

The Pastor's Page.

The Preacher's Inner Life.

There is an inner life. It is deeper, sweeter and more fundamental than physical or intellectual life. It is a spiritual life. This expression is in common use among religious writers and speakers. Perhaps it is often used carelessly and ignorantly. It is in such constant use that there is no small danger that it may lose its force by frequent repetition.

The spiritual life is not easy to define. It is too large for our thought and speech. Although we may not be able to comprehend it fully, yet everyone may know something about it. It is more than mere religious feeling. One may be deeply moved by religious exercises and religious ideas without being a spiritual man at all. It is more than a mere belief in the reality and importance of spiritual things. A man may be fully persuaded that there are spiritual facts, spiritual laws, spiritual experiences and spiritual beings and yet remain ignorant of the spiritual life. He may believe that there is a God without coming into close personal relations with God. He may believe that man is an immortal soul and continue to live a carnal life. He may believe that there is a spiritual world round about us, in close touch with this world, without entering upon his own inheritance in that invisible realm. He may believe that there is a heaven above us without seeking to become prepared for the heavenly life.

The spiritual life is a real life, a spiritual principle palpitating within, filling and thrilling the soul with spiritual desires, spiritual affections and spiritual visions. "God is a Spirit," and man is also a spirit. When the spirit of man, by conscious self-surrender, enters into conscious fellowship with the Spirit of God a fountain of divine life is opened within. As two kindred human spirits may come into such close touch with each other that each lives in the other, so the spirit of man may enter into such close fellowship with the Spirit of God that he lives in God and God in him.

The Christian is conscious of this life. It is a life of righteousness and joy and peace. This is religion. Deeper than the best creed, deeper than the truest theology, deeper than all external religious ceremonies, this inner life springs up like a fountain in the heart touched by the Spirit of the living God. Without it we have hardly touched the outer fringes of religion. No Christian should rest content with anything short of this life of God and heaven within. This is heaven begun below. But especially is the preacher in need of this experience.

It is this inner life that gives energy, enthusiasm and inspiration to the preacher. Without it his work is mechanical and formal. Beautiful sermons, eloquent sermons, fine literary productions in the pulpit are all very well, but they require the touch of God to give them holy energy. A sermon may be an able discussion of some fundamental religious theme, abounding in apt scriptural quotations, but if there be no holy inspiration in the soul of the preacher it will not be very effectual.

Other teachers may get on very well without the enthusiasm which the Holy Ghost alone can impart to a messenger, but no preacher can reach the highest efficiency of which he is capable without it. He is dealing with the spiritual life of the people. It is not directly nor chiefly the intellectual life, the social life, or the political life of the community which he seeks to nourish, but the inner life of God among men. He handles spiritual ideas,

preaches spiritual doctrines, dispenses spiritual food. His own soul must be refreshed, not only with biblical truth, but also with the bread of life which cometh down from heaven.

The greatest preachers have been men of deepest religious experience. In the New Testament we read of men who were full of the Holy Ghost, and their speech and their preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Many modern preachers, by whose labors the kingdom of God has been greatly enlarged in the earth, have attributed their efficiency to the conscious spiritual life begotten within them by the Holy Ghost. Some of them have related circumstantially the story of the beginning of this new life in them. It came upon them, in some cases, years after their conversion, and in some cases after they had preached the gospel for years. They were conscious of a definite experience like an inward baptism which came upon them at a certain time. Chalmers, Wesley, Bushnell, Moody, Summerfield and many others are witnesses of these things. Their preaching may have been orthodox and fine before, but afterward it was different. Those who heard them seemed to hear a new voice. The fruits of their labors were multiplied many fold.

These times require preachers of deep spiritual experience. This is an age of materialistic philosophy, of scientific skepticism, of insane greed, of social unrest, of industrial strife and political corruption. The church of God faces a thoroughly equipped and stubborn foe. Satan cannot be cast out in this age of ecclesiastical machinery and strong religious committees with high-sounding programs. Preachers with a clear vision, with a perfect knowledge of the things of the Spirit, and with a vigorous, robust and healthy spiritual life are needed to lead the disciples of Christ against the powers of darkness.

Mental and Moral Imperviousness.

The minister is and must be a many-sided personality. Temptations subtle, perplexing, fascinating, and often times nauseating, confront him.

He should be mentally and morally impervious to all kinds of flattery. The devil in the form of a serpent in the Garden of Eden was the first flatterer that we have any record of; he succeeded, and the results are known. All flattery is akin in its nature and purpose to that perpetrated in Eden.

He should be equipped with a mental mackintosh ready for use at any time as a screen against the gusher and bathos and all that form of iridescent fancy bubbles which look like soaring spheres, but are exactly suds and nothing more. There are many flatterers living to-day, plying their craft. Soft-soaping is still practiced. Of all natural gushers, the human gushers are the most nauseating and disgusting, to all good common sense and propriety. The quality of oil and gas gushers can be tested and known, but a human gusher may be two faced, changeable, alternating and policylelike. The flatterer usually has an axe to grind. He expects flattery in return, and if it is returned then it is simpletonism multiplied and emphasized.

A minister should be impervious to all unjust and untruthful censure. There may be cause for censure, but censure is often unjust and false. The minister is not living who is free from faults. The holiest men in all ages have had them, and it will continue so to the end of time in the church militant. Let him who knows that he has no faults cast the first stone. As the rugged Thomas Carlyle says:

"The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none." But when the censure comes upon us undeserved we should be mentally and morally strong enough to bear it, and rest content in the consciousness of our innocence before God.—Evangelical Messenger.

Why? A Question of Consecration for Our Laymen.

In the last few years we have heard much on the question of ministerial supply. The church press has been crowded to overflowing with discussions. The Mission Boards are simply overwhelmed with calls as urgent as words and bleeding hearts can make them, asking for men and women to fill the gaps left by missionaries who have been overworked and have broken down on the field, and if possible, for an increase in the normal working force. But on account of the lack of men and means, even to fill the ranks is often impossible, to say nothing of an increase.

As to a reason for this shortage, I feel that the matter of compensation has been given a higher place than is true or it deserves. The writer's own personal experience as the eldest son of a pioneer preacher whose salary was often scarcely enough to supply personal and traveling expenses, and whose lot was unenviable from more than one viewpoint, is contrary to this claim.

The trouble lies far deeper than the matter of a few pennies. Those who seek the salaries and stay out on that account are often too busy to seek the Lord and souls. The trouble is in the consecration in our homes. The money question does enter, but on the side other than the one usually mentioned. The fathers and mothers whose sons should enter the ministry are so busy that they have no time for the quiet repose of communion with their children and the Lord around their own firesides. The family altar is frequently lacking, and when found it is far too often a perfunctory affair that is gotten over the quickest, easiest way possible. The mad grab for wealth saps the heart life. When the family altar becomes a true communion and fellowship with God and with each member of the family, there is little to fear in the consecration of the children on God's altar for whatever service he may desire.

A Country Pastorate.

He who is fit for a country church pastorate, or for the pastorate of a group of country churches, will find an opportunity and delight there not to be exceeded in any other sort of a charge. He may have much driving to do, but this means much open air and the possibilities for sturdier health. He may not be able to have so much organization and so many meetings, but this emphasizes the importance of personal contact, and the call for rugged forcefulness for each passing occasion as it comes.

Our country communities need and will prize their churches as those churches are made to mean all they should mean to them. Rural life is to be increasingly pleasant. It is no longer, as formerly, a life of isolation and privation. Good roads, good schools, easy transportation, traction lines, free delivery of mails, and telephones are changing the whole aspect and atmosphere of country life. It is increasingly delightful to live in the country, and to have pastoral charge of a rural church.

What is needed in order to make successful the work in our country churches is that we shall have good and faithful ministers, ready to serve and ready to be contented wherever they may do good work for Jesus Christ. Nine-tenths of the secret of success for any such church is in a good and loving-hearted pastor. And let it be remembered, the very best and the very most patient and loving pastor needs to have an adequate financial support. To stimulate such a ministry, and to provide such support, is the pressing business of the hour.—Herald and Presbyterian.