The Preacher & His People

2 Corinthians 7:2-4
7/10/2011

Introduction:

To minister and to be ministered unto requires a right heart attitude

I. **The <u>layman's</u> heart toward his <u>minister</u>** (v.2)
(A welcome heart toward the preacher)

A. *People should open up their hearts to the ministry of one who did not <u>wrong</u> them*

B. *People should open up their hearts to the ministry of one who did not <u>corrupt</u> them*

C. *People should open up their hearts to the ministry of one who did not <u>defraud</u> them*

II. **The <u>minister's</u> heart toward his <u>laymen</u>** (v.3-4)
(A grateful heart for the people)

A. <u>Confidence & Praise</u> regarding what God can do in them (v.4a)

B. <u>Comfort & Joy</u> when they are right with God (v.4b)

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"On a notable Sunday morning in 1866, the famous Victorian preacher C.H. Spurgeon shocked his five thousand listeners when from the pulpit of London's Metropolitan Tabernacle he announced, "I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope one of you ever gets to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to." For some of his audience it was incomprehensible that the world's greatest preacher could know the valley of despair. Yet it was a regular part of his life, because twenty-one years later in 1887 he said from the same pulpit, "Personally I have often passed through this dark valley."

"John Henry Jowett, the renowned pastor of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian in New York City, and later Westminster Chapel in London, wrote to a friend in 1920, "you seem to imagine I have no ups and downs but just a level and lofty stretch of spiritual attainment with unbroken joy and equanimity. By no means! I am often perfectly wretched and everything appears most murky."

"Writing of Alexander Whyte, perhaps Scotland's greatest preacher since John Knox, G.F. Barbour said, "Resolute as was Dr. Whyte's character, he had seasons of deep depression regarding the results of his work in the pulpit or among his people." "Martin Luther was subject to such fits of darkness that he would hide himself away for days, and his family would remove all dangerous implements from the house for fear he would harm himself." (Hughes, p. 147)

"Phillips Brooks, the peerless preacher and one-time bishop of Boston, said: 'To be a true minister to men is always to accept new happiness and new distress. . . . The man who gives himself to other men can never be a wholly ad man; but no more can he be a man of unclouded gladness. To him shall come with every deeper consecration a before untasted joy, but in the same cup shall be mixed a sorrow that it was beyond his power to feel before.'

"The reason Paul was sorrowing and downcast was his other-directed love, here to Titus and to the church in Corinth. All his present fears and all his present fightings were grounded in his concern for others. This other-directedness was the basis of his depression and also, as we shall see, the springboard for his comfort and joy." (Hughes, p. 149)

"The most difficult, painful experience for a faithful minister is to be misrepresented, to be falsely accused, to have one's integrity unfairly attacked. Such assaults have the potential, by destroying people's trust and confidence in the minister, of devastating his ministry. Such slanderous attacks are hard to retrieve and correct, because those who make them are not interested in the truth. Nor are they motivated by virtue, love, or righteousness, but rather by hatred, revenge, bitterness, jealousy, and self-promotion. Purveyors of such falsehoods do not seek the unity and blessing of the church, the glory of the Lord, or the good of those they attack." (MacArthur, p. 233)

To minister and to be ministered unto requires a right heart attitude

I. The <u>layman's</u> heart toward his <u>minister</u> (v.2)
(A welcome heart toward the preacher)

"Receive us" - lit. make room for us; or provide a place for us (Cleon Rogers, p. 406).

NKJV – "open <u>*your hearts*</u> (italics) to us"

The imperative shows the <u>importance</u> of the encouraging command. It matters greatly how we receive God's messenger.

Paul's testimony (found in 2 Cor. 6:3-10) gave the Corinthians no valid reason to reject him or his teaching. No one could justify their unbelief based on some spiritual inconsistency they found in his life.

One's attitude toward the preacher will affect one's reception of the Word preached.

For example, if you have negative thoughts or feelings toward a particular minister, that will have a negative effect on your ability and desire to hear and receive what he has to say.

Trust is <u>earned</u>; especially after a person has been "burned."

One reason why some at Corinth may have been reluctant to open their hearts to Paul may have been their unequal yokes with unbelievers. "Evil communications" do "corrupt good manners."

Paul's emphasis is on the repeated words, "no man." Literally he exclaimed: "No one we wronged. . . No one we corrupted. . . No one we took advantage of."

A. People should open up their hearts to the ministry of one who did not <u>wrong</u> them

"Wronged" – *adikeo* – to treat unjustly or unrighteously

Paul had fair dealings with all of the Corinthians.

What does it mean to treat people unjustly?

1) To show <u>partiality</u> (or favoritism)

James 2:1 (KJV)
My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.

"Respect of persons" = lit. to "receive the face"; to show partiality, personal favoritism.

"Respect of persons" = a biased judgment, based on <u>external</u> appearances or circumstances such as race, wealth, social rank, or popularity while not looking at the person's internal true worth (value).

"Respect of persons" - to judge people <u>superficially</u> rather than on the basis of their true worth in God's sight.

Why is prejudice so wicked?

>It often extols <u>race</u> over <u>righteousness</u>
>It often esteems <u>color</u> over <u>character</u>
>It often respects <u>popularity</u> over <u>principle</u>
>It often glorifies <u>culture</u> over <u>conduct</u>
>It often values <u>wealth</u> over <u>worth</u>
>It often evaluates <u>externals</u> not <u>internals</u>

This "partiality" will often be demonstrated in prejudice.

a. Prejudice over <u>race</u>/<u>skin color</u>
b. Prejudice over the issue of <u>wealth</u>

2) To treat <u>unfairly</u> (to not practice the "golden rule")

3) To <u>sin</u> against someone by ill treatment or slander

B. People should open up their hearts to the ministry of one who did not <u>corrupt</u> them

"Corrupted" – *ftheiro* – to bring someone into a worse state; to make a detrimental or negative impact on someone, so as to destroy some virtue or blessing in their life

The word is used of:

1) The corrupting effect of <u>false doc trine</u> (2 Pet. 2:12)

   a. Denying the <u>resurrection</u> (1 Cor. 15:33)

   b. Detracting from the <u>simplicity of the Gospel</u> (2 Cor. 11:3)

   c. False religion (Rev. 19:2)

2) The corrupting effect of <u>sin</u> and <u>moral decay</u>

   a. The old nature is morally corrupt (Eph. 4:22

   b. Someone who destroys or mars a local church by leading it away from that condition of holiness of life and purity of doctrine in which it should abide (1 Cor. 3:17) (Vine, p. 130)

C. People should open up their hearts to the ministry of one who did not <u>defraud</u> them

"Defrauded" *(pleonekto)* - "to take advantage of someone in order to gain something; to defraud for the purpose of gain. It refers to the selfish attitude of one who is willing to go to any length to satisfy his selfishness" (Cleon Rogers, p. 406).

It has been reported that congress is examining people like Dr. Creflo Dollar, who allegedly has used church funds for buying nice, high-priced items like a private jet, mansion, apartment in NYC and fancy cars.

Other ministers like Dr. Fredrick Price, who wrote the book *Name It and Claim It,* believe that you can speak wealth into reality. "Let your mouth nourish your spirit, bring joy to your soul, minister health to your body and prosper you financially" (Faith-centered Resources website).

It is ironic that men like Dollar and Price float in an abundance of wealth while our Lord "had not a place to lay His head," and Paul knew what it was like to live with "little."

Many are in the ministry for the purpose of feeding themselves.

Ezekiel 34:7 (KJV)
Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Ezekiel 34:10 (KJV)
Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

II. **The <u>minister's</u> heart toward his <u>laymen</u>** (v.3-4)
(A grateful heart for the people)

v. 3

Paul says in effect, "You are so much in our hearts that we die together and live together. I'll carry you in my heart through life until death."

Paul's motive in reminding the Corinthians of his outstanding testimony among them was not to bring them down or hurt them. He did not say this to condemn or speak against them, for he loved them deeply.

"You are in our hearts," he says, "through life and death."

The emphasis is on the superlatives: **"Great. . . great. . . filled . . . exceeding"** (overflowing)

A. **<u>Confidence & Praise</u> regarding what God can do in them** (v.4a)

B. **<u>Comfort & Joy</u> when they are right with God** (v.4b)

When God's people are walking rightly (and come to Biblical repentance when sin has been present – v. 7-10), there is great reason for joy in the preacher's heart. Such joy can even carry one through trials and tribulations.

Hebrews 13:17 (KJV)
Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.

"They. . . must give an account" - All pastors because of their responsibility for tending to God's flock, will one day be held accountable to God for the type of job they did.

It's an awesome matter to be a pastor! We will receive the *"greater condemnation*" - James 3:1.

Note: At the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will be held accountable not for how the sheep turned out per se, but rather how we did our job of watching over them. However, it is no joy to a pastor to have rebellious, unteachable, "untendable" sheep. It's a grief, a burdensome, groaning experience.

"That is unprofitable for you" - Not only will the under-shepherd answer to God for how he watches over the sheep, but the sheep will answer for how they responded and respected the undershepherd.

There is NO benefit to being a stubborn sheep. There is ZERO advantage to being rebellious toward your pastor. It is harmful to you. Much of the stability of the flock is determined by their submission to the shepherd! If you go astray, I will grieve; but you will face the consequences!