

Challenges Preachers Face

The first challenge is *to be spiritual in an unspiritual society*. A critical admonition to Timothy is “Take heed to thyself” (1 Tim. 4:16). One must live godly in an ungodly world. Debauched societies have long passed by those who desire pure minds, decency, and morality. Personal godliness is one of the gravest challenges to preachers in private times, alone, and not before other Christians. “Keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22).

Devout preachers should “exercise thyself unto godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7). The challenge is to be examples in: (1) word, (2) manner of life, (3) love, (4) faith, and (5) purity (1 Tim. 4:12). Good manners, thoughtfulness, and consideration must be maintained toward older and younger men and women (1 Tim. 5:1-3).

It is hard to be honest with those in error, those who are living sinful lives, and those who profess “profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called;” (1 Tim. 6:20-21). It is easier to leave sinners unrebuked, but personal honesty suffers.

Society is in love with humanism, multiculturalism, and atheism. Preachers must look at themselves in the mirror of God’s Word (James 1:23-25). Honesty with one’s self about going counter-culture in a decadent society is a test faithful preachers must not fail.

Preachers must live in this world, but the world must not live in the preacher. It is so easy to fall prey to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vain glory of life (1 John 2:16). Pride is ever lurking nearby. Professional advancements, salaries, and accumulation of “things” present many temptations.

“Climbing the ladder of success” and patronizing cliques for personal gain are stumbling blocks all along the way. Personal spirituality must prevail.

A second challenge is *to be distinctive in a non-distinctive religious world*. Can faithful men still be undenominational in a denominational world? The Lord built one church (Matt. 16:18), and no denomination is that church. The Lord purchased one church (Acts 20:28); no denomination was purchased by his precious blood. Jesus has only one body (Eph. 4:4), and that cannot refer to the multiplicity of denominations. Jesus will save his body (Eph. 5:23), but he has not promised to save any denomination. Who preaches today about the sinfulness of denominationalism, even to the point of hardship (2 Tim. 2:3)?

The challenge is to respect and uphold the distinctive identity of the Lord’s church. There is nothing else like it in the world; it absolutely unique. It is not man-made; every denomination is man-made. The Lord’s church began in the First Century (Acts 2), while no denomination can claim this successfully. Faithful preachers will accept the challenge of maintaining a distinct line between the church of the Lord and man-made denominations. Who preaches this today?

In a time when standards set by Jesus are being ignored, preachers are challenged to maintain distinctive limits of fellowship. Immorality, though quite commonly practiced in churches today, is still a destroying “leaven” (1 Cor. 5:6). “Gangrene” of doctrinal errors still overthrows the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:17-18). Errors continue to arise, but conscientious preachers are to be “instant in season and out of season” in faithful preaching (2 Tim. 4:2).

Who among preachers today is a soul-winner? Many are capable in the classroom and pulpit, but are not involved in personal soul-winning. Did Jesus come to “seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10)? Some pulpiteers seem to have lost that distinction. A challenge to all preachers is, “How long has it been since I have personally brought someone to Christ?” Too many are too busy administrating congregations.

A subtle but dangerous third challenge concerns *preaching an unchanging gospel in a changing world*. The truth of the Lord was sealed by the apostles and inspired teachers of the First Century (Gal. 1:6-12). If it were not preached by these inspired men, it must not be preached now. The “faith,” the full body of revealed truth, was “once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Nothing else will save any sinner. “Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord” (2 Tim. 1:8). It is distinctive to preach the “unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8)

Some professors in our universities seek new insights, but often show themselves to be “ignorant and unstedfast.” They succeed only in wresting the scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). They find nothing new; they only repeat former errors long ago answered. They seek changes with society.

How studious are preachers today? Timothy was to “abide” in things learned from a mother and grandmother since they were the sacred writings (2 Tim. 3:14-17). Preachers must be “nourished in the words of the faith” (1 Tim. 4:6). More and more time should be spent in serious study of the Bible, not studies of communication, methodology, or expertise of counseling. Who today

gives most of his time to “reading, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tim 4:13)?
Accuracy and knowledge of the Word is still a mountain for men to climb.

Preaching the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) can be a failure. A man may preach nothing but the truth all his life and still lose his soul. He may have avoided vital truths necessary to be heard by sinners.

There is no new sin in this world. There are no old sins once practiced that are gone from this world.

The Lord needs faithful men willing to commit God’s truth to others (2 Tim. 2:2).

Who will rise to the challenges echoed from Jerusalem?

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