

The *Pulpit Exchange*

The preacher sought to find out acceptable words:
and that which was written was upright, even words
of truth (Ecclesiastes 12:10)

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be
ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15)

Ministry Edition # 5

ME # 5

The Importance of Practical Preaching

Preaching, or a sermon may be defined in several ways. However, we usually think of a sermon as a public religious discourse designed to influence human behaviour. At least, that is one definition. Webster says preaching is “to urge acceptance or abandonment of an idea or course of actions.” I kind of like that one. That is about the “bottom line,” is it not —acceptance of Christ or abandonment of sin?

We do well to stop and evaluate the reasons we preach. One reason is that it pleases God “by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” References to preaching are scattered throughout the New Testament.

Our subject is narrowed down from the importance of preaching to the importance of practical preaching. I have divided it into three subtitles. I) What is practi-

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cal preaching? II) How can we make our preaching practical? III) Why practical preaching is so important.

I) *What is practical preaching?* We realize some subjects tend to be more practical in nature than others. That is understood. This sermon is not written to minimize the place or importance of doctrinal preaching. Perhaps we can use some help to make our doctrinal preaching practical. We need a good bal-

ance between the doctrinal and the practical aspects in our preaching.

What is practical preaching?

1) *Practical preaching begins with God and His glory, rather than man and his needs.* Sometimes some of us get that mixed up. Many preachers in nominal Christianity do. Speaking of man and his need is important, but our messages should begin with expressions of praise and glory to God, at least

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generally.

2) *Practical preaching is a clear delivery of a message from God, to a broken, dying, fallen race.* Practical preaching makes the Word of God clear, urgent, and personal. That sounds a bit presumptuous, perhaps, as if the Word of God needs clearing, and we need to shed light on it. Sometimes we get caught in that snare. I was told of a commentator who had spent many years working on his commentary. He gave it to his servant to see what he thought of it. After looking at it awhile, he said, "Well, the Word of God sheds a lot of light on this."

3) *Practical preaching makes the Word of God clear, urgent and personal.* Mark 4:34 says about Christ, "Without a parable spake he not unto them and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples." That word *expounded* is an interesting one. It actually means "to give additional loosening." We think of making the Word of God clear and personal in order to give additional loosening. It is more than simply informing people about the Bible, reviewing facts, or giving a report. It is the need to expand and to give additional loosening.

4) There are many Scriptures that we can expound and give

additional loosening on. I appreciate it very much. Practical preaching is rock-solid on the Scriptures. There is an interesting verse in Jeremiah 23:28, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully."

Our people do not come to church to hear what we imagine. They come to hear what we know God has said in His Word. Let us not disappoint them. Practical preaching is not based on supposition and assumption. It is the clear Word of God that we need to be exalting.

5) *Practical preaching is done in the present tense.* It has been well said that no one goes to church to find out what happened to the Jebusites. It is not that we do not use those Old Testament examples and the New, for a Springboard for our preaching. However, we must go beyond the story itself. We live in the present tense and we need to hear what God has to say to us today. All Scripture is inspired and all Scripture "is profitable," the Word says. That means that there is a present day message and application for each portion of God's Word. It is the preacher's job to discover the timeless truths that are in the Word.

One writer noticed that 2

Timothy 3:16, 17 gives the plan for practical Biblical preaching. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

Notice it is profitable for doctrine. Someone has said that is what is right. Reproof — that is what is not right. Then, correction that is how to get right. Instruction in righteousness — that is how to stay right. That is practical preaching in a nutshell. It starts with the doctrinal, what is right and then a good Biblical base and makes practical application of reproof, correction, and instruction.

II) *How to make our preaching practical.*

Leaving what is practical preaching, I will look at how to make our preaching practical. I want to spend a little time with this. I will use as an example the greatest message that was ever preached. It was in Matthew 5–7. This was preached by the greatest preacher that ever preached, our Lord Jesus Himself.

For the last week or so, I have been paying more attention to the Sermon on the Mount. It never ceases to amaze me when I read

how the Lord communicated in this sermon. It is interesting, also, to me that this whole sermon can be read aloud in ten or fifteen minutes. Peter’s sermon at Pentecost was probably preached in less than ten minutes. Paul’s message before Agrippa took probably less time yet. Perhaps one of the keys of practical preaching is found right here, with being brief, although not too brief.

One brother shared recently that when he runs overtime, it is because he has a burden, when someone else does it is because they are long-winded. Maybe we give too much tolerance to ourselves. Maybe Jesus rather abruptly ended this greatest sermon that was ever preached. The important thing is that he still had their attention when He stopped, and that is a gift to be coveted. We might have it when we start, but what about when we stop? His manner of preaching left the people amazed. Matthew 7:28, 29 says, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: (29) For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” That might mean several things, but it means to me that we preach in a practical way rather than as the scribes did.

Let us analyze this Sermon on the Mount a bit closer. How can we make our preaching more practical? 1) *Notice the simple language used.* Things are clearly and briefly stated. Now, some of us may have phrased one thought from the Sermon on the Mount this way: “If one is spiritually handicapped by a persistent desire to do a certain wrong, he would do well to put a hindrance in his path to that wrong action.” We are looking at the simple distinct language. Jesus said it this way, “If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off” (Matthew 5:30). We can lose our hearers fast, if we stray too far from the simple method.

On one occasion a family was babysitting two neighbour children, eight and ten years old. The girl was eight. The father was a professor at the college. How do you entertain two youngsters (when you are a youngster yourself) that are accustomed to watching television? In time they began playing Parcheesi. After playing awhile and a few stifled yawns the eight-year-old girl made this statement, “I have a feeling of apprehension that the exquisite form of this game is very hypnotic.” The twelve-year-old only understood after she was gone that she was trying to say she was bored with the game.

However, the effect was lost and the game continued. Use terminology which the hearers understand. Maybe sometimes the reason we do not receive more response is because people do not understand us. We should explain and define unfamiliar terms.

2) *Notice in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ's choice of concrete words instead of abstract ones.* Here are some words which Jesus used, and this is only a fraction of them: salt, light, candlestick, bushel, scribe, Pharisee, altar, brother, judge, officer, prison, farthing, woman, eye, hand, wife, throne, footstool, Jerusalem, king, head, hair, tooth, cheek, coat, cloak, mile, sun, rain, publican, rock, wolf, gate, fish, serpent, swine, fowls, lilies. These were words which people could “connect” with. They could feel what He was talking about. He used them as illustrations from everyday life. Perhaps some of us tend to stick with more abstract words like love, obedience and fellowship. Those are good and necessary words, but let us identify them. There are always younger ones in the audience hearing them for the first time. We tend to forget that.

It is interesting to me how Christ used the objects that were around Him to reinforce the

point. Matthew 18:6 says, “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” Very likely a millstone was not very far off. Maybe He pointed to it, and the sea was perhaps behind it. He used the object of the nearby.

3) *Notice how specific Christ was in His speech.* This is closely tied with simple language. Ecclesiastes 12:10 says “the preacher sought to find out acceptable words.” That is only part of the verse. Preachers of the Gospel must be specific in their preaching. Acceptable words conveys the idea that we are using words which convey what we mean. There is power and authority in precision. I do not claim to have that, but I know that there is.

Another example is that we can read a passage of Scripture (maybe I have done it, I do not know) and then make this evaluation, “There are several things in this passage that should help us to become better Christians.” That wording of things is a bit vague. What kind of things do we mean — obstacles, encouragement? Ministers should study with a dictionary close by and I

have room to grow in that. One skilful writer of the past said it this way, “The difference between any word and the right word is the difference between lightning, and a lightning bug.” Be specific.

One minister who was anxious to be strong in his preaching without offending anyone said something like this, “If you do not repent, as it were, and be converted in a measure, you will go to hell to a certain extent.” That is an extreme example. What was he trying to say? Be specific.

4) *Jesus also made good use of stories and parables in his delivery.* Consider the parable of the wise and foolish builder in Matthew 7:24–27. “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: (25) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. (26) And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: (27) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was

the fall of it.”

A good way to make our preaching practical is to give a well-chosen illustration. Someone said it this way, “A well-chosen illustration is like a window in a building. It can shed light on the subject, but one caution, too many windows in a building weaken the structure.” We must work with that. Naturally, we must work with illustrations that have a connection with the point we are making.

Also, sometimes in His parables, Jesus let the listeners decide what they mean. I am amazed how often He did not explain his stories and parables but let the people come to their own conclusions. True seekers come to a right conclusion. But we do need to use caution. We can become too graphic. Preaching the Word is serious business, and we need to maintain our dignity.

Nevertheless, a good illustration can help to shed light on the subject. I came across one. A minister could say it this way, “A Christian has peace and tranquility even amidst troubles. Well, the saint that has been a saint for many years can nod his head; Amen. But to the younger — we could give the illustration of the two artists.” That was how it was “driven home” to me. (I do not

know where). However, to illustrate how the Christian has peace and tranquility even amidst troubling circumstances, the story is told of two artists that were told to paint their idea of peace and tranquility. The first artist took a canvas and painted on it a little lone lake out in the middle of the mountains with no human in sight, beautiful and serene. The second artist took his canvas and painted a thundering waterfall and at the right of the spray was a slender sapling hanging over the water right in the spray, and there was a mother bird sitting on a nest. Which describes a Christian’s peace and tranquility better? I do not know that the minister gave the definition but it certainly drove it home in my mind. We live here in a troubling waterfall.

Jesus asked some very interesting questions in His sermons. Another way we can be practical is to ask an interesting question. Matthew 6:25 says, “

Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” And in verse 26, “Behold the fowls of the air. . . Are ye not much better than they?” And in verse 28 “Why take ye thought for raiment?”

Verse 30 says “Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to mor-

row is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Matthew 7:9 says, "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? And in verses 10 and 11, "Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? (11) If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Jesus asked some very interesting questions in His sermon. He also did not answer His own questions. Rather, He motivated people into thinking and making practical applications on their own by asking questions? That is an art in itself.

III) *Why is practical preaching so important?* 1) *Practical preaching is important because the Bible is a practical book.* It is written largely for the common men, maybe even uneducated men. I am not talking about cave men or anything like that. Rather, it was written largely by common men in a common language. If the Bible is practical, why should not our preaching be practical? If our textbook, the Bible is practical that should influence our preaching.

2) *Practical preaching is important because it helps us make current applications to*

Biblical principles. An example is the doctrine of nonresistance. In our forefathers' day, nonresistance meant not bearing the sword. Maybe most of us could not even identify a sword today. Times have changed. We could still be preaching about not bearing the sword, and in so doing not making practical applications for our day. In preaching on nonresistance today we might bring in the question of the legitimacy of the Christian owning a handgun. That would be a good question to bring in to make nonresistance practical, or speeding on the highway. A young man was stopped by a police officer for speeding on the highway and the police officer said, "Young man they are just as dead if you kill them in the car as if you kill them with a gun." That is making nonresistance practical. We need to make application.

Recently, a minister said, "Brother, we are walking closer to the world than we should be." That is a startling statement. In what areas? Let us not simply go on and leave it hanging. Let us clarify and spell out some things. Is it in nonconformity in attire? Is it in business life? Is it in our vehicle appearance? Does it have to do with the computer? Walking too close to the world — let us make practical applica-

tions.

3) *We have practical preaching of the Word because the Bible has the answers to the current issues in the world and the church.* There are issues in the world like abortion, alcohol, drugs, immorality, tobacco, war, marriage problems (that is now coming within the church) disrespect for authority, and school problems. Yes, there are even problems with communications like the computer. The Bible says “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Couple that with our church’s position in the past on open communication. We should be able to find our way through. That does not say we will not need to back up a little, or that it will all be easy. Nevertheless, but the Bible has the answers to the complex issues facing the church and the world.

4) *Practical preaching is important because of the difference in age and maturity levels in our audience.* I have already alluded to this. There is always a new generation coming. Some are hearing and registering for the first time. The Biblical command to those preaching is to feed the sheep and the lambs. We are not aiming at the intellectuals necessarily.

I realize that some concepts are beyond young children’s intellect, and we should not forget about them. They need to be fed also. I am so glad for the plural ministry. If my people would need to listen to me Sunday after Sunday and that is all they would hear, it would certainly become imbalanced. We enjoy the pulpit exchange. We need to remember the different age and maturity level in our audience.

5) *Practical preaching is important because it has been handed to us from previous generations.* This is important. One of the distinctions between our Anabaptist forefathers and their accusers, or critics, was a great emphasis placed on reading the word and allowing it to affect every area of life. That affected their preaching also.

Someone called my attention to the article under worship in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. There is an interesting article. There is one paragraph I would give for your consideration, and we do not want this to happen. In some places a sermon has been renamed “teaching,” and the lecture style has been borrowed as a model for delivery. Ethical issues and lifestyle concerns have provided the primary themes. Sermons using Biblical themes are having less attention

and have been less frequent. In recent years preaching has seemed to be at a low ebb in many congregations. That can happen if we allow it to. Let us remember in all our preaching only the Holy Spirit can convict men of sin and of the demands of righteousness. We can get ever

so practical in our preaching but unless the Holy Spirit is moving and guiding our efforts they will be in vain.

May God bless each of us as we continue to strive and to apply the Scripture to our everyday life, and then also in our preaching as we stand before our people.

The Importance of Practical Preaching

From a message by John Burkholder

April 8, 2004

Semiannual Conferring Meeting

Numidia Mennonite Bible School

Benefits from the Preaching of Others

Certainly it is important that we expose ourselves to the influences of special meetings and benefit so that we might do the work that God has called us to do. We do need to work and improve the way in which we do this work, and apply ourselves and perfect the methods. The question was raised here whether God does use the efforts that we put forth — the study and the things that go into that. I believe if those efforts are sanctified, God does use them, no question about that, if we are taking our place.

The idea of benefiting from the preaching of others, I suppose we would all agree that we have experienced that already. We

have benefited from that. We need to do that. I remember some years ago, a certain person whom I considered was quite well gifted in the work of the ministry, when he was asked about attending a ministers' meeting he said, "I simply cannot afford that leisure." I do not know exactly what he meant. Maybe he felt that he was so busy preparing sermons that he did not have time to listen to what others had to say. Or, maybe it was because he needed to earn a living. Understanding his situation, I believe, he was being paid for some of his work and so it hardly was that. It would seem to me that from my own personal vantage point, I cannot afford to go

without this. We need some of this exchange and benefiting from other people's preaching.

We do believe that the "word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). When the Word of God is preached to preachers that same effect is on them as it is on anyone else, or at least, it should be. Maybe even more so than to other people. Should not a group of ministers or a group of ordained men be the best audience to preach to? Maybe in one sense, at least, because there is a sense in which there is understanding and sympathy and unity of purpose and thought so that is a blessing from that angle. I certainly can testify that I have, many times, benefited and still benefit from the preaching of others.

We do not find a Scripture that directly teaches this, but there are quite a number of implications. One of those is in 2 Peter 3:15, 16 when the apostle Peter talks about the apostle Paul's ministry. He says in, "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the

wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; (16) As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." Then, he further admonishes them. I would say from that passage that Peter recognized some benefits that he had experienced from his brother's ministry, and from his brother's ministering and preaching.

In 3 John 11, 12, we have another thought that I think again implies the same thing in the comment that is made about Demetrius. "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. (12) Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true." The idea, or the implication is that they benefited from this man's ministry. One minister benefited from another man's ministry. That is the way it should be.

It seems to me that this brings into focus the blessings and benefits of the multiple ministry. I think that we certainly see those benefits and want to continue to

follow that method. There is no reason why we should not continue that. Probably the only way that it will not continue is if we would turn away from the truth and no longer follow the truth. Then, we would be like others where we would finally come a one man church organization where there is one pastor or leader and he does not get to hear others preach.

Everything that we know (how little or how much that is. It does not really matter) we learn from someone else. We might not exactly remember from whom we learned it, or where we learned it but everything that we know, we learn from someone else. Now and then, I have encountered a few individuals already who claim that they had figured something out themselves or that it was original with them. I really do not believe that. We are so made that everything we know we learn from someone else, either their writings or their preaching, and that it is God that giveth wisdom and giveth knowledge. We learn from each other and that fits right into this.

Another thing that we should recognize is this idea of the non-professional ministry. I am all in favour of that. That suggests that it is in one sense a part time work. Sometimes people try to

belittle that and even in our circles will say “Well, are you more interested in making or living or are you interested in doing the work of God?” It is understood in our nonprofessional ministry approach that our ministry, at least for a certain portion, or a good portion of their productive life, do work something else. Since they do, I think it makes them better ministers. I am convinced of that.

Sometimes people will say, “If I could devote all my time to the work of the ministry, then we would get a lot more done.” Well, I doubt it. You might for a little bit but the net result probably would not be that way. We believe that the nonprofessional ministry as the Mennonite church has practiced it, is what the Bible teaches. This is not saying that there would not be any time, under any circumstance, that it would have been otherwise. In the times in which we are living this is the way that it works best to maintain the faith for a number of reasons.

One of them is that it is good for our ministry to need to do something else besides serving in the ministry. Consequently, in order to get the work done, we need several leaders and then we hear each other preach. That brings us to this idea of benefit-

ing from each other's preaching and from each other's ministry.

We could raise the question, "Should one hear as many sermons as he preaches?" I would say at least that. If anything, a minister ought to hear more than what he preaches. However, at least, he ought to hear as many as what he preaches. For most of us it works better if we hear more because we need that and it is very beneficial and profitable.

We look at this matter of benefiting from the preaching of others from one vantage point. We look at it from the personal benefit. What do I benefit as a person, as a Christian, as a fellow Christian? Then, we also might look at it from this angle as to how do we benefit as a church leader. Certainly, there are benefits from both, in both ways. In other words, we would say that they complement each other and we would say that they go together. The minister, or the leader who has not benefited from other people's preaching will probably not have very much of a message to give, at least not very long.

Therefore, we depend for a certain amount of our inspiration and the contribution to what we do from what we gather from others. It is not that we copy from them necessarily but because of some of the benefits

which we will enumerate from that shortly.

There are a number of benefits that should be pointed out. *It is good for us to simply be learning.* We have the example in the Scripture where it says that Jesus was in Bethany in Mary and Martha's home [Luke 10:38-42]. Mary was at the feet of Jesus and Martha was doing the serving. Therefore, she reminded Jesus that the situation was not fair and that Mary should help her. Jesus said "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42).

I have heard numerous times messages from that passage and the importance of sitting at the feet of Jesus and learning. How can that be? Jesus is not here in person. I would say that one of the ways to learn at the feet of Jesus might be to listen to someone else preach. That might be one of the ways at least. Or, maybe reading some messages or reading some things that were preached. That is a part of sitting at the feet of Jesus. It is not in some imaginary way now, thinking He is here and I will try and learn from Him sitting at His feet. There may be some time for that kind of meditation. We are not despising that, but more often we would say that probably we would agree that sitting at the

feet of Jesus, and I could testify to that has been when I have heard some good message brought. It did good all the way down. Sometimes when we hear a good message people say, "Well, what was good about it?" You are not quite sure what to say, but you know it was good. The other time well, "Yes, this and this, and this was good." It is not always the same, but you know it was good and it was good for us to hear it.

Possibly the times when we cannot say what was exactly good about it, it no doubt filled a spiritual need that God knew we had and that was filled that way by listening to someone else preach. Therefore, I certainly feel that there are many benefits.

We want to list a few of those benefits. The Word of God is powerful as we read in Hebrews 4:12. It is powerful, and it "is profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16), productive for various things that it lists, "for reproof," and so on.

1) *One of the benefits of listening to others' preach, for me, has been the inspiration.* Sometimes the inspiration comes because the person who is preaching is inspired. I can also testify that I have experienced some real inspiration and the person who delivered it seemed to be having a hard time of it. It was not going

really good but there was something communicated that provided inspiration. I would recommend this. I have done this for years, and I would recommend it to anyone. I recommend to many people that in your Bible you need to have a paper or a place where you write down the things that impress you and give you inspiration.

Probably many of them you will never use but I wrote down some here in these meetings. It is simply a thing that occurs and if we do not write it down we are liable to forget it. However, there is the inspiration, and from that it is a very good seed bed for messages and for devotionals and for admonitions and whatever. That is how we can benefit. Therefore, one of the benefits is the inspiration.

2) *Also, there is the encouragement that comes from listening to others' preach because we are men of like passion.* Probably what our brother has struggled with we can easily identify with. We might soon too, or we have already experienced that or might in the future. Therefore, there is the encouragement that comes from that, that possibly is experienced when we have that kind of benefiting from those in similar circumstances.

I thought of that when we spoke this morning on this matter of discouragement. We do not want to leave the impression that we never become discouraged. Some personalities are more sunny than others and you might never think that the individual is discouraged. Nevertheless, I do think that it is important that we are able to know what to do when we get discouraged and where to go. Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. That is the encouragement that we can receive. Sometimes we know some of the circumstances that our brethren have experienced and then they are testifying in their message maybe unconsciously of the victory that is experienced in that. We know what has taken place, or at least we have an idea what has taken place. Therefore, one of the benefits is the encouragement.

3) *Also the instruction.* There is always instruction to be had. One of the follies of men who have been in the ministry long is like the Scriptures say that “an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished” (Ecclesiastes 4:13), or will no longer be instructed. One of the follies of one who has served in the ministry a long time is when he gets to the place where he does not think he has any instruc-

tion coming his way anymore. The Word of God is still instructive and it always will be that way regardless of how long one has served in the ministry. If it would be for no other reason it is because we have probably forgotten some of it and so we need to be reminded again.

4) *Also, there is the reproof that sometimes comes.* That is a part of the benefits that we receive in listening to each other preach and listening to the message that others bring. I do not feel that it is a wise thing for one minister in a public service to take a side swipe at another minister before the congregation. However, I do feel that there are many times when the Holy Spirit has brought reproof from the message that we say, “Well, I guess that does speak to me. That is something that I should watch.” Or, “That is something I should be aware of,” and that is part of this work.

In conclusion we simply want to look at a few things yet that we might say is how to benefit. Sometimes, there are plenty of benefits around but they somehow elude us or we escape them. How can we benefit? 1) *One way to benefit from hearing each other preach is to be at peace among ourselves.* When the ministry is not at peace among them-

selves they often do not hear from each other what they ought to hear. We should be at peace among ourselves. That is a big help in benefiting. We need to be at peace among ourselves even though sometimes there may be differences of opinions and some disagreements. The benefits of hearing each other preach will be the most fruitful when we can live in peace among ourselves.

2) *Also, the benefit in hearing each other preach is when we have prayed for the one that preaches.* Should we not as leaders be the ones that do the most of that? We know what it is like and sometimes it goes better than other times. Therefore, we ought to do that. We encourage our congregations, we ask them to pray for us and that is right that we do. However, when whoever is responsible to preach this morning, or this evening, when we remember them and pray for them, it is one of the ways that we can benefit from it. We sometimes challenge our people if they have some complaint about the message, I would like to raise this question if the preachers are not preaching to suit you, have you prayed very much for them? Very few times have they ever said that they feel that they have done all of that which is necessary. They are usually ready to

admit that maybe they should do more. That is a way to benefit.

3) *Another way to benefit is when we can rejoice in a message that is well given.* That certainly is a blessing. It is when we can rejoice when someone else you know gives a good message and people agree with it, and there is a sense of approval, not necessarily applause (that would be worldly) but you know that it is accepted. We can rejoice that it is well done even though we did not do it. That is a way we can benefit from it too.

I suppose we would agree that we have all heard some much better sermons than what we have preached ourselves. At least I would feel that way — much better, and it is better if it would be that way. We can rejoice in a message that is well given even though we did not do it.

4) *We benefit when we are open to the challenge that it presents.* Sometimes that can be a bit bitey, a little sharp maybe. Yet, not necessarily. If we expect our people to be open to the challenge, why should not we? These are ways in which we can benefit from the preaching and hearing others preach. I certainly rejoice in that we have much good preaching today to listen to. Let us heed it and let us do it.

That is one thing that I remem-

ber from my father that stands out to me. I think of it often. I remember yet how he loved to hear good preaching, and how he often commented on that. When we came home, he said, “Well, that was now well said. That was a good sermon.” You did not

think about it at that time. It was just sort of a thing that you took in stride, but I feel that is a real benefit. Let us continue to benefit and be open so that we can benefit from each other’s preaching.

Benefits from the Preaching of Others

From a message by Jesse Neuenschwander

Location and date unknown

Conservative Mennonite Fellowship

Ministers’ Meetings

approximately March 1992

Scripture References

Ecclesiastes	7:28, 29	116	3:16	126
4:13	127	18:6	118	3:16, 17
12:10	118			116
		Mark		Hebrews
Jeremiah	4:34	115	4:12	123, 126
23:28	115			
		Luke		2 Peter
Matthew	10:42	125	3:15, 16	123
5:30	117			
6:25, 26, 28, 30	119	1 Corinthians		3 John
7:9–11	120	15:33	121	11, 12
7:24–27	118			123
		2 Timothy		

Sermon Outlines

16. Subject: *Nonconformity*

Title: **Relating to the World’s Holiday Practices**

— This subject rests on two basic Bible doctrines that are very important to us.

- 1) The doctrine of separation
- 2) The doctrine of salvation.

I) I would like to think of the world.

II) Secondly, I would like to consider the world’s holidays.

— Four categories of the world’s holidays that we would like to notice.

- 1) There are the religious holidays that are observed.

2) Secondly, as we think of the world's holidays, there are the "hero" holidays.

3) A third category we could list would be patriotic holidays.

4) Fourthly, would be the category of commemorative holidays.

III) Thirdly, I would like to consider the world's holiday practices.

— When you boil them down, what is the world doing on their holidays? What marks their practices?

1) One of the first things which we identify as one of the world's holiday practices is the practice of idolatry.

2) Secondly, as we recognize the world's holiday practices, we identify mockery.

3) Thirdly as we think of the world's holiday practices, we recognize vanity in them.

4) Another practice that we notice is the practice of extravagance.

5) Another thing that comes out when you boil down the world's holiday practices is the thought of slothfulness.

6) Also when we boil down the world's holiday practices we find the product of discontent.

IV) My fourth consideration is "How do we relate to the world's holiday practices?"

1) We relate to them, we respond to them rightly when we remember and we remind ourselves of what kingdom we are a part of.

2) We relate to these rightly as we maintain a clear vision of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

3) We relate to the world's holiday practices by finding our refreshment needs met in spiritual holidays, (if I may use that term).

4) Fourthly, we relate to practices rightly by realizing that holidays are not days off in Christian experience or Christian service.

5) We relate properly to the world's holidays by drawing a clear line of separation in our observances.

6) We relate right to the world's holidays by remembering the command to "be sober."

17. Subject: *Nonconformity*

Title: **Thinking Through Valentines Vanities**

The commercial value of the day.

The background of the day.

If Valentine's day is not connected with St. Valentine, and that

was all a concoction, then the question that can be raised is, “What is it connected with?”

I would like to think a little bit about the vanities yet.

When we borrow the symbols of the world as a token of our expression, we automatically borrow some of their meanings.

18. Subject: *Discipleship*

Title: **Lessons From Anabaptist History: Steadfastness in Discipleship**

I) 1) The first lesson I would like to glean particularly as we focus on the early era of the Anabaptist history is that the Reformation was a result of those who desired to be steadfast in discipleship.

2) Another lesson we can glean is that history clearly reveals that not every reformer (referring to those who sought to take a stand for truth) came to, or called others to true discipleship.

3) Our third lesson we can glean is that true discipleship runs counter to the popular religious belief of the day.

4) Further, we can glean the lesson that they did not allow themselves to be terrified by fire, water, sword, or executioner.

5) Another lesson we can glean is that from the shedding of this innocent blood (I would call it) identifying those who were faithful and steadfast in discipleship, there was a light and a testimony for those around.

II) I would like to yet further identify seven (what I could call) tokens, or signs of steadfastness in discipleship.

1) First is the need for firm stand upon the Scriptures in face of false accusations and misinterpretations whereby they, or (we could say we) may be tempted to recant.

2) Secondly, I would cite particularly the response of the faithful disciples in the time of Anabaptist history and down through time as well.

3) Thirdly, another token or sign of steadfastness, are the words of exhortation to fellow Christians as those faithful ones were led to their place of execution or suffering.

4) Fourthly, they gave clear expressions of humble worship.

5) Fifthly, another token I believe is that of writing of letters.

6) Sixthly, I would cite as a token of faithfulness, the uplifted hands.

7) Seventhly, I would identify what I would call the “glow of

glory,” that surrounded the faithful ones.

19. Subject: *Nonconformity*

Title: **Right Thinking About the Something-for-Nothing Mentality**

Defined

Let us think about some things about this mentality that would constitute right thinking, or what is right thinking about the something-for- nothing mentality?

1) The something-for-nothing mentality is not the same as learning to receive a gift graciously and thankfully.

2) according to this Scripture and others, as we understand the facts, the something-for-nothing mentality ignores the fact that there is nothing free.

Ephesians 4:28 suggests that there are three ways in which to get what we have, all of which will be at a cost to someone.

1) The first way that is suggested is that one can take from another that which does not rightfully belong to him. “Let him that stole steal no more.”

2) Another way in which we can obtain something is that one can pay for, or earn, what he receives.

3) A third way that is suggested here is that one may receive a gift at a cost to the giver. Remember that.

1) One of the things that is ruining our country and that is feeding on this false something-for- nothing mentality is gambling,

2) A second thing that has become so deeply ingrained in our society is the insurance business.

3) A third way in which our government and society has certainly encouraged the something-for- nothing mentality it with government hand-outs, and entitlements — the welfare system as we may call it.

A few practical applications as we think about the something-for-nothing mentality.

1) We should be very slow to receive government subsidies.

2) Another thing that I would like to say is that with regards to business and business people.

3) We should beware, I think the something-for- nothing mentality is at work in our system when we will work another down in price so low that when we are done we can go away and say that we received

a real bargain.

4) We should avoid the sweepstakes.

5) We need to be careful about those free meal offers that may come at farm meetings.

20. Subject: *Child Training*

Title: **Danger of Producing Mocking Children — 2 Kings 2:23**

I would like to clarify a few matters before I get into the heart of the subject.

Firstly, one would be that the prophet did not get angry and so call forth these she bears.

Another thing would be that these children were accountable for their conduct.

1) Someone failed to supervise these children.

2) Someone failed to teach respect for those who are older and wiser.

3) A third failure is that someone failed to teach respect for God's prophet.

4) A fourth failure I see is that someone failed to teach respect for another's differences or handicaps.

II) Let us consider how these failures can be avoided.

1) We must train our children not to mock or make fun of another's physical characteristics or handicaps.

Our children can be instruments of destruction, if we do not train them away from mocking.

If we want to train our children to respect others, we must do likewise.

2) We must train our children not to mock God's messengers.

3) We must also teach our children not to mock older people.

4) The first failure we mentioned was the failure to supervise children. How can we avoid that?

III) Thirdly, what are the dangers of producing mocking children?

21. Subject: *Discipline*

Title: **Preventing a Gap Between Teaching and Practice**

Definitions

1) Gaps occur because people tend to have divided loyalties.

2) as men, it is easy for us to teach practice rather than doctrine.

3) A third reason why gaps occur is because we are yet being

perfected.

“What is it that gaps in teaching and practice produce, and why is it that we are so concerned about gaps in teaching and practice?”

When gaps occur, in teaching and practice, and we are not speaking sound doctrine, it actually leads us toward disunity rather than unity.

We must understand why it is important that we are doctrinally correct, and then let the applications be worked out.

Again, we have gaps in teaching in practice whenever we teach separation from the world but do not practice it, or do not apply it in our lives, or as a church.

Another thing that is produced whenever there are gaps in teaching and practice is bondage rather than liberty.

Another thing that gaps produce is a distaste for regulation and order.

How can we prevent gaps from occurring?

1) First of all, I would like to say that it is by personal integrity.

2) The second thing that will help us to prevent a gap between teaching and practice is sound teaching.

3) A third thing that will help us to prevent a gap between teaching and practice, I will refer to it as spiritual minded living.

22. Subject: *Youth*

Title: **Sober-Minded Youth**

The word “sober minded,” is used in Titus 2:6, “Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.”

“Should we really expect youth to be sober minded?”

“Why do we expect youth to be sober minded?”

1) God commands it.

2) It is a time of moulding character for a lifetime.

3) The choices and decisions of youth affect their personal destiny.

II) Character traits of sober minded youth.

1) One very important character trait is spiritual youth.

2) Another characteristic from Titus 2, about sober minded youth is that they do not form a generation gap between themselves and older mature Christians.

III) I would like to draw some lessons from the book of Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach and

Abednego) and learn some more from young men who lived in their day.

1) The first I take is from verse 4. One of the requirements of the king for these who were to stand before him was, “Children in whom was no blemish.” I would like to take the character trait of purity and discuss, “children in whom was no blemish.”

Young men and women, purity is a product of sober minded thought patterns.

I think the answer is in Daniel 1:8, “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat.”

Now some practical instruction. How can youth secure their hearts?

1) Maintain strong ties to your home.

Appreciate the safeguards of your parents and church leaders.

2) Another character trait is that sober minded youth will not compromise their convictions for truth.

3) In chapter 2 sober minded youth seek answers for the secrets of life from the God of heaven.

4) Sober minded youth give God the glory for success.

5) Sober minded youth refuse to worship the king and his idols.

Sober minded youth exchange fun for fulfillment. They exchange silliness for sobriety. They exchange foolish talk for a circumspect walk. They exchange the pleasure of sin for pleasing the Lord.

CHAPTER I [The Ministry] THE MINISTER AS A MAN

Introduction

“Be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man,” — 1 Kings 2:2.

The work of the ministry is the highest and noblest vocation to which a man may be called in this life. In dignity, importance, and sacredness the position is superior to the office of any earthly magistrate, ruler, king, or potentate. . . .

The Gospel minister who would meet with success must be a man in the truest sense, a live man; a true man, a simple man, a manly man, one who is a leader of men, an example in gentleness, simplicity, love, and faithfulness. No preacher can be successful in his calling without strength of character and true Christian manhood. To be a real man means infinitely more than to have the physique and outward appearance of a man. It means the kind of manhood which is manifested in loving the truth, hating the things that are evil., and doing good in the spirit of self-sacrifice, self-forgetfulness, and a disregard for personal advantage, being conscious of the fact that such a life is more nearly like that of the Master, than any other.

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