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WHY PREACHERS QUIT

Jack Gray

1. **Why preachers quit.** How many are offered an increase in support only when they move to a new work? Many have poured their heart out in a given work with hardly a "thank you", only to be appreciated after he is gone. The congregation then awakens from its long sleep when they must arrange for a big increase for a man with less ability. A fellow minister recently remarked that he felt sure his congregation was going to love him to death.....ten years after he had moved away! This type of thoughtlessness tears the heart out of our preaching ministry.
2. **Preachers quit because of the double standard.** They are seldom allowed to be a real part of the congregation, to be judged by the same criterion as other members. They and their families are always in "the glass house" open to the inspection and criticism of all who pass by. The same type of dress, haircuts, recreation or personal habits which are accepted in others are taboo for the preacher or for his family. They may have deacons who smoke or elders who miss on Wednesday night; but that preacher better toe the line! We forget that while he must certainly be an example--SO MUST EVERY CHRISTIAN!
3. **Preachers quit because of materialism.** All the blame is not to be placed on others. Some just want more of "the good life". Yet, perhaps congregations contribute to this by making a man a hireling. We insist on talking about his "salary" instead of his support. We review with relish "what the preacher is getting paid" at every business meeting and in every accounting of the budget. I urge you to remember: IF YOU CAN PAY A MAN TO PREACH, YOU CAN PAY HIM TO QUIT. And some have been paid to quit. Many companies are not looking for day laborers; but they are looking for men with man-

agement and executive ability--and any preacher who is worth his salt in any sizable congregation has had lots of experience in that field. So secular companies are offering glowing enticements to preachers; and, sad to say, many are accepting at the expense of the Lord's work.

4. **Preachers quit because the ministry is in disrepute.** There was a time when being a preacher meant something special in almost any community. The reason that some wore their collars backward was because they liked this prestige. Our own ministers received it in more subtle ways; but receive it they did. Now that prestige is largely gone. There are times and places when to let it be known that you are a minister is to be demeaned or insulted. Following this pattern, almost every movie or novel which has touched on the work of the ministry in recent years has pictured him as either a charlatan or a pervert. Either he is out for all he can get from the people by deception, or he is trying to seduce every woman he meets in a counseling session. The most dedicated of men despise being identified with such an image as this. It is easier to switch than to fight.

5. **Preachers quit because of hypocrisy.** They witness the constant parade of bare flesh at church services, in spite of great stress on modesty. They are aware of those who are secretly participating in things openly condemned from the pulpit or in the classroom. Their hearts are torn by the so-called faithful who simply do not show up for evening services. They sit through business meetings which are filled with nit-picking. The outward show is there; but the inward dedication and purity is noticeably absent. This disparity between the "talking religion" and the "living religion" of the membership finally begins to have a telling effect. The preacher begins to feel like "the voice of one crying in the wilderness". The "what's the use" battle begins. He wonders what is to be the real results of his life and work, if

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Is Preaching A Tradition or God-Appointed Means?

Irvin Himmel

This is an age of change. It is popular to criticize and reject old ideas, inventions, methods, and practices. Like the ancient Athenians, people of our generation are interested in some new thing. Some of our youth especially are determined to get away from conventional and time-tested ways.

Catholicism arose in the gradual turning away from the "old paths" in which the apostles had walked in the first century. Protestant denominationalism originated in opposition to the corruptions of the Roman Catholic system. Protestantism since has undergone many changes because of the desire to keep pace with the times. New religions are springing up. The desire to attract large numbers of people prompts revision in doctrines, alterations in church organizations, changes in programs of activity, and differences in purpose.

It is now a common thing for religious leaders to downgrade preaching. The denominations have minimized preaching in their services. In an effort to draw bigger crowds they have set aside most of the preaching and have turned to choir renditions, human testimonials, concerts, shows, pageants, church suppers, religious films, dialogues, panel discussions of popular themes, spontaneous and emotional performances, featuring of celebrities, and such like.

It concerns me greatly that in churches of Christ there are some who view the preaching of the gospel as if it belongs to the past. Even among brethren of whom we think as being conservative, some belittle preaching as the "traditional" approach which will no longer work. I suppose they view preaching somewhat as I look upon the old kerosene lamp.

Several years ago James P. Miller made a statement that set me to thinking about this. Brother Miller said we are making the same mistake the Methodists made years ago. He said the Methodists were once strong on preaching and grew (despite all their error), but when they laid preaching aside for other things they began to decrease. He referred to our making gospel meetings shorter, and shorter, and shorter--until they have lost much of their impact. I believe brother Miller had a valid point. When we begin to dispense with preaching and substitute other things, we may make a splash for a time, but eventually we shall suffer great losses!

Preaching is not a traditional approach. It is a divinely-appointed means of saving the lost from their sins. Preaching may turn some people off, but it turns on such as respect the will of God. To minimize, belittle, or dispense with preaching is to de-emphasize or discard what God has ordained.

1. **Jesus commanded that the gospel be preached.** "Go ye in to all the world, and PREACH the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16).

2. **The apostles preached.** "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and PREACH Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). "And they, when they had testified and PREACHED the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and PREACHED the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans" (Acts 8:25).

3. **First-century disciples preached.** "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where PREACHING the

word" (Acts 8:4). "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and PREACHED Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5). "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and PREACHED unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

4. **Paul admonished Timothy to preach.** "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; PREACH the word..." (2 Timothy 4:1,2).

5. **God's will is declared through preaching.** Paul said that God "hath in due times manifested his word through PREACHING, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour" (Titus 1:2,3).

6. **God chose preaching to save the lost.** "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of PREACHING to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).

Men may regard preaching as foolishness. They may say, "Preaching turns me off; don't preach to me." But God in His infinite wisdom chose this "foolish" (to many men) method. Any person who says preaching will not work is doing one of two things: (1) Putting himself above God, or (2) Trying to work something that preaching is not designed to work.

Brethren, other things may have more appeal to the masses and may entertain, but remember this: God has not told us to put on a show! God has instructed us to preach the gospel. Many things will stir up interest, but it takes the gospel to save. A humanly-devised scheme may pack a meeting house, but gospel preaching saves souls. The fact that a thing is interesting, entertaining, and popular offers no proof that it is accomplishing what God wants done.

Let us not throw out preaching. Let us not downgrade the power of preaching. Let us not cut down on the amount of preaching. If we make any change, let it be that we shall devote more attention to the preaching of the gospel.

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WHO are the happiest people on earth? This question was asked by an English newspaper, and prizes were offered for the best answers. There were four prize winning answers:

"A craftsman or artist whistling over a job well done."

"A little child building air castles."

"A mother after a busy day, bathing her baby."

"A doctor who has finished a difficult and dangerous operation, and saved a human life."

There are neither kings, emperors, riches nor rank mentioned in the list of answers. The things that make happiness are honest toil, and the consciousness of making a success of any and every job undertaken. It would be a sad day on earth if only the great could be happy.

Happiness is for everybody who seeks it, and not for a few. We realize exactly the things we reach out for despite disappointments that cast shadows over life.

ARE YOU PREACHING THE WORD?

Donald R. Givens

To impart saving truth --- there is no more wonderful service. Lost sinners must know the truth and the truth can make them free. Our Savior commanded: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel," so that creatures could hear, believe, be baptized, and be saved. (Mark 16:15,16)

It is clearly seen then, that the preaching of the word "publicly and from house to house" is of utmost importance. Every disciple of the Lord is to spread the glad tidings of salvation. The disciples driven out of Jerusalem waited for no instructions nor human "ordinations," but "went everywhere preaching the word." (Acts 8:4)

As one preaches and teaches the Word one must have a life consistent with the content of the gospel he proclaims. Zealous, righteous, and blameless character must fortify the oral lessons of the preacher.

The evangelist Paul told the younger evangelist Timothy to "preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." (2 Tim. 4:2.) It is the Word that is to be preached. Not your opinions. Not your surmisings. Not "the ways that seem right unto men."

Preach Christ as the living King. Preach him as the world's only Savior. Preach Jesus as the only one with the authority to forgive sins. Apologize not for the "narrow way" that leads to life even though "few are they that find it."

Preach the inspiration of the scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16,17) and cater not to the worldly wisdom of the crafty wise fools. (1 Cor. 3:18-21.)

With the rock of Truth hurled from the sling of faith, you can smite unbelief as it parades in modern society under the guise of sophistication. Swallow not the bait of the devil which says that only the ignoramus believes the Bible. Show the people that the nice and pretty baits of pleasure, power,

and profit only hide the **hooks** of damnation, destruction, and doom.

Preach repentance from sin. Firmly declare that the sinner must repent or perish in hell. Remember that men laugh at sin instead of turning from it. They toy with it instead of hating it. Teach men to hate sin as much as they hate the hell to which it leads. Even though some may have eliminated hell from their belief, it has not been eliminated from God's word.

Rebuke sin wherever and in whomever it is found, and start with yourself. Be courageous enough to call sin **sin** even though it be found in your "best friend" as well as in your worst enemy.

Be just as broad as the scriptures. Be just as narrow as the scriptures. Study the sermons of Peter, Paul, Stephen, but especially those of Jesus. Think not that you can have "better manners" than the apostles. Denounce riotous living; expose the hog pens of sin; and as you do so offer the amazing grace of God to the returning prodigal.

As you preach the Word remember that your greatest wage and your best pay is the approval of the Lord and the glory brought to God. No wage is so satisfying as the peace and joy you will have knowing that you are laboring together with God.

When humiliated by a seeming failure, the Lord will halve your burden by helping you bear your disappointment. And when you are elated with success, God will double your joy by sharing it.

As many faithful preachers and teachers of the precious Word have said before: "Preach sin horrible, death inevitable, judgment certain, hell hot, and heaven beautiful."

Preach the Word. Go, and may the Lord be with thee.

--2710 21st Avenue, S.
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

MISTAKES

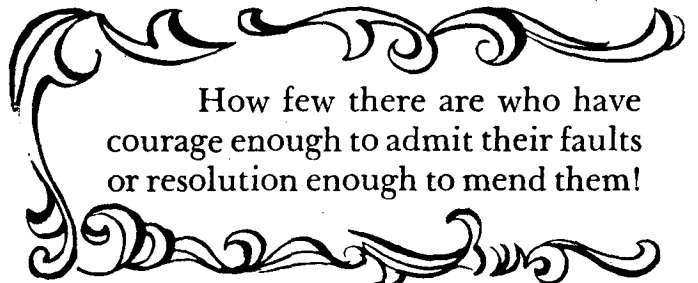
"That was my mistake." Are you brave enough to say this when you should? Perhaps you never have thought of yourself as being a brave person. It often takes courage to admit a mistake. At least, many people seem to be too cowardly to admit they are at fault, even when they are convinced of it.

"To err is human," Why then shouldn't we admit we are human? It really is foolish to try to pretend that one is superhuman, and does not make mistakes.

You can trust a person who admits his mistakes. You know that he isn't trying to bluff, and you honestly feel that he is sincere in his dealings with others.

If you admit a mistake, you will find that others with whom you are associating are more likely to do the same. You do not run the risk of taking the blame for something that isn't yours.

When you admit having made a mistake, you establish yourself in the minds of those around you as an honest, agreeable person. They will know you are not going to let someone else take the blame for something you did. They will feel that they can depend on you in the future, and it will make friends for you.



How few there are who have
courage enough to admit their faults
or resolution enough to mend them!

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he continues to dedicate his life to something which gives the appearance of butting his head against the wall. If he cannot win the battle against discouragement by seeing that it is his duty to preach, and not to get certain results, he has no alternative but to give it up as a bad deal.

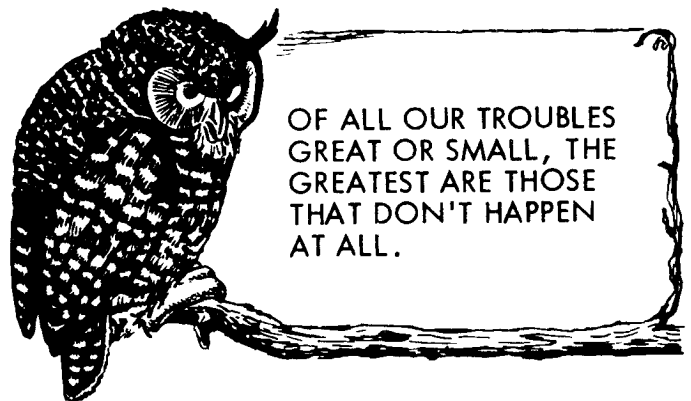
6. Preachers quit because of lack of their original commitment. Some have drifted into this work when they were not really suited for it. It seemed glamorous and exciting. They expected a certain amount of prestige, so they are easily disillusioned. "Two thirty minute sermons on Sunday and golf all week" sounded fine to them. Others were much more serious than this in the beginning; but as time passed, their commitment to the task wavered, partly because they had never entered into the sacred marriage of lifetime commitment. They had held their options open. The fact is it just isn't too hard to quit something that you were half-hearted about in the first place!

7. Preachers quit because of the pastor system. You don't have to convince our people that a preacher should not be called "pastor". They don't want him to have the authority that this implies; but they have no hesitation about his doing the work! They want him to keep up with the sheep. He is expected to make sick calls and hospital visits. Very few counsel with the elders or call on the elders for prayers or visits to their delinquent relatives. Let this never excuse the preacher who is not willing to do all he can in every way he can for the cause of Christ; but let it be clearly understood: There is no real difference in being called a pastor, and in being called something else but still being a pastor! When will we ever learn that ELDERS have the care and keeping of the sheep. Preachers are to be mostly concerned with the goats (the lost) and with the preaching of the Word. Because, however, of the pastor system which we have allowed to grow up among us, and which has become the expected thing in most congregations, many a preacher has very little time to "preach the Word" because of the multitude of tasks which we have laid upon him. It disheartens any man who is sincere about his work to find himself loaded with every job that no one else wants until there is simply not the time to make calls, have home

Bible studies, write, study, preach and pray as he so longs to do.

8. Preachers quit because of a lack of security. Few people in our world are more insecure in their present positions than are many located preachers. Some have been "fired" with nothing more than a note slipped under their door in the dead of night. Verbal agreements have been ignored, with no recourse to one who would not resort to legal action. Most have no retirement plan at all. If a man dies in active work, his widow is seldom welcome to even live in the preacher's home for more than three months! This makes a preacher almost totally dependent upon his faith in God's Providence and his brethren being completely Christian. The first is absolutely assured; but the second has proven to be a very unstable commodity in our time.

You may feel by now that I have been leading up to reasons why I was considering quitting the full time local ministry; BUT IT IS NOT SO. I am in this work; and I am in it to stay! So far as I know, God never even gave me a choice. I have never intended to be anything else and I have no plans to be anything else. But the problem continues to affect our great brotherhood; and we must work together toward its solution. — Springdale, Arkansas



OF ALL OUR TROUBLES
GREAT OR SMALL, THE
GREATEST ARE THOSE
THAT DON'T HAPPEN
AT ALL.