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WORLDLINESS OF PREACHERS

BY: C. D. COLE

"His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter," Isaiah 56:10-11.

"For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's," Philippians 2:20-21.

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world," I John 2:16.

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," I Corinthians 4:1.

The ministry is a serious and solemn undertaking; no man of himself, is at all equal the task. It involves a tremendous responsibility. It is a work before which the noblest saints of earth have wavered. Jeremiah, when called to preach, murmured, saying, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child," Jeremiah 1:6. And it was only after God had said, "I am with thee," that he dared to speak.

Isaiah was so filled with a sense of unworthiness. "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips...Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand...And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the

Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me," Isaiah 6:5-8.

The Apostle Paul in the face of such an undertaking, cried out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" II Corinthians 2:16. And, his soul was not quieted until he could answer, "Our sufficiency is of God." Of all tasks committed into the hands of men, that of the ministry requires divine enablement.

A timely admonition to the preachers of this day is Paul's injunction to Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine," I Timothy 4:16. Of all people, the minister needs to be watchful and careful. First, of himself, and second, of his doctrine or teaching. To the extent that this injunction is ignored, to that extent the minister imbibes the spirit of this world. Worldliness in preachers is largely responsible for the worldliness in our churches. A worldly pastor and a spiritual church cannot long co-exist.

WORLDLY METHODS EMPLOYED IN THE MINISTRY

The Bible is full of warnings against worldly methods in a divine program. We cannot war a spiritual warfare with carnal weapons. We cannot build a spiritual temple with worldly tools. Worldliness in methods is leaning upon an arm of flesh. Israel in Canaan, surrounded by bloodthirsty and warring nations, is typical of the Lord's people and churches on this unfriendly world. The Israelites were in danger, but their hope was in God. And instead of looking to God for protection and blessings they were continually forming entangling alliances with their heathen neighbors; looking to the chariots and horses of Egypt, rather than to the invisible arm of God. Ministers of Christ need to realize that the hope of protection and success is in the promise of the pres-

ence of their Lord.

WORLDLY METHODS IN SOUL WINNING

I am sure that every god-called preacher desires to be used in the winning of souls. But, how are they to be won? Is there a divine method to be employed? If so, then any other method is, to say the least, a worldly method. The divine method of winning souls is to preach the gospel. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," Romans 1:16. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," I Corinthians 1:21. "Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye," I Corinthians 15:11.

Men are saved by believing on Christ. The aim of preaching is to get men to believe on Christ. When the gospel is preached those who have a mind and heart; a disposition to believe, will believe. But the preacher cannot impart that disposition. This is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" I Corinthians 3:5.

I bring this indictment against much of the present day evangelism. Worldly methods in evangelism are mainly responsible for so much worldliness in our churches. A lost man cannot contribute to the spiritual strength of a church.

(Continued on Page 3)

FALSE PROPHETS AND TEACHERS

BY: C. D. COLE

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction," II Peter 2:1.

Our text is both a piece of history and prophecy. It tells us there were false prophets, and that there shall be false teachers. In all ages when God sends true prophets, the devil sends some to seduce and deceive, false prophets in the Old Testament and false Christs, false apostles, and seducing teachers in the New Testament.

We know from history that false prophets were always in the majority. It was so on mount Carmel. *"Send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table,"* I Kings 18:19. It was so when Ahab wanted counsel about going to Ramouthgilead to battle. *"Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramouthgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king,"* I Kings 22:6. In Jeremiah's day, *"Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness,"* Jeremiah 23:9. One cannot but wonder if the proportion of false teachers is any different in our day?

MARKS OF FALSE PROPHETS

1. Not sent of God. Intruders in the prophetic office. The Lord speaking, *"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings,"* Jeremiah 23:21,22.

2. They prophesy lies. *"I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I*

have dreamed," Jeremiah 23:25. *"Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them,"* Jeremiah 14:14-16. *"The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed,"* Isaiah 9:14,15.

3. They cause God's people to err. *"Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him,"* Micah 3:5.

4. They preach a false peace. *"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace,"* Jeremiah 6:14. *"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape,"* I Thessalonians 5:3. *"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,"* Isaiah 57:21.

5. False prophets were covetous. *"The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us,"* Micah 3:11. *"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their dam-*

nation slumbereth not," II Peter 2:3.

6. False prophets are deceivers. *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves,"* Matthew 7:15. *"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many,"* Matthew 24:11. *"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect,"* Matthew 24:24. *"For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect,"* Mark 13:22. *"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived,"* II Timothy 3:13.

7. False prophets have always been popular. *"This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits,"* Isaiah 30:9,10. *"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets,"* Luke 6:26.

God's prophets have never been popular. And the greatest of all was crucified. *"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you,"* Acts 3:22. *"This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear,"* Acts 7:37. But they did not recognize him. *"For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him,"* Acts 13:27. *"Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory,"* I Corinthians 2:8.

But God has a watchful eye over his prophets. *"Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm,"* I Chronicles 16:22. *"Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm,"* Psalm 105:15.

(Continued from Page 1)

How strong is an army of 50,000 men with half of them dead? The answer is obvious. The answer to my next question should be as obvious. How strong is a church of 200 members with 100 of them dead in trespasses and sins? Why is there so much worldliness in our churches? Because there is so much of the world in them. And there is so much of the world in the churches because worldly methods have been employed in evangelism. It is because mealy-mouthed, molly-coddled, high-pressured, high-powered, draw-the-tears, count-the-noses, get-the-money, put-it-in-the-papers, evangelists have been responsible for their entrance. And, the churches have loved to have it so.

WORLDLY METHODS IN PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

We are living in a day of competitive religion. Churches of varying and conflicting faiths viewing with each other in their bid for the public patronage; resorting to various devices to fill the ever-increasing mighty pews, and mighty treasury. And so entertainments of various kinds are provided. And so the few sheep of God are starved to provide merriment for the worldly. We are living in a day when preaching is sacrificed to programs, banquets, etc. All this marks a departure from the living word. In the New Testament a large and growing church was commanded to select seven deacons to look after the material things, that the preachers might give themselves to the ministry and prayer.

Look at the problems of a Baptist pastor. The average church is composed of warring and irreconcilable factions. On the one hand there are the saved, on the other the lost. There are those who believe the scriptures are to be obeyed; others who will not hear to it. Take the question of woman's place in public worship.

The Bible teaches that the woman is to have a sign of subjection on her head because of the angels. *"For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels."* I Corinthians 11:10. And they are not permitted to speak. *"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church,"* I Corinthians 14:34-35. Some believe these ought to be kept; others ignore and ridicule them. What is a pastor to do? A worldly pastor will either take sides against the scriptures, or else compromise them by an attitude of silence. *"Take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine."*

WORLDLINESS ON PERSONAL HABITS

Conversation. Worldly amusements. Not enough for the preacher to abstain, he must try to keep others away. *"For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret,"* Ephesians 5:12.

MARKS OF A WORLDLY PREACHER

1. The world hears and approves his message. *"They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error,"* I John 4:5-6. He is popular with the worldly crowd both in the church and out of it.

2. The worldly preacher has neither friends nor foes. Nobody especially hates him, and nobody would die for him.

3. The worldly preacher is in great demand at social functions. He will be in favor with the Lions, and the Elks, and the Eagles, but he will not be loved much by the sheep. He is awkward in prayer meeting, but manifest much grace as an after dinner speaker.

4. The worldly preacher is a diplomat. He is schooled in the art of diplomacy. He doesn't know much about the doctrine of election and predestination, but he can tell you all about a modern Sunday School or any other department of a modern church. He doesn't know

much about the attributes of God, but he can tell you all about organizations. He can eat with the Lions, and run with the Elks, and fly high with the Eagles, but he doesn't know how to feed the sheep. John Gill tells of a certain Bishop who read the Bible one day, saying that he did not know what book it was, but knew that it was contrary to their religion. The worldly preacher has found an answer to Amos' question, *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"* Amos 3:3. He says, "Away with doctrine, come together on a platform of love."

5. The worldly preacher is a self-seeker. He feathers his nest by pleasing platitudes, while the sheep go hungry. His aim is to build himself up in the esteem of the world rather than to build the saints up in the most holy faith. He is a love of peace at any price, and like a watchdog that will not bark, he never warns against false teachers who would destroy the once delivered faith. He is greedy, and never gets enough of the filthy lucre.