

The Pastor's Page.

THE SPIRITUAL CHARACTER OF THE PREACHER.

There are preachers and preachers—some of one class and some of another. The fact that a man is a minister of the gospel does not guarantee the man, and for the reason that sometimes most ordinary men are admitted to the ranks of the ministry. As to the wisdom of their admission, that is another question, but none the less a question which is now and then handled with poor discretion. If a man says he is called to preach, that he wants to preach, that he feels he must preach, why many of his fellows hesitate to sit in judgment on his motives and purposes. They say it may be that the Lord has called him, and, if so, we must not stand in the way. True enough, if the Lord call a man, then no man ought to stand in the way of his having a good chance to answer his call.

Let us keep in mind, however, that the Lord makes no mistakes in the call He gives to a man. If a man says he is called of the Lord to preach the gospel, then it falls to his lot to show that his claim to be called rests on a good foundation. In the first place, the Lord will not call a man who cannot qualify himself for the work. We mean that a man called of God is a man who has sufficient mental ability, when mental training has done its best for him, to enable him to grasp an ordinary question under proper effort, why we may rest assured that he is laboring under a hallucination—he is not called to preach, and one proof of the fact is to be found in that he has not sufficient mental grasp to study and master the thought of God's Word so as to present it intelligently.

The same is true of a man who has not sufficient moral stamina for standing as a teacher and a leader of the people. If he has no moral strength, he cannot preach the gospel successfully and on that account we may rest assured that he is not called to preach. Think of a man, who cannot stand against a temptation to lie, saying that he is called to preach the gospel. We know he is mistaken—for God does not call men who cannot stand against common lying to preach the gospel. Suppose he does not lie, that he is a good man, but he is weak in "the upper story," we know that the Lord would not ordinarily send out such a man to represent His Son as a preacher. We say ordinarily, and by that we mean that there may be some exceptions, when the Lord will do some marvelous thing by using such a weak man in His work, but when that is the case, the Lord will indicate it in some marked way, and therefore indicate to His people His will.

There are three qualifications which every preacher must have, or it will be difficult for him to convince thinking people that the Lord has called him to preach, viz.: He must have a good MORAL life, he must be INTELLECTUALLY capable of training and preparing for the work, and he must be SPIRITUALLY a true child of God. With these qualifications, the church ought to listen to any man who says he feels that God has called him to preach the gospel. If he possesses these qualifications, then, that far he has a fair basis for convincing the people that God has called him to the work of the ministry, and if he really possesses the divine call, he will be able to convince the

church of the fact. Then the church may proceed to open the way for the man to do the work to which he says he is called. We urge the church and her ministers and counsels to think what it means to the world and to the church, too, to set apart a man to the work of the ministry who is deficient morally, intellectually, and spiritually, deficient, we mean, in any marked degree. Necessarily such an act means that the church is not standing for its own welfare, nor that of the people.

There is a great lack of true courage and spiritual insight on the part of many conference officials in a matter of this sort. They yield to the admission of a man to the ranks of the ministry when they have moral conviction that the man is not, and is not likely to be, qualified in any marked degree, for the work to which they are setting him apart, and yet for the lack of a little moral backbone they give in, hold their peace, and then let the Church of Christ suffer for it, it may be for years and years, and of course the results are disastrous. Who is to blame? Why, the man who did not have the wisdom and the courage to stand for what is right. He gave way, and mischief in the church was wrought, to the great detriment of the Master's cause.

One fact ought to stand out so prominently that all men of ordinary sense may see it, viz.: If the Lord calls a man to preach the gospel, He will call a man who at least has the foundation on which to build such a life-work. If such a foundation is absent, you may rest assured that God has not called that man to enter such a service, and therefore he should not be thrust into the work. We are often very much afraid that we shall hold back some man whom the Lord has called. Do not fear such a result, if you are conscientiously doing your best for the cause of Christ, according to the best light you have.

If the Lord has called a man to enter the ministry, even though His people should make a mistake in not admitting him to the ministerial office, He who has called him will see to it that his brethren are sooner or later convinced of their error, and later, at least, they will admit him, seeing they were mistaken and that the man is called of God. A thousand times better hold back for a time five worthy men than to admit one man who is not called of God to enter the sacred work.

It takes a man of solid parts as the basis for a preacher. The sculptor can make a statue of a piece of good marble, but he cannot make such a statue of a lump of clay, not because he is not capable of making a statue, but because the clay is not capable of bearing the work necessary, in order to produce the statue. May we not say it is much that way with the dear Master in making preachers? He is a master Hand in producing preachers of the Word, provided He has material which is capable of enduring the strain in the making, otherwise He cannot give His Church true preachers of the gospel.

There are many things entering into the make-up of a true, brave, and faithful ministry, but one thing must ever stand as a foundation-stone in that sacred calling, and that is CHARACTER. A man without character is as much out of place in the ministry as is a mudhole in the parlor. Character, character, character—it is character first and last and all the way, and without it no man has a right in the Christian ministry. There

are several constituent parts in the character of the ministry, such as the true life of God, for dead men do not preach; a good mind, for imbeciles are not capable of delivering a message; good character, a man who leaves slime in his tracks, as he goes among men, cannot represent the truth of God; intellectual ability, a well-trained mind, for men who have no training are at a great disadvantage in not being able to give out the truth in a clear and forcible way; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to energize and illuminate and direct in the Lord's work; a good working knowledge of the Bible, as containing the revelation of God's will to man, for if he knows not his Bible reasonably well, he lacks the basis of his message, and therefore he goes out dumb before his hearers; he must have love, too, for without love, we are nothing and can be nothing, and can do nothing, and for the reason that love in the heart and mind of man is the element in which resides the divine power.

The preacher must be so true, so noble, so great in Christ, so well qualified under the power and illumination of the Holy Spirit, that his life is a continual sermon and a mighty power among the people, or his ministry must be shorn of its strength and influence. Oh, beloved people, let us be careful who are admitted to the ministry? Today we can point out to those who may look, instance after instance of the wreck of the local church through a bad man in the ministry. How many churches today might be shining lights in the cause of Christ, if they had never had an unfit man for pastor? It is time to get our eyes open. If a man has not the right kind of a character as a minister, no church ought to receive him as a pastor.

KIND HEARTS BENEATH BLUE.

Many a kind heart beats beneath a blue coat on the policeman's corner. In New York an official was sent out as a "down-and-outer" to test the attitude and action of policemen to such men. In all he approached fifty bluecoats with a hard luck story. The results follow: One policeman bought him coffee and rolls, sharing his last 25 cents to do it. One took him to the kitchen of Churchill's Cafe and got a dinner for him that would have cost \$1.50. One gave him five cents for carfare so that he might go to the Municipal Lodging House. Others told him where to obtain public charity and some offered to get him work. "With possibly two or three exceptions," says the officer in his report, "the attitude of the policeman was most kindly." There is more goodness in this world that we suspect. Policemen do not generally have the reputation of being kind-hearted, because they must often be rough. But they are considerate and often render an act of service and even of sacrifice. Let us be courteous toward policemen, and ourselves practice the good that we admire in them.

A SONG OF HOPE.

Each night is followed by its day,
Each storm by fairer weather,
While all the works of nature sing
Their song of joy together.
Then learn, oh, heart, their songs of hope,
Cease, soul, thy thankless sorrow,
For, though the clouds be dark today,
The sun will shine tomorrow.

—Exchange.