROLOGUE

Dr. W. A. Dillard, pastor of Spring Creek Missionary Baptist Church, Benton, Arkansas, honors me greatly by requesting that I write a short prologue to his treatise on HUMANLY COPING WITH A GODLY CALLING.

CONCERNING THE AUTHOR

The author of this treatise, Dr. William Andrew (W. A.) Dillard, was born in Jenny Lind, Arkansas, on February 24, 1939. He was married to Laura Ann Forbess in 1961. He is the father of two daughters, Andrea and Annette, and one son, Alan. He received his secular education in the Elementary School in Jenny Lind, and graduated from the Ft. Smith Senior High School in 1957. He was born again and was baptized into Jenny Lind Missionary Baptist Church in 1948. He moved his church membership to Cavanaugh Missionary Baptist Church in Ft. Smith in 1957. He surrendered to the call of the gospel ministry in 1959 and enrolled as a student in the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, the same year, remaining there until 1965. In 1960 he was ordained by the Unity Missionary Baptist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. As a student in the Seminary he was awarded the following degrees: Bachelor in Bible Language, 1962; Master in Bible Language, 1963; and Doctor in Bible Language, 1965.

He has held pastorates of churches in Arkansas and Oklahoma continuously since 1960. He was an instructor in Old Testament Hebrew, 1966-1976, and served as Dean of Oklahoma Missionary Baptist College, Institute and Seminary, 1974-1975.

Dr. Dillard's interest in missions and evangelism has moved him to travel much in the United States and to many foreign countries, including the Bible lands. He served two years as moderator of the Red River Association in Oklahoma, two years as moderator of the Baptist General Assembly of Oklahoma, and is presently serving as a vice president of the American Baptist Association.

Dr. Dillard's writings consist of the required theses for graduation from the different departments of the Seminary in Little Rock. His Doctor's thesis of 50,000 words is a treatise on the Hebrew names of the Deity, and I think is worthy of publication for the benefit of the public, and especially for students in our Baptist schools.

HUMANLY COPING WITH A GODLY CALLING

Dr. Dillard delivered the following lectures in Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in Minden, Louisiana, in 1976, for the benefit of all present during Lecture Week in the Louisiana Missionary Baptist

Institute. I sat and listened to a young man God had called to preach the gospel of His own dear Son deliver what I believe to be messages that all ministers of the gospel should hear or read. Feeling as I did about the lectures, I requested the privilege of making a motion that these messages be reduced to manuscript and published in a book. The vote was unanimous for Dr. Dillard to publish his lectures. He has reduced the material into a manuscript which I have read with great interest. In this treatise Dr. Dillard very ably portrays the majesty of God and the dignity of man, especially of a man God has called to preach His Word. The subject for each lecture has in it a challenge to every gospel minister, and if the reader can meet the challenge it will bind him closer to God, and cause him to be a more faithful and obedient servant of God. It will also enable him better to evaluate himself as he functions in the duties of his calling. A true gospel minister must be honest with God, himself, family and fellowman.

Doubtless most, if not all, gospel ministers become victims of the discouragements and disappointments which befell Jeremiah, the prophet of old, and they feel like "throwing in the sponge" and quitting the field; then, Dr. Difiard's "Pylons of Power" will be of such hope and assurance as to awaken in the discouraged minister the will to meet the challenge of a Christian life.

Jesus Christ is the hope of the world, and the Lord has called men of His choice to make Him known to the world. The more sinful the world becomes, the greater the need of God's called ministers of the Word to rise up in courage and meet the challenge. Peter said, "Make your calling and election sure with God," and Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

I believe Dr. Dillard's lectures are a key to a faithful and self-satisfying ministry, and that in time these lectures will be looked upon as classics in religious literature.

Conrad N. Glover

INTRODUCTION

The formidable task of the ministry has indelibly impressed my life in several ways. Preachers, teachers and other Christian workers are a special "breed" of wonderful people with whom I happily identify. Their obstacles, challenges, and triumphs are, therefore, of keen interest. A study of them has become a large part of my own ministry.

I have spoken to many gatherings of God's people in churches and in classrooms for several years. The following lectures have been presented, at least in part, to students in Oklahoma Missionary Baptist College in Marlow, Oklahoma; Louisiana Missionary Baptist Institute in Minden, Louisiana; Eastern Missionary Baptist Institute in Monroe, Ohio; Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas; and in various seminars.

Having known the pain of close friends making shipwreck of their ministry as well as the joy of seeing others succeed, I continue to learn from each one. By this experience it is prayerfully hoped others may be helped and encouraged along the way. Accordingly, the reason these sermons were formulated, spoken, and printed is as old as the ministry, itself. It is the difficulty ministers and other Christian workers generally find in coping with a godly calling. Certainly, these difficulties have been underscored in modern times. Whether this is because of increasing material pressures, the fast, demanding pace of today's society, a decreasing popularity of the church and its ministry, a lack of personal preparation, or a combination of them all, today's Christian worker needs all the help and encouragement available from every source to meet his challenges. I freely acknowledge indebtedness to many whose help and encouragement made this presentation possible. I am especially grateful to the churches and schools of the American Baptist Association who have given me many opportunities of service. Also, I acknowledge the patience of my family and Spring Creek Baptist Church whose unselfish demands upon my time have been a great help. Furthermore, I am indebted to Dr. C. N. Glover of Sheridan, Arkansas, with whom I served as guest lecturer to Louisiana Missionary Baptist Institute in 1976. Since that time, he has, through letters and personal contacts, encouraged the printing of this material.

Apologies are offered due to the absence of literary style. These sermon-lectures are transcribed from tape recordings and presented essentially as they were spoken. Some

grammatical changes and corrections have been made to facilitate readability.

It is prayerfully hoped that the reader may be helped hereby to **see** some of his shortcomings, be challenged to correct them, and throw himself more enthusiastically in to Christian endeavors. Surely, it is the will of God that we have success in humanly coping with our godly calling.

W. A. Dillard Benton,
Arkansas

May 1978

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," II Timothy 1:9.

Passing the Isaac Test

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and caved the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thy only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

Genesis 22:1-14

The tragedy of modern Christianity, in my opinion, but I believe substantiated upon the Word of God, is that it fails to give God His rightful place. So much of the time God must take a place in line with people and things in order to share in our affections. That is, we think to relegate God to some corner or to some place in line with other people and things, but we actually fool nobody other than ourselves in thinking God will take such a place. He will not do so, but in our mind we put Him there. Then, like Samson of old, we become destitute of God unknowingly. When that happens, we proceed to somewhat disgustedly, truly

Reluctantly, and certainly miserably worship with ourselves and wonder what is wrong. I want you to know that God stops many of His people in their spiritual tracks until they are willing to pass the "Isaac" test. Abraham was given the "Isaac" test we read about in the text. I declare to you that the "Isaac" test is an important test and one not restricted to Abraham, but it is a test God gives to each of us. Perhaps it comes a number of times in the course of life.

Consequently, I emphatically declare that the significance of the "Isaac" test must be understood and the test passed if we are to be pleasing in the eyes of Him who has called us with a godly calling. Passing the "Isaac" test is the difference between the fruitful and the wayside Christian. It is the difference between happy living and miserable existence. Passing the "Isaac" test is the difference between the sweetness of victory and the bitterness of defeat. It is the difference between the joy of an optimistic, progressive attitude and the unhappiness of a pessimistic, unprogressive, and negative attitude. Passing the "Isaac" test is the difference between having something to share with others or always looking for something to obtain. It is the difference between attracting others to the heavenly life of faith or repelling them by the coldness of human religion.

The "Isaac" test was of great significance to Abraham from at least four or five different viewpoints. I should like to point out that it was significant as to time and experience in the life of the great patriarch. Abraham, after all, was getting along in years. It is determined by the Word of the Lord that he was 100 years old when Isaac was born. At the time of this offering Isaac was a stalwart young man referred to as a lad, but there is every indication he may have been near twenty years of age. This would make Abraham near one hundred twenty years old and God was still testing him. My, my! You know, that is so contrary to what a lot of us have come to think in our relationship with God today. We think there are a few years to give in service to God and then we are supposed to sit back and let the younger generation "carry the ball." Well, there may be instances where the younger generation should "carry the ball," but there certainly are instances where the older generation should still do some "ball carrying." We should never get to the point in life where we feel that we have done what we are going to do for God, and that our "thing" for the Lord is over. Abraham was near 120 and God was still testing him as to his faithfulness. In fact, this was the greatest test of his life.

However, Abraham had already proven himself in the eyes of men. Look at his life. He had obeyed God's call; he left his kindred; he left his country; he forsook everything. He came out of Ur of Chaldea into a land he knew nothing about. He blindly followed the Lord, forsaking everything, at least almost everything. But here again we are come face to face with the true axiom that yesterday's experiences, sacrifices, and blessings are not sufficient for today nor will today's be sufficient for tomorrow.

Moreover, this was a significant test to Abraham when considering the sacrifice of the test. Abraham had given up many things for the Lord. He even risked his life in war for Lot, his nephew's sake. Now, Isaac, the only son of him and Sarah, the son of his old age, the son whom he dearly loved was being asked of him. This test struck the very heart of his affections. You know, some things in this world always manage to capture every man's affections. This is a varying thing with individuals. Families capture the affections of some, first and foremost. With others, it is money. Some of us learn to, live with a little and some of us learn to live with a lot, but some of us never learn to be satisfied whatever our lot. Positions in life and the esteem of others, the desire for popularity, these capture our affections, but God demands our affections be first and foremost on Him. When they are not, we cannot expect to be right in His sight, we cannot expect to enjoy His choice blessings. Jesus said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," Luke 14:26. The love for Christ Jesus, the love for God, must excel our affections for people and things so much that this affection appears as hate when compared to our love for God. The first commandment Jesus enumerated for the scribes and Pharisees even the first God inscribed on the rock for Moses was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matthew 22:37. God will be pleased with nothing less.

In addition to being a significant test as to the affections of Abraham, it was a significant test as to the lesson he learned. God does not want what we need or must have! God owns it all! Why should He want what I need? Why should He want what I must have? You see, God is in the business of providing for Himself. Isaac said, "My father, here is the wood, and the fire for the burnt offering, but where is the sacrifice?" Abraham replied, "My son, God will provide Himself a sacrifice." God has always provided for Himself. He is a debtor to no man. He does not need

to be given a helping hand. And so it was, when it became time for redeeming that which He had made as the crowning act of creation, even mankind, God would not accept the blood of a thousand bulls or goats. Neither would God accept human sacrifices though they be the best of men, but God provided for Himself even Jesus Christ, the acceptable sacrifice who would pay for the sins of humanity.

Furthermore, God is still in the business of providing what is needful to carry on His work. There is not one who can stand and say he has given himself into poverty supporting God's work, but everyone of us must truthfully say that God has given to us that we might give. Thus, we do not give of our own, but of that which God has provided. James said, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," James 1:17. Everything you have gotten in life that is worth a "hill of beans" was given of God. He gives you your food, clothing, job, home, this country. God gave it to you everything God gave it! Yes, Abraham learned that God would not have his offering, but would provide for Himself.

Therefore, notice the key to passing this "Isaac" test. Abraham passed the test. How did he do it? It is written in Hebrews 11:17-19, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Underscore the faith of this man! He reasoned that Isaac was a physical impossibility to Sarah and himself in the flesh. Isaac was a special gift from God and not of their own doing. This was Abraham's first reasoning. Secondly, God promised Abraham his heir would be of his and Sarah's flesh. Ishmael was rejected. Thirdly, Isaac's proper name had been used by the Lord in referring to his heir. Genesis 21:12 records, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Oh, there it is in plain black and ink. God made this promise to Abraham and now he was taking Isaac to Mt. Moriah to plunge the knife into his body at God's command. What was Abraham's reasoning? He did not get this child in the first place, God gave him to him. Also, God promised that this man, Isaac, would be Abraham's heir. He must have children and through them the holy covenant will be passed on. "It's him!" Abraham reasoned, "Therefore, I do not fear to plunge this knife into his body, because God who gave him to me and now asks for him at my hand, will raise him up again. He has already promised him children." My, my! You talk

About believing God! Abraham was to the point of bringing the knife down into the body of his son, and God saw that he meant business. Consequently, God stopped him. Abraham's attitude made the difference, friends. Amen! By this demonstration, Abraham passed the "Isaac" test. God did not require Isaac, but He required that Abraham be willing to give up Isaac that God might be all-in-all in his affections.

Now, consider this: every Christian, every born-again child of God has an "Isaac" test. As I indicated earlier, we may have more than one from time to time, but each has his own "Isaac" test. The tragedy many meet in coping with a godly calling is flunking out at the "Isaac" test. In Luke 14:16 it is written, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Thus did these flunk the "Isaac" test. Do you suppose they ever had the power of God? Do you suppose they ever experienced the blessings of the Almighty when they balked at his bidding? Moreover, Christians today are no different. To some, "Isaac" may be material things. It may be a job that stands between you and God. It may be a savings account that you treasure and think more of than God. To others, "Isaac" may be the direction of your life. You may fear to give up your life, without reservation, to God. I forthrightly declare to you that who or whatever your "Isaac" may be, you'll never be right in God's sight until you are ready to turn loose, to let go. If you don't give up your life, the Bible promise is that you will lose it. Matthew 16:25. There is only one way to keep that which is most precious to you and that is to give it to God. Give it to God! That's the only way you'll ever keep anything.

Furthermore, to some Christians the "Isaac" test may be degrees of service. Some are afraid to pray for missionaries. They say, "I'm afraid to pray for missionaries. God might call me to be a missionary." That's the poorest excuse I've ever heard for failure to pray for missionaries. If you don't want to be a missionary, God certainly doesn't want you to be one. You can be assured of that. God doesn't want people whom He can't use. On the other hand, if you are not willing to pray for missionaries, if you are not willing to give up yourself to be a missionary, you are not right in the sight of God. You can't be right, you never will be

right until you pass that "Isaac" test. Some are afraid to pray for soul-winners because they are afraid God will want them to be a soul-winner. Well, if you are not willing to be what God wants you to be, then you'll never be a happy person in God's service. You are flunking out at the "Isaac" test. Some are afraid to pray for church finances. They are afraid God will get into their pocketbook, but if you are not willing to give God your pocketbook, you'll never know the genuine joy and happiness of the Christian life. You are flunking out at the "Isaac" test. Some are afraid to pray for teachers. They, themselves, won't teach and they won't pray for Others to teach. They are flunking out at the "Isaac" test. Yes, some are afraid to pray for preachers, that men would surrender to the ministry and go out into God's harvest fields. They fear that God will call them. But, if you are not willing to surrender your life to whatever God wants you to be, you have not passed the "Isaac" test. Blessings are being withheld from you. Your life is shrinking and shriveling and miserably fading away because you won't give up your "Isaac." I don't know what your "Isaac" is today, but God called on Abraham to give his up. Are you willing to give up your "Isaac"?

Subsequently, when Abraham was willing to give him up, God gave him his Isaac and blessings, blessings, blessings besides. God will do no differently to you than He did to that great patriarch of old. If you'll give up your "Isaac" then God will give you your "Isaac" and everything else you need plus a lot of things you want. God may not want you to perform in some areas of service. God may not want you or yours, but you'll never be right with Him until you can say, "Lord, I'm willing. I give up my 'Isaac' to You." To be sure, the blessing of passing the "Isaac" test could not be sufficiently enumerated with hours of eloquent speech. But, returning to Genesis 22 we notice that the blessings of the Lord were pronounced upon Abraham after he had given up Isaac. It is written:

By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the **sea** shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Additionally, I've talked with people who lay on their deathbed, to those old and decrepit. They revealed that things which mean most at the end of the way are not the good times they've had; not the bank accounts they have laid up, but it is the souls they have won to Jesus and the faithful service rendered to Him. It's the hours they have spent in Bible study, in prayer, in church, and the experiences they have had as Christians. No sir, I have never met anyone who was sorry he gave up his "Isaac." Many people talk about Christian happiness, but talk is cheap. Those who experience Christian joy are those who give up "Isaac." God wants you to pass the "Isaac" test. That's why He gives it to you. There is a great blessing on the other side.

Truly, the "Isaac" test was significant to Abraham. He passed it by the key of faith. I realize I am not talking to a great number of "Abrahams" who have passed the test, but to "Abrahams" who are still before the test. I encourage you to go ahead and make that full surrender to God that you may enjoy the blessings awaiting you. Go ahead, join Abraham, lay "Isaac" upon the altar. Put Jesus above your family; put Him above your possessions; most of all, put Jesus above yourself. Friend, that is successfully coping with a godly calling.

Sober Sentiments of Self

I am happy to be in the sanctuary of Calvary Baptist Church here in Minden and I am happy to be able to speak to you from the Word of God on this special lecture week occasion. I am always happy to preach what preacher is not? Also, I have heard so much of this church and the Louisiana Missionary Baptist Institute over the years, but I have never been privileged to be in this city before today to see your work and facilities. I certainly feel I am among great friends because many of you are not new to me at all. Of course, Brother Glover is one of the ministers that I first became acquainted with after enrolling in the Seminary in Little Rock. I have always been blessed by his life and I am honored to serve with him in your lecture week. It is good to **see** so many others of you. I might be able to call more names if my memory were up to par. I took a memory course some time ago. . . if I could just remember what it was all about it would help me with this name business.

I wish I'd had this opportunity many years ago. Then, I could have told you many things you really need to know, but my years of experience in the ministry have led me through various stages of knowledge, zeal, emotions, and everything else that goes with it. Today, probably the best advice I could give you is "Do the best you can."

I bring you greetings from the state of Oklahoma. We remember you in our prayers there and ask that you do the same for us. We appreciate the work you **are doing**. As I observe the work of the Lord, of His churches, of His ministers, I am made keenly aware that we are living in what Paul called "Perilous times." These are perilous times, not from the standpoint of physical abuse or persecution, but from the standpoint of material prosperity and pressure that is applied to the minister and his church in such degrees that his ministry ever stands in danger. The Bible speaks about this in such terms that we may become wisely, properly prepared to do good warfare in these modern, materialistic, high-pressured last days. Thus, I read to you from Romans 12:1-3:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

I want to speak to you generally on the topic, "Sober Sentiments of Self out of the Scriptures." Psychologists, psychiatrists, if they know what they are talking about, teach us it is necessary for an individual to have a proper, a good, estimation of himself to do well in life. Now, that really isn't too much of a problem with most ministers. We usually go too far the other way, don't we? We have a lot of ego to feed and sometimes we have a lot of ego to be trimmed off. It is like the young preacher who went on a preaching appointment full of confidence in himself. But, his well-rehearsed sermon fell flat. Then, an old woman was overheard saying, "I knowd when I seed thet young man a-comin' he had his wick turned up too high."

Accordingly, the admonition of the Scriptures teaches us to think soberly. There was a time (Brother Glover will have to verify this) when the churches and ministers of the Lord Jesus enjoyed a great deal more respect in the various communities than they do today. They were highly esteemed. Why, it might be that the principle of the local school would consult the minister about activities to **see** who was going to conflict with whom. Have you ever had that happen to you, fellows? During those days, the minister could walk down the streets and be respected by those who met him whether they were Christians or not. Today, he is just another "Joe" and this gives the preacher a real problem. The minister wants to be respected. The minister wants to have the esteem of the community in which he ministers. He needs to feel that he is important. He needs to feel he is contributing a vital role in the lives of his church members and in the lives of the community members as well. When the minister finds himself spurned, rejected, not highly esteemed, it becomes one of the most discouraging factors in his life. He may wonder if God is really with him in his ministry. He wonders if it is worth it all to be kicked about, abused and otherwise crudely used. We forget that to be used is our calling.

Nevertheless, what are we to do? For one thing, try understanding the situation and the times. We remember in the book of Matthew 24:12 Jesus said, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Now, "iniquity" is different to "transgression" and to "sin" although these terms are very much synonymous. This appears to be a contradiction, yet "transgression" means to violently, flagrantly violate an open and stated command. This is illustrated by a hunter who comes to a fence on which the owner has posted a sign, "No trespassing, Keep out, This means you." But, he crosses the fence anyway. He understands the law of the property owner, but makes up his mind to go directly in opposition to it. It is a transgression. "Sin"

simply means to miss the mark, to attempt to do that which is right, but to fail, or to fall short of the goal. But, "iniquity" is lawlessness, anarchy. "Iniquity" is determining neither to know the law, nor to abide by it, to determine not to allow the law to become an encroachment or guide on everyday life. Now, this describes the actions of the majority of our generation. Spiritual anarchy prevails. Jesus said that in the last days Christians won't read the Bible, won't pray, won't do what they are supposed to do.

As a result of so much spiritual anarchy, the preacher gets discouraged. Often, he, too, falls by the wayside. Lately, many preachers have simply quit the ministry. You may say, "Well, that's them and not me." I'll tell you this, brother, "Anything that happens to your fellow minister can happen to you. You are not any better, you are not any different, and you are not any stronger." Perhaps by godly wisdom, Bible study, prayer, and the grace of God you will not fall as have others. I hope this is true, but it could happen to anyone. Consequently, we need to think soberly as we humanly cope with our godly calling.

On the other hand, as an overly adequate estimation of self leads to undue egotism and pride, a low, inadequate estimation of self leads to defeatism and depression. Let us strive, then, to make our sentiments of self to be sober ones. It will help us to know something about the word, "sober." It comes from the Greek **sophroneo**. Scholars say this is a combination of two words, *sozo* which means to save, preserve or make **safe**, and **phreen** which means to reign in, or to curb. This alludes to action applied to the mid-section of the body. When the warrior went to war, he girded himself tightly for strength, support, and for protection from the enemy. By the way, a lot of people still curb themselves in the midsection and lot more of us should. But, when this word becomes applied to the mind, this illustration becomes apt and useful. We need to gird our mind, to curb it in, to make it safe by limiting our mental activity in some areas. You have the capability, the possibility of doing this because you are the captain of your soul. You sit in your own driver's seat of doing and thinking what you want to do and think. Surely, there are outside influences that come to bear on our lives, but decisions affecting your life and well-being are still made by you. You can curb your thoughts. You can make your mind safe and that is what the word "sober" means. Don't let your mind hang out in places where it doesn't belong as your mid-section does. Curb it up.

In addition to this, Webster says the word "sentiment" is, "A feeling of sensibility, a mental attitude, thought or judgment prompted by feeling as religious sentiment, a complex organization of ideas, instincts built up in the course of the individual experience." Well, that's a lot of words just to say, "Thoughts based on experience." But, understand this, for there is a distinct need for preachers and other Christian workers to curb in and make sale their feelings, sensibilities, thoughts, and judgments with regard to self. Then, and only then, may we please Him who has called us with a high and holy calling.

Subsequently, I say to you, it will be within the purview of "Sober Sentiments of Self for you to think in this fashion: As a minister of the Lord Jesus, you deserve the best there is. You like to hear that, don't you? We want to explore that a little. As a minister of Jesus, you are the best. You deserve the best. You are the best because you have Him who is the best in all the universe. First, believe this: you deserve the best. You deserve the best in mannerism, molding, and in morals. The formative years are the most important and precious years of life. Somebody said, "You can always tell a young preacher, you just can't tell him much." Oh, but how great it is to be in the fellowship of fellow preachers, going to school, studying the Word of God. Formal schooling is, in my opinion, one of the wisest things a young preacher can obtain. However, many institutions of today are simply not worthy of the Lord's preachers. I thank God for schools such as this one. May His richest blessings abide here even as they are now evident. Yes, Bible education is the best education going. There is an old cliché that says, "A Bible that is falling apart usually means an individual who isn't." There is more truth than poetry in that, friend. Jesus' testimony of one who is educated in His Word is well expressed in the sermon on the mount: He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them is likened unto a man who built his house upon a rock and the winds came, the storm, the rain and beat upon it. But, the house stood because it was founded upon a rock. Who is this? He who HEARS and DOES the Word of God.

On the other hand, there are many ways you could have chosen to direct your life. You could have been wrapped up in the field of medicine and that would have been noble enough. You may have been a very fine doctor, a fine surgeon. Perhaps you could have been one of the great heart transplant surgeons. Ah, but I say to you, your way of transplanting hearts is better than theirs. You could have been a lawyer. Perhaps you would have aspired to, and realized, a bench on the Supreme Court of

the United States, the zenith, the height of that profession. But, I say to you, as a minister of Jesus Christ, your judgments will have farther reaching effects than theirs. You could have been a politician and perhaps you would have become the President of the United States. But, I say to you, your executions are of greater value than are his. Yours is the molding of the best life that a man can live upon the face of this earth. Understand this and think well of yourself. It is so easy for us to feel sorry for self, to feel persecuted, to feel we have insufficient financial means which is usually true. But, why worry about it. That is not going to put a check in the bank. Do not waste so much time being frustrated with life's affairs. There is a better way. To successfully cope with a godly calling, accent the positive.

More than this, you deserve the best in mannerism, fellows. Many ministers don't have good manners, but they deserve them. I have known men whose personalities were forceful. They had a burning desire to implant what they knew about the Bible and about Christ in others, but in their zeal they became rude, often crude, and, as a result, were rejected by those they were seeking to win. The highest compliment which can be paid any minister of Christ is, "He is a gentleman." If that can be said of you, you are representing the Lord fairly well. The fact is that there is no room for crude, rude, roughshod, and what Dr. Albert Garner likes to call "Cowboy" **preachers. People will reject them.**

Furthermore, neither Jesus nor the apostles sought to impose their personalities on others, but *vice-versa*. Paul told the Corinthians, "I am become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." Rather than impose his way of doing things on others, Paul was willing to forbear, to overlook, to go around, somehow be all things to all men that he might win them to Christ. Accordingly, Paul used himself repeatedly as an example of the ministry to his ministerial son, Timothy. I repeat, you deserve the best mannerisms available in human circles, today.

Moreover, you deserve the best in morals, too. Also, let me hasten to say there can be no room in the preacher's heart and life for a "Holier than thou" attitude. I believe I am susceptible to every vice, crime, and sin which man's mind can devise. It is only in this belief that I can trust God enough to walk above them. I see too many of God's preachers setting themselves on the shelf because of low morals. It breaks my heart.

Furthermore, on this topic Paul warned, "Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints," Ephesians 5:3. Truly, the minister must use wisdom from above in every aspect of his ministry to avoid a moral downfall. This includes great care about our viewpoint of others. To me, it is not a matter of condemning men when they sin. God forbid. I have no business condemning men. I do believe we need to condemn sin, not men. It is not any marvel to me that a man could do something wrong, but, you know, when somebody does something wrong you can hear the word make a circle, "Hey, did you hear about old so and so?" I guess the old Adamic nature will predominate enough that this will never cease. But, listen, fellows, it isn't so much a marvel that a man who is born wrong, with total, hereditary depravity, should sin and do wrong. On the other hand, if there is one glorious mystery on earth it is that a man who is born totally wrong should ever do anything right. This can be accomplished only through the power and presence of the Lord who enables us to successfully, humanly cope with a godly calling. Now, folk don't whisper about that. Neither do they shout from the rooftops, but this is a wondrous marvel. God can take a man who is depraved mentally, spiritually, and physically and cause him to be right and do right.

But, why does the minister deserve the best in molding, mannerism, and morals? Because he is the best. Now, God may have scraped the bottom of the barrel when He called you, but you are the best. Certainly, God does things differently to the way I would do them. Praise His name for that. I guarantee you, if I were out on the street today shooting preachers, most of you guys would go free. Oh, there is that lovely, strange creature we call the preacher and he is the best there is. He has the best work on earth, the best people to lead and the best message to preach.

What work could possibly be better than the ministry? I would rather be a preacher than anything else in this world. Paul said, "If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." It is good, very good. Sure, there are temptations, obstacles to overcome, but those obstacles become mountains of blessings on the other side.

Furthermore, you have the best people in the world to lead, preacher. These are God's people, born-again, peculiar people, a royal priesthood. Still, some preachers complain they feel they

get off balance and fall. Well, rejoice! Why? Because you are the one on the rope. You are not the one throwing hurtful objects. You are still up there on the rope. Praise God for walking the rope if that is what it is.

Finally, the minister, teacher, Christian worker is the best on earth because he possesses Him who is the best in the universe. Paul told the Corinthians, "We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ and ourselves His servant for your sake." Let's exalt Him whom we have. Paul told Timothy, "Preach the Word." Get involved in the Word. If you are discouraged, go to the Word. If things are not going well for you, go to the Word, get lost in it. Then, if you have a hat you will probably throw it away for joy. God will bless you that way. Jesus Christ, the possessor of our soul, is the only message, the only person worth preaching. There is a lot of preaching going on today, but there certainly is not much good biblical preaching going on any more. If we share Him with others, He will mend broken hearts, be a balm to the bruised. He will be healing to the sick and liberty to those in bondage. You can help people in this way, preacher, because you possess Him who is the best. To do this is the call of Him who lives within. Exalt Him, love Him, for Jesus is the fairest of the fair. He is the loveliest of the lovely. He is sky without a cloud. Jesus is day without a night. He is rejoicing in a time of sorrow. He is the Lily of the Valley. He is the Rose of Sharon. Jesus is the Bright and Morning Star. He is the obedient servant. He is the perfect propitiation for our sins. The Bible says that Jesus is King of kings. He is Lord of lords. He is the Christ of Calvary and He is the Savior of the souls of men. Without Him you are nothing. With Him you are everything. "I can do all things," said Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." We may be nothing without Him, but we are all things in Him and He can accomplish His work through **US**.

Brethren, there are a lot of folk today who get discouraged, perhaps at some preconceived opinion of what they believe the preacher ought to be or do. They say, "I can't live up to it, I can't cut it, I can't continue on," but there has never been a man since the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden's garden to this present day, nor shall there be until Jesus comes again, who will live the Christian life. Jesus is the only man who ever did do it and He still can do it through you. Keep yourselves in the love of God. If you think like this, I am persuaded your sentiments about self will be sober and Scriptural and you will cope well with your godly calling.

Honest Ministers Providing for Honest Things

But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in

Previously, I alluded to Matthew 24:12, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Having talked about iniquity, I would like to mention "Waxing cold," briefly. The word so translated is Greek. It refers to the process of evaporation. Put your hand into a basin of water then lift it out. You will feel the coolness of lowered temperature as the water evaporates. This is much more noticeable when alcohol is used instead of water. This is the same process alluded to here by our Lord when He said the love of many would wax cold. Love will actually exist, but because many will not be able to cope with the actions of others and the circumstances around them, they will become honestly discouraged to the point of falling by the wayside. Their zeal for the Lord will evaporate, wax cold. This is quite a problem for the modern minister. Surely, the way we meet these situations will determine our effectiveness for the Lord. It will determine the success we have in our ministry. Make no mistake about it, it takes a properly prepared heart to meet these obstacles, well.

The other day, I spoke to you regarding the minister's esteem of himself. Now, let us turn our thoughts more to the actions of the minister and specifically about honest ministers providing for honest things. Attention given to this aspect of life will enhance our chances of succeeding in our ministries to the glory of Christ Jesus. Paul and Titus were honest ministers providing for honest things, both in the sight of men and in the sight of God. They were, and are, encouraging examples.

Moreover, the need for this consideration is acute, even to the casual observer. As the end of this age draws ever closer, we are beset by rebellion, by falling away from the principles of the New Testament. We may think we are far removed from many of these situations now, but we see them affecting others. It should be a point of concern more than just good preaching material. We can talk about other Baptist or Protestant organizations generally and point out wherein they are losing spiritual ground, but their problems will be on your doorsteps sooner than you think. Consequently, we need to be wise. D. L. Moody once said, "The best way to revive a church is to have a fire in the pulpit." The best way to build a fire in the pulpit is for it to be filled with an honest minister providing for honest things.

At this point, a research on the word "honest" proves most interesting. It is used eleven times in the New Testament, but there are three different Greek words employed to convey the idea. The first, and most common one is *kalos*. It is usually translated "good." Thus, an honest minister is a good minister. Since the Bible affirms there is none good but God and nothing good but the things of God, then a good minister is one given to the things of God. Another term so translated is *sebomai*. It means to revere, to be devout, but most of all, it carries the idea of being honorable. An honest minister is one who is given to a walk of life that is honorable. Thirdly, the **word *euschemonos*** is translated "good." This word means good conditions or good fashion. The connotations of the word are, "Well formed, decorous, noble." Putting the definitions of these three words together, we come up with something like this: An honest minister is one who is permeated with, administers in, and proclaims the Word of God in all of its simple purity. He thinks, speaks, and walks in honor. He is well formed, dignified, and honorable in all things. His life provides for things of this nature in the sight of God and in the sight of men. The honest minister must provide things honest: 1. in his personal life, 2. in his relationship with others, and 3. in his ministry.

Now, let us think about the minister's personal life. Pilate said of Jesus, "I find no fault in Him." It was a good judgment, but it cannot be rendered upon you and me who must carry the Adamic nature to the grave. Still, that does not give the Christian a license to give up striving for that which is honest and good. Many have done so, rationalizing their situation on the basis

of an ever-present nature to sin. Of course, they made shipwreck of their influence. Personal deportment is a reflection of what goes on in the heart and mind. How could anyone be so foolish as to think to successfully cope with a godly calling with an unclean heart and mind? Paul told the Philippians, "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Employ your mind to the highest and most noble purpose you can give it.

Furthermore, we can learn much through nature if we are observant. The Cabbage Butterfly, while it is in the caterpillar stage, can be found feeding on a particular vegetable. Can you guess what it is? An old cabbage head. The Monarch Butterfly is also called the Milkweed Butterfly. Its caterpillar feeds on Milkweed. Often, things become known by the substance on which it feeds. People often become known by what they feed on mentally and spiritually. When I was pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church in Midwest City, Oklahoma, I went home one night following Wednesday services and the telephone rang. I picked it up and a feminine voice on the other end conveyed the sense of frustration, panic, excitement, and sorrow all combined in one emotional appeal. She said, "Preacher, you must help me." I said, "I will, if I can." She said, "My brother-in-law just committed suicide and his mother and dad live out in the country. They are on their way here and I cannot bear for them to **see** that room as it is. Will you get help to remove the mattress and carpet and burn them?" I said I would. Then, I called a deacon and told him we had a job to do right away and would need his truck. I didn't tell him what it was about on the phone for fear he would back out. Having informed him of our mission on the way, he said, "I did not know this man, but when we get over there I just know we'll find some gambling material and some lewd magazines." I said, "I don't know where you are getting these ideas, but we will **see**." **We** went into the house, turned on the lights and the deacon was right. On the dresser was a well used deck of cards, on the walls were pictures of scantily clad women, and in the middle of the floor, beside the bed, was a pile of old stag magazines. There, on top of those was a great glob of the brains that had fed on that rotten material.

Subsequently, learn a lesson. You must clean up your mind and keep it clean. You cannot do God's business with a dirty mind. You cannot provide for honest things if you don't feed on the right material. The filth of this world is not for you, Christian worker. Turn it off. Get it out of your life. Feed, rather, on that which is pure, honest, upright, even God's Word. Anybody can get into the gutter, but it is for you to provide for things honest. Paul told the church at Colossae, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."

Furthermore, this provision for honest things affects the area of our speech. I Peter 2:12 states, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak evil against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Some say if a fellow tells the truth all of the time he certainly will be unpopular. Perhaps so, but are you in a popularity contest? If so, get out of the ministry. Also, I want to point out that being unpopular does not give one the right to become bitter. This is a pitfall that catches many and, without a doubt, a bitter Christian can be as mean as a snake in the grass. Let me illustrate. In Southwestern Oklahoma there are a lot of rattlesnakes. Every year the little town of Waurika has a rattlesnake festival. People come from many states to hunt the snakes and the one who catches the largest snake gets a prize, a rubber duck or something like that. I went down one year to see those vile creatures, the snakes, not the hunters. Main street was closed and in the middle of it was a large pen with a cage at one end knee deep in writhing snakes. They emitted a foul odor and it gives me chills to think about it. There was a barbeque pit set up and they were grilling rattlesnake steak. I... I wasn't too hungry. Each evening they let down the door of that cage and the snakes came writhing out into the pen. The hunters would jump in with sticks and bags and the one who could bag the most snakes before the whistle blew received a prize. I figured there was something wrong with those fellows. But, I learned to respect those snakes. A rattlesnake can strike, inject its deadly venom and return to a coiled position in about one half a second. Boy, they are quick, but there are times when Christians can do the same thing. They can strike, inject their deadly words, and walk out with a pious look in about one half a second and pretend they have done nothing wrong. The Psalmist declared, "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent. Adder's poison is under their lips." But, Paul said, "Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting, not in drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." Oh, let us provide for honest things in what we say to and about others.

Still further, the preacher can get to the point he feels he is beyond the problems of the people to whom he ministers. People have problems, but preachers are not supposed to have problems, are they? Do you ever feel that way about yourself? We will all do well to provide time in life for an honest confession of sins. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all

Unrighteousness." Abraham Lincoln said on March 30, 1863, "It is the duty of nations as well as men to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with the assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and to pardon."

In keeping with this line of thought, Charles Spurgeon told the story of an Italian Duke aboard a galley ship. He went down into the hole where men were in chains, manning the oars. As he spoke with these convicts, he asked them why they were there. One by one began to give his reason and it was always someone else's fault. They blamed parents for poor upbringing, friends for framing them, crooked lawyers for throwing their case. Everybody rationalized his problem. Finally, one man said, "I am supposed to be here. I needed money so I took it and for that I am here." The duke replied, "Why you rogue! What in the world are you doing here among all of these honest people?" Then, because he had the power, he pardoned this man for his misdeed. Look, confession of sin is the way out from under the load of that sin. Do not rationalize your situation. If you are wrong, simply admit it. You will be the bigger and better for it. Also, you will be able to help somebody else because of it.

Additionally, in our dealings, our relationships with others, we must provide for things honest. It appears strange, but one is more likely to be dishonest with his fellow minister than anyone else. Perhaps this is because of misjudgment of another's worth or failure to reckon properly with another's potential. It may be because of jealousy, or simple overindulgence in our own affairs, but sometimes, evil is premeditated. Consider this illustration. As boys back home in Jenny Lind, a community near Fort Smith, we used to catch blue dirt daubers. They could not sting, but you sure could scare the girls with them. Now the blue dirt dauber is peculiar in another way. She will not build a nest of her own, but will wait until a red dirt dauber builds one. Then, she will fly repeatedly from a water source to the nest to place tiny drops of water on it softening the clay enough to dig a hole in it. Then, she will go in, kick out the eggs, put in her own, repair the hole and fly off. She doesn't have to build a nest, she just steals one. Oh, I hate to make the application. Is that enough?

Furthermore, we must provide things honest with those to whom we minister. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls." Are you watching for those souls, or are you in the ministry for what you can get out of it? It will soon tell on you. There is a story about an old deer every hunter tried to kill, a grand, stately, old buck with large antlers protruding in a beautiful array. But, though he was old and his senses of smell

Consider, too, that there is no reward for the silent, slothful worker. A few years ago, I visited Australia. A lot of things captivate interest in that country, especially the native creatures such as the Koala bear, Kangaroo, and the Dingo. A Dingo is a wild dog similar to an

Oklahoma coyote, but there is a vast difference in one way, the Dingo is a dumb dog. It is silent all the time, unable to bark. It reminds me of a passage of Scripture in Isaiah, "His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." This is a castigation of those who were supposed to be filling the gap between God and the people in the days of the prophets. Such accusations might well be laid at the feet of some ministers, today. We don't want to get involved in anything controversial. We know on which side our proverbial bread is buttered. So, we will preach something simple and leave the troubled areas alone. After all, it is reasoned, why make trouble for yourself when you can leave that for the next pastor. Sometimes this may be valid thinking, but most of the time, it is disastrous. We must provide for things honest to those within and without our churches by meeting sin head-on. Paul said, "Walk honestly toward them that are without," I Thessalonians 4:12. I believe this story drives the point home. Once a Persian ruler had a pearl of great price to give to one of his three sons. He decided to give it to the one who had done the most noble deed; therefore, he called them before him to explain their deeds of nobility. The first son said, "Well, I think I did a noble deed just a few months ago. A merchant of our kingdom placed within my possession a large amount of costly jewels to be delivered to a far country. He did not take accounting of the jewels. I could have kept some for myself and he would not have been the wiser. Still, I did not." The father commended his son, but he said, "Could you have done otherwise without knowing shame?" Then, the second son explained, "Just last week I was walking by a large body of water and I saw a littlechild out in the water drowning, crying for help. Immediately I jumped into the water and rescued the child." The father said, "That is very noble, but could you have walked away and left the child to drown? Could you have done anything less?" The third son explained, "I was returning from a journey not long ago and as I came across the mountain, I met a man who hated me. He was lying asleep at the very edge of a large cliff. One more turn and he would have plunged to his death. So, I awoke him and told him of his plight and he abused me for it." The father said, "This is the most noble deed of all. For without hope of reward you have done a good deed to a man who hated you."

Subsequently, I believe this gives illumination to the ministry. Your reward for an honest deed may be an evil reward. You may be abused by men, but don't let it discourage you. Keep on providing for things honest. God gave you the charge to minister to your community. Minister then, and do it well. In the words of Paul, "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

Finally, there is great security in the ministry if it is a good ministry. A lot of preachers are leaving the ministry and do you know why? Financial insecurity is the given reason. Most ministers are not paid enough money, it's true. I know I don't make enough money, but if I were paid three times as much it would not be sufficient by this time next year. We live on what we have and this is something we must learn to do. Still, preachers quit because they say they must have more money. It is ironic.

In view of this, what is important, now? It is the providing for things honest. Those who are favored by God's call become the object of God's special love and care. Think of Matthew. He was a publican, a tax collector. He was sitting at customs seat making lots of money when Jesus came to call him out. Perhaps Matthew worried about financial security. Maybe that is why he was a publican. But, when Jesus said, "Follow me," Matthew dropped his customs accounting and followed our Lord. I submit to you that this man, who may have been money hungry, knew financial security and real peace for the first time in his life. Yes, Jesus and His work is worth more than money and if we will provide for things honest in our ministry, we will be able to honestly evaluate these things. We will be able to stand.

Honest ministers providing for honest things. This is the way to humanly cope with a godly calling. Let us speak honestly, think honestly, walk honestly. It is imperative that we do this today because the Bible commands it, God demands it, the ministry requires it, and the world expects it. Paul told Timothy, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ. Nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine whereunto thou hast **attained.**"

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," Ephesians 6:10.

There is an innate characteristic in the human species which drives us onward ever impelling us forward to the zenith of our calling, to the attainment of goals and fulfillment of our concept of success. It is not so much a point of concern that Christian teachers, lay workers, and ministers will be motivated to do their best as it is that they will have a proper concept of success. If we were equating godly success with material success, no better example might be found than exists in Beverly Hills, California. Residents of that city are the epitome of personal wealth, glamour, popularity, prestige, and influential power. But, when the masquerade of fancy yields to the illumination of reality, it is a different story, altogether. A couple of years ago, statistics showed that city to exceed 33,000 in population with an average income of \$200,000.00 annually. Business property sold for \$100,000.00 per front foot. The average house remodeling job cost was above \$250,000.00. Haircuts were \$25.00 and \$40.00 if by house call. However, statistics also showed Beverly Hills hosted 193 Psychiatrists, 750 various medical doctors and over 1,000 lawyers. Those folk have problems most Christians escape. The deception of the Hollywood type is that some of the tools of success are confused with success, itself.

True success of life demands something more, something extra, beyond the common commodities of life. Jesus said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," Luke 12:15. This is not to say material strength cannot be an asset, but more often it is not. The real strength and success of an individual lies beyond these in spiritual power. Concluding an abundance of instruction to the Ephesians, Paul further admonished, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." It is interesting to notice the term "Success" is mentioned only one time in the Scriptures, Joshua 1:8. It is a quality most difficult to define, but is manifest in its holder by certain characteristics, certain qualities which I choose to call "Pylons of Power."

The term "pylon" is defined as, "A gateway, as of an Egyptian temple; a tower-like structure supporting telegraph wires; marking a flight course, etc." The term "power" taken from Ephesians 6:10 comes from the Greek *kratos*. It is different to the more common words translated "power" such as *exousa*, authority-type power in Matthew 28:18 and *dunamis*, explosive, energetic power in Acts 1:8. *Kratos* is a power manifested

through submission to dominance, specifically to God's all enabling might. Thus, "pylons" of such power characterize the life of every person who is successful in the sight of God, be he a pastor, evangelist, missionary, teacher, deacon, or layman.

The first "Pylon of Power" is the one who is successful in coping with a godly calling is that of paraphernalia. Any good dictionary states that "paraphernalia" means personal belongings, apparatus, equipment as a fireman's paraphernalia. The Christian paraphernalia is listed in Ephesians chapter six. It is the loin girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet which are shod with preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and above all, the sword of the Spirit. This is the proper paraphernalia provided by the Lord, it is adequate for both offense and defense. It has been wisely noted that provisions are given for every part of the anatomy of the Christian warrior, but his back. God does not intend for His people to run in the face of opposition or shirk responsibility. We can, with His help, successfully cope with our godly calling. Without exception, the pylon of paraphernalia is always present in the life of those who do so. So, even in paraphernalia, our strength must be "in the Lord and in the power of His might."

The second "Pylon of Power" is that of performance. Addressing this aspect of service, the apostolic instruction is, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand," Ephesians 6:13. R is with great regret that we observe Christians failing in successfully coping with their godly calling. We ask ourselves why? At the risk of sounding too simplistic, I offer God's uncomplicated solution to the problem. It is Luke 18:1, "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Sometimes, the difference between success and failure is so small! To lightly esteem a regular time of prayer is a tragic mistake. Show me a Christian who is a failure and I'll show you a Christian who prays little. The power of prayer is great. An unknown author put it this way:

*Moses prayed, his prayer did save
A nation from death and from the grave.*

*Joshua prayed, the sun stood still,
His enemies fell in vale and hill.*

*Hannah prayed, God gave her a son;
A nation back to the Lord was won.*

*Solomon prayed, for wisdom,
Then God made him the wisest of men.*

*Elijah prayed with great desire,
God gave him rain and sent the fire.*

*Jonah prayed, God heard his wail,
He quickly delivered him from the whale.*

*The three Hebrew children prayed, Through flames they trod;
They had as a comrade the "Son of God."*

*Elisha prayed with strong emotion,
He got the mantle and a double portion.*

*Daniel prayed, the lions' claws,
Were held by the angel who locked their jaws.*

*Ten lepers prayed, to the priest they were sent,
Glory to God! They were healed as they went.*

*Peter prayed, and Dorcas arose,
To life again from death's repose.*

*The thief, he prayed, for mercy cried,
He went with Christ to Paradise.*

Christians should be aggressive, through prayer, in the pursuit of their goals. Paul encouraged, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised the gates of hell would not prevail against His church. The surest way to success is through the pylon of power called prayer. The story is told of a young minister who was called to pastor a church. On the first Sunday he was well prepared, so he thought. To his surprise, the sermon fell flat. As he greeted the congregation at the door, one dear sister said to him, "Pastor, I feel so sorry for you. You can't preach a lick, but I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I am going to pray for you and I will enlist others to pray for you, too." How then could this fortunate minister ever be a failure? His preaching improved, his congregation grew, and lost souls were converted.

Furthermore, the pylon of power, performance, cultivated through prayer manifests itself in qualities of life that cause men to rise up and call its holder "Blessed." *In 865 SUNRAYS OF HELP* the blessed leader is described as one:

Who does not think that he knows it all, but recognized there are a few things yet to learn. Who does not work by the tick of the clock, but by the beat of the heart. Who does not make announcements twice in exactly the same way, but cultivates variety and surprise. Who does not quit when his toes are stepped on. Who does not blame others for going to sleep because he is not awake. A good leader in the home, the church, the school, or business life must be a good person, kind, considerate, understanding, patient, and diligent. Diligence means to be energetic. There is no Divine sanction for laziness. Every good leader, like our Master, must "be about his Father's business." I never knew a busy, energetic person to become a gripe or nag.

Paul called upon all who name the name of Christ to perform in such an honorable and appropriate manner, as he told the Romans, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." It is another way of saying, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

Thirdly, every Christian minister, teacher, layman I count as being successful in humanly coping with his godly calling evidences a quality I call the pylon of patience. Someone once defined patience as a sign on a motel which read, "For night service, ring this bell and keep your shirt on while I get my pants on." Another said that patience is, "Idling your motor when you feel like stripping your gears." "Patience" is translated from the Greek *hupomeno* which is a combination of two words meaning to "stay under." When you feel like putting your load down or letting up, just stay under it a little longer. Patience will bring you a prize. The Hebrew writer said, "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

To be sure, no man may successfully cope with his godly calling without the virtue of patience. It is the means of overcoming the inadequacies of self as well as the trials placed upon you by others. Those trials will come as it did to one minister whose church voted in conference to build a new building. The next month, they voted to use the materials in the old building to erect the new one. Then, the next month, they voted to build the new building on the same location as the old building. Finally, the next month, they voted not to tear the old building down until the new one was completed. Alas, such are

The many trials in coping with a godly calling that calls for patience, but most are not so humorous. If we are to succeed, we must be, "Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

Moreover, no successful Christian is a quitter. No matter what happens, he keeps on keeping on, thus the fourth outstanding quality, the pylon of perseverance. The Christian who does not admit to some discouragement and entertain some thoughts of quitting is less than honest with himself. The obstacles along the way are more than enough to discourage spiritual giants. How does one go about overcoming such obstacles of discouragement as failure of health, death of loved ones, betrayal by friends, and rejection by others of what you know to be sound procedure, or the rejection of your witness by lost friends? II Peter 1:5-10 forthrightly answers the question.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.

In a moment of discouragement let the Christian rediscover that God is a great God who not only knows our every care, but is able to cause us to overcome every obstacle. Moreover, the faith we have in Him, the confidence we place in Him, even in the midst of adversity, is precious and, "Hath great recompense of reward," Hebrews 10:35.

*When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't quit.*

*Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a fellow turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow,
You may succeed with another blow.*

*Often the goal is nearer than
It seems to a faint and faltering man. Often
the struggler has given up,
When he might have captured the victor's cup,
And he learned too late when the night came down, How
close he was to the golden crown.*

*Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems afar,
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit,
It's when things seem worse that you mustn't quit.*

Anon.

To some folk, you may be an oddity at which they are amused, by some you may be misused, by others abused, but if it all means being used of the Lord, no price is great enough to cause us to lay down our great calling. The modern Christian can persevere if he will, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

Subsequently, the foregoing qualities which I have chosen to call "Pylons of Power" will certainly combine to create great strength in your person. "Pylons of Power" in your person, but not of your person. It is power that comes through the person of Christ. Paul made many such statements to this effect in his New Testament letters. He **add**, "Our sufficiency is of the Lord." "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." "Looking unto Jesus." "These things I count but dung. . that I may know him and the power of his resurrection." Yes, he had great power in his person, but not of his person. Such is the power that comes through submission to God. It is the power necessary to assure success in humanly coping with a godly calling.

Finally, consider that Jesus Christ is in every respect a success. As such, He is qualified to give us a plan of success. To the born-again Christian embarking upon a godly calling, the greater part of that plan is embodied in these pylons of power. But because God is not in the business of superimposing His will upon us, the balance of success or failure lies within each Christian worker, himself. Perhaps this truth is best illustrated by the story of a young smart aleck who despised the wisdom of a grand old sage in his community. Hoping to make a fool of him, he caught a bird and went before him to ask, "Is the bird alive or dead?" His thoughts were, "If he says it is dead, I will open my

hand and let it fly away. If he says it is alive, I will crush it. Either way, I will make him appear to be a fool." The young man approached the old man with his question. The old sage replied, "It is in your hand, it is even as you will it." In like manner, the godly calling of your life is in your hand. God will supply His help, but you will determine its success or failure. Surely, it is the will of the Master that each of us know success, even the kind of which Joshua spoke, as we cope with a godly calling. Who then is a success? He has achieved success:

*Who has gained the respect of intelligent men, the
trust of pure women and the love of little children;
Who had filled his niche and accomplished his task;
Who left the world better than he found it, whether
by an improved poppy, perfect poem or a rescued soul;
Who has never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty or failed
to express it;
Who has looked for the best in others and given them the best
he had;
Whose life was an inspiration;
Whose memory is a benediction.*

Bessie A. Stanley.

And my I add to that,

*Who has drunk of that spiritual rock that followed Israel in
the desert and that rock was Christ.*

*Who has set his face as an adamant in the Holy Word even
as the prophets and apostles of old.*

"Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

Challenges of the Christian Life

I stand in the midst of the best people on earth today. I am happy the opportunity has been mine to sit and listen to all the great lectures presented here. You know, I used to glory in a man who agreed with me in every respect, theologically, but it didn't take long for me to learn such a fellow had no more sense than I. Therefore, I welcome views that challenge me to think. Brother Glover has certainly done that in his lectures. (Brother Glover That is what I have been trying to do.) Well, you have succeeded and I want to study more. I appreciate what I have heard here this week.

Earlier remarks evidence how many preachers are prone to practical joking. I must share this experience with you. When I was pastoring in Oklahoma City a number of years ago, my friend, James Kitchens also pastored there. Often he would telephone me and mimic a colored man. I would respond in kind. One day I picked up the phone and a voice said, "Say dere, is dis Reveren Dillard?" I said, "Show nuf, man." Well, it so happened there was a Reverend Timothy Dillard, a colored man, in the city who pastored St. Jude Missionary Baptist Church. The voice proceeded, "I hears you has a motorcycle fo sale." I said, "A motorcycle? Man, man! Who ever done tole you I gots a motorcycle for sale?" The voice said, "John, he done tole me that. He say you has a motorcycle fo sale fo two weeks." I said, "Man, man you know dat John he gonna lie." He said, "You. . . you don't gots no motorcycle?" I said, "No, man, I done sole dat motorcycle." He said, "Well, thanks you, reveren" and hung up. I said, "James, James!" As soon as I could, I called over there and asked Sister Kitchens where her husband was. She told me he was out of town that day. I said, "Somebody is in a lot of trouble." I don't know how that fellow got out of that one, but I learned to be more prudent about my foolishness.

Well, we have had a lot of words in this session. That is in keeping with Baptist tradition. It reminds me of two old maids who went to an association meeting. You know how it is when you are trying to close a session. The moderator will ask if anybody has a word. That is the wrong thing to do because someone always has a word and after that, someone else has a word. Well, these two old maids went home. They arrived at the front porch and one was fumbling in her purse trying to find the door keys. Not being readily successful, she said, "Matilda, shine that light over here so I can find the keys." Matilda said, "Well, I'll

tell you one thing, if there had been one more Baptist who'd had just one more word we would not need a light to find the keys." I will try to finish the words before you need a light to find the key. One thing, if there had been one more Baptist who'd had just one more word we would not need a light to find the keys." I will try to finish the words before you need a light to find the key.

Look, with me, to the book of Mark 8:34: "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." I present to you some of the challenges of the Christian life, of the ministry.

People have been arbitrarily categorized in a lot of ways, so I will say there are two kinds of people in the world, today. There are those who can receive a challenge and there are those who cannot. We may think of the young being ready to grab a challenge and run with it and the older folk not being so challengeable. This is not necessarily so, but if you can't take a challenge, you are over the hill regardless of your age. May God give us a heart and mind to be challenged through His calling and by His Word. The greatest challenge in all the world is the ministry. Every preacher needs to accept that challenge and deal with it wisely in his lifetime.

Furthermore, it is evident today, by common casual observation, that there are problems in our churches and **in** the ministry. Some are frustrated at what they think are fruitless attempts in serving the Master. Some become discouraged and fall by the wayside. Others ought to be doing their best work, be in the zenith of their ministry, but they are doing little. It is because the challenge has not been properly met. I see the challenge of your life in about four categories: 1. There is the challenge of perverted Christianity, 2. There is the challenge of proper motivation, 3. There is the challenge to exercise faith in God's plan, and 4. There is the challenge to do what you can while you can.

Perverved Christianity dominates the American religious scene. We hear and read on every hand of what is called "Neo-evangelism." It is church membership campaigns, bringing folk into the church without experiences of conversion, mere taking the preacher by the hand, and the deletion of the preaching of repentance of sins. Then, there is non-denominationalism, inter-denominationalism, and the forces of mass preaching outside the authority of the local, New Testament church. These forces threaten the very practice of fundamentalism and the operation

again, but, brother, we are getting pressured. However, lest you take a pessimistic attitude, let me tell you there is some good news in it all. You see, God is able to make all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28. Accordingly, perverted Christianity can be viewed as a challenge to the Lord's people. When the children of Israel were about to enter the land of Canaan, God instructed they should drive out all the inhabitants of the land. He had deemed them unworthy to have possession of it. But, Israel utterly failed to do so. Therefore, God said He would leave them there to prove His people, to seek whether or not they would keep His commandments and walk in His ways. Thus, the Jebusites, Canaanites, Hittites, Gibeonites and all the others became perennial thorns in the side of Israel. They caused them to sin, to fall, to indulge in idolatry, to feel the stinging chastisement of God, but to be challenged to do their best for God, also.

In like manner, Matthew chapter thirteen teaches that God intends something of the same nature with the perverted forms of Christianity that are about us, today. They prove us. They cause us to manifest what we are and what we will do. Jesus gave the parable of the sower who sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept, the enemy sowed tares in the same field. When the plants came up, the servants asked if they should uproot the tares. They were told to leave them alone, let them grow together lest the good wheat be uprooted with the tares. I believe the plants of that field represent religious institutions in the world. Jesus planted His church and the Devil has planted his many perverted versions of it.

Moreover, I am glad God did not give judgment to men as to who could exist and who could not. Our nation has a good constitution, fellows, and I will fight for my right to exist under it. I will also fight for the right of the heretic to exist under it. Oh, I would like to teach him what is correct, however. But, there are times when it can be difficult to tell which people are tares and which are good wheat. We have a lot of sunflower up in our part of the country. There is much cocklebur, too. When those plants are small, you can't tell them apart, but when they reach fruition, it is no problem.

Therefore, the Lord said they should grow together. In the end, He will send His angels to do the reaping. They have sense enough to know who is who.

Furthermore, most of us are better at reacting than at acting. When someone says or does something, I can react quickly, but

having the initiative to come up with something on my own is a different story. Similarly, the churches of the Lord Jesus have been goaded into doing good work for God by the actions of heretics. It may be offensive, but it is so. Why do we build nice church houses? Because the Methodist, Catholic, and Presbyterian folk started doing it. If they can do it, we can, too. Church folk will ask why we don't have more visitation efforts then point out the Jehovah Witnesses and the Mormons running around town on bicycles beating on every door. If they can do it, we can, too. Yes, God allows these to challenge us. By their challenge, we will push on to greater heights of service which we might not otherwise attain. The relentless efforts of quarter truth and decimal truth Christianity ought to challenge us to be better teachers, ministers, and churches.

In addition to this, it is imperative that we accept the challenge of proper motivation. Humanly coping with a godly calling is a formidable life. Also, there is an ever increasing danger that people will embark upon it improperly. People join churches for various reasons, be it business expedience, social reasons, or family pressure. Some folk also enter the ministry for the same reasons. But, if you are not a properly motivated minister, you will not stay, you will not be able to do the work. This is a very serious matter because improperly motivated ministers fall by the wayside. Then, for each minister who falls, there are others who become discouraged. These are present realities, so let's try to understand these situations and rise above them.

Accordingly, we need to have a proper understanding of terms used, too. I often wonder if folk get the right idea from the terms we use. I use the term "soul-winning" a lot, but it is actually God who is in the winning business. We are called, not to be winners, but to be witnesses. Therefore, when you knock on doors and people are not saved, you have no justification at all to come home with your lip dragging because no one was saved that day. The Holy Spirit will use what we do, if we know what to do and do it properly. Among other unclear terms used in our churches is "outreach." I wonder if a lot of ministers don't actually mean "indrag." Well, no more comment about that. We use the term, "mission work" and sometimes substitute the term, "church extension," but if you really want to get plain, it often simply means "split." Oh, I did not have to say that, either.

In keeping with the thought of proper motivation, I recall the story of a preacher who related his dream. He said he was in the presence of the Lord Jesus who asked him his desire. He said, "Oh Lord, I want You to make me a minister that is burning with

zeal." God said, "Why?" He said, "Well, I want to really build up my church." God said, "Why?" He said, "Well, Lord, You know we really need to have more people and more finances than we have." God said, "Why?" He said, "But, Lord, You just don't understand. I want to pastor the biggest church in my state." God said, "Why?" The preacher said, "That's when I woke up." What is our motive? What makes us do what we do and be what we are? Truly, a proper motivation comes through the possession and understanding of a right relationship with God. Realize you are working in His vineyard, for His glory, and that His accomplishments will be done through you according to His purpose.

Furthermore, Isaiah spoke of proper motivation through his heavenly vision. He said, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." But, coals were taken from the altar of God to cleanse his lips, then when the question was posed, "Whom shall we send, who will go for us," Isaiah was ready. He was properly motivated and replied, "Here am I, send me." Oh, I have had the experience of saying to some preachers, and Christian workers, "Come on, let's work for God. Let's build, let's do something." They have said, "Well, preacher, I used to have to do that, but I don't have to anymore and since I don't have to, I am not going to do it. Something is wrong. If you feel you are in a straight jacket, if you feel you HAVE to do things for God, you are improperly motivated. We should do God's work with a ready, willing mind. I tell my people they are not to feel sorry for me. I am doing what I want to do. I am in this calling and in this work by my choice, also.

Moreover, realizing you are not alone in the work is a big part of proper motivation. II Kings six relates an interesting story that is appropriate. The king of Syria had a problem. God allowed Elisha to know his military secrets by which he avoided war with, and made a fool of, the Syrian king. When the king of Syria learned Elisha was his problem he sent his army to Dothan to capture him. One morning when Elisha and his helper awoke, Dothan was surrounded with the Syrian army. His helper was distraught and cried out in fear, but Elisha assured him that there was more for them than there were for the Syrians. He prayed for the young man's eyes to be opened to see spiritual hosts and he then saw the mountain was filled with chariots of fire round about. What a

scene! God is with us, too. He said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." There is every reason in the world to be encouraged to do our best. Jeremiah was abused of his brethren, put into a mud pit, imprisoned and fed with bread and water. He tired of it all and said he would speak no more in His name. But, he soon found God's Word was a fire in his bones and he could not forebear. He was properly motivated. Paul said, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." He was properly motivated.

An equally important challenge is that of exercising faith in God's plan. Jesus' most often rebuke to His disciples was, 'O, ye of little faith.' That rebuke is still applicable. How do we get out of our failures? Usually it is not by meeting the challenge, but by rationalizing our situation. Now, there are many things about which I am ignorant, but I am not stupid. I don't know how to fly airplanes, but if someone would show me, I could learn. I do not care to spend the time learning, but I am satisfied with the belief that I could learn. This pacification is fine in many areas of life, but in the spiritual realm it is disastrous. When I fail to prepare to preach, to witness, to be the minister of my church and community I am supposed to be, I can't sit back and say, "Well, I could if I really wanted to" and be satisfied with that. One day God will judge me, not on my self esteem, but on my performance. Our challenge is not to come up with a workable plan, but to exercise faith in the plan God has already given.

Nevertheless, occasionally someone will arise, with all the audacity and intestinal fortitude the carnal flesh can muster, to say, "I would like to serve the Lord, but I can't." Why don't you just quit insulting God? If God said you can do it, you can! Jesus said if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed we could cause mountains to be removed to the sea. This is profound! Now, I am not familiar with mustard seed, but I am familiar with turnip seed. I planted a turnip patch one year. Those seeds were so small they ran through my fingers uncontrollably. I wondered, "What if I were a turnip seed?" If I were, I would object to being put into the ground because it is cold, dark, and damp, and I hate being alone. I would object to the probability of rotting and the possibility of germination. I would object to the probability of someone stepping on me when I sprouted or cutworms or birds plucking me off at the top of the ground. I would scoff at the very idea that a guy my **size could possibly produce** huge fruit. I would say, "It is absurd, I can't do it." Oh, I am glad God did not give those little seeds a brain. They just do what God

programmed them to do, but how much more we could do if we would simply believe God. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Additionally, I was talking with a pastor of a large church who told me a young minister came to visit for a few days to get ideas for his own ministry. At the end of that time the young man asked if he were starting all over again, would he build his church in the same manner. The minister replied, "If I were starting all over again, I would not do it because it cannot be done." Get the point? Simply believing God and going ahead with the work will allow us to accomplish the seemingly impossible. I listened to Dr. Chester Tulga many years ago. He told us students in the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, "Brethren, we must evangelize or fossilize." It was his way of saying we must exercise faith in God's plan, accept the challenge, and go to work in our ministry.

Finally, let us accept the challenge to do what we can while we can. One man put it this way, "Get all you can, can all you get, then get off your can." The time ahead is short, the time is perilous. That makes such meetings as this precious. Time has stopped awhile in sweet fellowship, great preaching in the company of great men. I hope you will accept this challenge. Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote a book called, *A Day in the life of Ivan Denisovich*. The Xerox Corporation sponsored it as a full length movie on T.V. many years ago. Ivan, a World War II veteran found himself imprisoned with many of his generation as they were caught up in the tightening rule of communism. Deprived of normal life and human decency, they worked in forced labor camps in sub-zero weather. Many felt it would be better to die in the cold than to work, but Ivan chose to work because it was the only option left open to him. He would work because he could work. It was a good philosophy that led to the saving the lives of his comrades. Now, we may not accomplish great things, but because we can work for Jesus we ought to do so. This option will not always be ours. Jesus said, "I must do the works of Him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.. . for there is no work.. . in the grave, whither thou goest."

Moreover, statistically, the battle of Christianity is being lost more proportionately everyday. It is true that more people are being born than are being born-again, but our churches and our ministry can still be successful. The day of Christ is going to be a victorious day. It will be a day that reveals souls have been saved, lives preserved, and rewards earned. My brethren, anticipation of what I want that day to be for me is a distinct challenge.

There are many fields that offer great challenges, today. Technology, engineering, the medical professions offer their challenges and rewards. You could have given yourself to them or to philosophy, law, invention, research. These certainly have their challenges, but the greatest challenge is that of the ministry to which God has called you. Regardless of what the future holds in a material, economical way, give yourself to your ministry. You may be a farmer, truck driver, service station attendant or other things of necessity, but above all, be a good minister of Jesus Christ. Excel in coping with your godly calling and God will bless you. Remember, there is a high commendation at the end of the way for the faithful workers: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Perform the Doing of It

And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

II Corinthians 8:10, 11

There is a story about a man who died and went to heaven. While on earth he lived a rather nomadic life. Being a transient he knew only temporary jobs and longed for something permanent. St. Peter asked what he would like to do in heaven. The man indicated it made little difference to him so long as it was a permanent job. After a little thought, St. Peter gave him a teaspoon and told him to return to earth and put the Rocky Mountains into the Pacific Ocean. A million years later the man returned, angry because his job was finished, and requested something permanent. St. Peter gave him a tea cup and told him to place the Pacific Ocean into the Atlantic Ocean. Thirty million years later he returned with a complaint that his job was finished. He demanded something permanent. St. Peter then gave him a Bible **and** told him to return to earth and not come back until every Baptist did what he was supposed to do. He never returned. This underscores the fact that we often have noble ideas and inclinations, but, too often, we never get around to performing the doing of it. In the setting of the text, the need of benevolent performance in the Lord's churches is emphasized. The first church in Jerusalem was scattered by persecution, causing churches to be planted in many countries. Indirectly, the first church was responsible for the existence of the church in Corinth. Paul reminded them he had taken wages of others to do them service. Now, the saints in Judea were impoverished through renewed persecution and it was time yea, past time for the Corinthians to help relieve their suffering.

Now, notice the language of this text. The word "forward" is from the Greek, *thelo* which means a determination, preference, wish, inclination. The word "perform" is from the Greek, *epiteleo* which means to aim at as a limit or to bring to a conclusion. In other words, Paul is saying, "You had an inclination, a determination to help the poor saints at Judea last year. Now, bring this determination to a conclusion that there may be a performance of substance as well as a good intention."

Without doubt, this Scripture is readily applicable to each of us. Intending to do, but failing to perform is a sad fact of life. Souls go to hell because of this. Christians are cheated out of blessings because of this. Churches suffer because of this. Someone once said, "Good intentions are a lot like good eggs, unless they are soon hatched they will rot." I emphatically declare to you that God wills for all of us to perform the doing of it. If you so will, there is no one to stop you, but yourself.

*All that stands between your goal
And the deeds you hope to do,
And the dreams that stir your restless
souls you!*

*The way is rough and the way is long,
And the end is hid from view,
But the one to say **if you** shall be strong
Is you!*

Anon.

First, I want to say that performing the doing of it is essential in being saved. Notice the testimony of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name- done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Of course, this brings up the question of what work can **one** do to be saved? Jesus said, "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Now this is not man's work, it is God's work. Also, John 3:18, 36 heavily emphasize that we are to perform the doing of it by personal faith, a faith without reservation. In Calvary Baptist Church in Duncan, Oklahoma, the secretary, Betty Douthit and her husband, Bill, who is assistant Chief of Police, give demonstrations in Karate. I have

seen Bill break several boards and a slab of concrete with a single blow of his bare hand. Once, he offered to let me try it. I refused, saying, "I can't do it." He agreed and explained the necessity of total committal when the hand is brought down. Anything less than total committal would result in failure and a broken hand, also. It was his way of saying, "You must perform the doing of it." When I came to Christ in repentance and faith, I did not come with reservation. I did not say, "Lord, save me, but don't ask me to be baptized or to be a church member or to live for *You*." No sir, I came without reservation and you did, too. That is, "Performing the doing of it."

Secondly, it is essential that you perform the doing of it if you would build upon your spiritual foundation. Jesus Christ is that foundation for all men. Paul said, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," I Corinthians 3:11. Building on the foundation is the work of your life. It is what you believe, what you do, the work of your influence. Remember the story Jesus told in Matthew 7:24-27 of the house built upon the sand and the house built upon the rock. It is so very important that we build our life upon our foundation rock, even Jesus. This is working in accord with His Word and anything less is surely quenching the Spirit. Paul admonished, "Quench not the Spirit," I Thessalonians 5:19. You see, it is the Spirit of God working in us that causes us to will and do His good pleasure. Philippians 2:13. Therefore, you certainly can perform the doing of it. You can witness to your neighbor. You can attend church regularly. You can support God's work monetarily. You can respond to the Spirit's leading in your life. In short, you can build upon the foundation of faith in Christ Jesus because you can "Perform the doing of it."

Thirdly, "Performing the doing of it" is essential to the welfare of your church. As a teacher of ministers, I often emphasize that a church will progress no further than its pastor. But, the opposite is true, too. A church will progress no further than its members. Judging your own spiritual progress, how far down progress road has your church come? Individual failure to assume responsibilities is rampant in these last days. Now some will be quick to assume the responsibilities of others, but the same ones will be slow to take care of their own. Such "Out-of-place" actions have been hurtful to younger Christians and crippling to their respective churches. To be sure, there are strong warriors who are relatively unaffected by such carnal actions, but there are always weaker ones who are hurt. May God help us strive to make our "Performing the doing of it" to be spiritual and not carnal as the welfare of the church depends upon it.

Furthermore, many in the church long to be spiritual. **Now**, to some this may mean swinging from light fixtures, throwing sawdust, feeling exhilarating emotions, a songfest, etc., but the formula for true spirituality is given in I Corinthians 14:12. It is written, "Even so ye, for as much as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye May excel to the edifying of the church." In his book, *Kindling Fires for Church Growth*, Dr. R. T. Perritt said **of** this passage of Scripture:

The text itself may be understood and appreciated for practical reasons by observation of four key words. "SEEK that ye may EXCEL to the EDIFYING of the CHURCH." First, "Seek" means "to go in search of; to look for; to inquire for." Second, "Excel" may be defined as follows: "To possess good qualities in a great degree; to surpass." Third, "Edifying" speaks of "building up; strengthening; imparting instruction which builds up." Fourth, "Church" simply refers to "an assembly or congregation of believers recognizing and respecting the headship of Jesus Christ." The words of the text, then, suggest the idea of success in the work of the church by right actions. The text may be expressed, "Go in search of that by which you may possess good qualities in a great degree, or surpass, for the purpose of building up, or strengthening, the congregation of believers recognizing and respecting the headship of Jesus Christ."

Brother, if you really want to be spiritual, find ways to magnify your church in the eyes of its members and in the eyes of those without. Then, employ those ways and means. 'Perform the doing of it.'

Moreover, one pastor made a comparison of his church with a submarine. He said they simply submerged in their own private sea one day, closing the hatch to all around them. Once, the captain got a vision and suggested the church surface and get busy. The whole crew immediately took the bends, so they had to stay down. The captain's log showed the crew gave maximum efforts. They overhauled the kitchen, inventoried ammunition, paid officers, and had regular drills. Also, they prayed that no depth charge would disturb them. Now, the air became stale as well as the routine, but the alternatives were too rough and, besides, a committee reported that stale air was really good for you. One day a member looked into the periscope and suggested a change in course. He was tried and convicted of mutiny. The captain's last log showed they had set a record for submersion and saw no reason to change. The crew continued to give maximum efforts. Recently, an enemy was sighted and a committee was appointed to study it. Friends, in many

churches this comparison is too close to home to be comfortable. What that church needed was a pastor and a congregation who would "Perform the doing of it." It is so sad that many churches spend all their resources on themselves and make little, if any, progress in spiritual outreach. It is as the man who visited a grease factory. He was impressed with the smoothness of the machinery, but asked to see the shipping department. His guide replied, "We have no shipping department. It takes all the grease we make here just to keep this machinery running smoothly." If it takes all the efforts and resources of your church just to keep it running without an outside ministry, then you and your people need to return to the Word and "Perform the doing of it." It is essential to church welfare.

Fourthly, "Performing the doing of it," is essential to a gratifying conclusion of life. Think of Caleb, one of two Men in the Egyptian Exodus who lived to enter the promised land. He was also one of two spies who brought back an appropriate and encouraging report of conquest possibility to Israel. For this he was promised, as a personal possession, the land he had walked on that day. **In** Joshua the fourteenth chapter he approached Joshua and asked for that land although he was now eighty-five years old and giants inhabited it. Caleb said, "But I wholly followed the Lord my God. . . As yet, I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me.. . Now therefore give me this mountain. . . if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said," Joshua 14:8-12. It was his way of saying he had performed the doing of it and would t "Perform the doing of it."

Furthermore, consider the case of Hezekiah in II Kings 0:3. When told to set his house in order for he would die d not live, he prayed to God recalling how he had walked in God's ways and kept His word. He was saying he actually had performed the doing of it. God agreed and added fifteen years to his life on earth.

Moreover, consider Paul. He told Timothy,

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

II Timothy 4:6-8

Paul had a gratifying conclusion to life because he had performed the doing of it. Oh, it can be the same with you, but will it be? Someone once said,

*I am only one,
but I am one;
I cannot do everything,
But I can do something.
What I can do I ought to do,
And what I ought to do
By God's grace **I will do.***

Consequently, whether it be in obtaining salvation, building upon the foundation, providing for the welfare of the church, or having a gratifying conclusion to life it is essential that we "Perform the doing of it." Most all are dilatory in one or more of these areas to our hurt. It is the will of God, not that we should be dilatory, but that we should "Perform the doing of it." May God help you to "Perform the doing of it." It is the best way I know to succeed in humanly coping with your godly calling.

ABOUT THIS BOOK



The calling of God is glorious, but those who answer it must still face human weakness, discouragement, pressure, responsibility, and the demands of faithful service.

In these practical lectures, W. A. Dillard speaks directly to ministers, teachers, and Christian workers who desire to serve with honesty, humility, courage, and perseverance. Drawing upon Scripture and pastoral experience, he examines self-evaluation, integrity, spiritual strength, obedience, and the challenges of the Christian life.

This enduring volume offers thoughtful encouragement to every servant seeking to cope faithfully with a godly calling.



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