

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO THE PREACHER

By James W. Boyd

There are many reciprocal duties among Christians. There are duties between members, between elders, between deacons, between elders and deacons, elders and preachers, preachers to members, on and on. This lesson is concerned with the duty that a congregation has toward one who preaches, especially at the local congregation regularly. Just as a preacher must know his duty toward those who hear him preach, the hearers have duties to him and need to be aware of them.

### Courtesy

Congregations owe the preacher personal courtesy. Should this even have to be mentioned? Yes! The preacher is usually the one who has been invited to be where he is, and has accepted the invitation. He has made necessary arrangements to accommodate the congregation, so the congregation should make accommodations for him and his family. It is nothing but Christian to be courteous to everybody. You might be surprised how some evidently think that courtesy afforded them is not applicable to preachers. With some it is always “open season” to shoot at preachers over anything. Preachers should receive as much personal consideration as any other member.

Congregations must realize the preacher has a tremendous four-fold accountability: to himself, to his family, to the congregation, but most of all to God. He does not mount the pulpit to just please, entertain, or display personal wisdom or talents, but to proclaim God’s Word. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:10, *“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”* First Corinthians 2:1-5 reads, *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”* Acts 10:29b, 33b says, *“I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?... Now therefore we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”*

Preachers preach with the souls of men in mind, the realization that those out of Christ are lost, and the gospel is God’s power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Without obedience to the gospel, one cannot be saved (1 Thess. 1:8-9). He has the right to expect the congregation to want him to *“preach the word”* (2 Tim. 4:2). No faithful preacher will allow himself to be like those described in 2 Timothy 4:3,4, who are teachers who simply appeal to their hearers, even with error if need be. He must preach salvation for the lost, preservation of the saved, being true to his convictions that have been drawn from the revealed Word of God.

Congregations owe preachers a courteous hearing. Preachers are warned, *“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine”* (Titus 2:1). Hearers are also warned, *“Take heed therefore how ye hear...”* (Lk. 8:18). Hearers ought never do anything to detract from learning. They have a duty to consider what they hear and measure it in the light of the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). To create disturbance while one is preaching is very rude when done deliberately.

### Consideration

The message deserves consideration. Sometimes lessons have a number of points and we lose attention at times. Possibly attention falls on just one or two things we do not like and we totally dismiss everything else that was said. Sometimes we may hear something with which at first we disagree and it disturbs us. But we need to hear him out. Some are inclined to brand lessons and preachers as negative or positive on the basis of one presentation, refusing to really listen to all that is being taught. That is unfair to both the preacher and yourself to listen in such fashion. Some will only comment with disapproval when they are not pleased with a lesson, but seldom express approval at anything that is ever said or done by the preacher. Is that proper or consistent?

Every preacher will likely provoke mixed reactions regarding his manner, tone of voice, language, etc. What appeals to one may repel another. This is a matter of human opinion and personal preference. While method and manner are important, the message is that which we should weigh carefully. The first question to be asked upon hearing a sermon, is, “Is it the truth?” Error is often accepted or overlooked because the hearer likes the preacher. Truth is sometimes rejected because the hearer

doesn't like the preacher. It is not uncommon for attempts to be made to discredit the message by discrediting the messenger. Those who do that are the losers, as well as the preacher. Particularly is this common when one opposes the message, but cannot muster sufficient Biblical evidence against the message, and the only alternative is to undermine confidence in the messenger.

The truthfulness of a sermon is determined by the Word of God. **"Thy word is truth,"** said Jesus (Jn. 17:17). We are duty bound to measure the lesson by the truth (1 Jn. 4:1). No Gospel preacher ought object being questioned and tried by the Word. It is a healthy practice for hearers to do that. A faithful preacher wants people to follow Christ, not him or error. Preachers are not infallible and may not always be correct. This was true in New Testament times, even of good men (Gal. 2; Acts). Paul did not mind having his words checked (Acts 17:11). Christ urged this measuring (Jn. 5:39).

## Correction

When one finds a preacher in error, like Priscilla and Aquila did Apollos, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, who spoke boldly and fervently, they taught him **"the way of the Lord more perfectly"** (Acts 18:26). He accepted their teaching. They did not shy away from him, nor try to talk against him behind his back. They loved him and the truth, as well as those who might later hear him. They showed him the truth.

It is certainly not a Christian act to condemn the message, reject the message, and just blast the messenger. The message ought to be inspected under the light of truth. Rejection ought not be based on preference of preachers. Preachers have the right to have their errors pointed out and truth explained. They also have the right to expect those who say they love the truth to conform to the truth once it has been preached.

No hearer ought to be offended when a sermon transgresses what they presently believe or practice. Why is it that two people can hear the same sermon, one will repent, and the other get mad? Is it not because the seed the preacher has sown falls on two kinds of soil? One is determined to do what he wants to do, while the other is determined to do what God wants, rejoicing in the truth. Faithful brethren will support and endorse sound doctrine. They are hungry for it. Many were offended at the preaching of Jesus, Paul, Peter, etc. Just because somebody gets ruffled is no reason to discount the sermon and get mad at the preacher.

## Support

Preachers have a right to expect congregations to support the truth with words of endorsement, and with material support for the one who proclaims it. First Corinthians 9:14, **"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."** First Timothy 5:18, **"For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the laborer is worthy of his hire."** Galatians 6:6, **"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."**

Preachers have the right to expect more than mere words of endorsement and material support from the congregation. How disappointing it is to work hard preparing a lesson of truth, and then half or more of the brethren do not care enough to even attend and hear it.

Hearers, after checking the message against the revealed Word of God, have the duty to believe it, live it, stand for it, defend it, oppose its enemies, and teach it to others. Nothing is more reprehensible than a hearer declaring war against the truth, ignoring it, belittling it, scoffing at it, or giving ground and encouragement to those who oppose it, attacking the preacher while doing it. What the preacher has a right to expect along this line is what God expects of every Christian concerning the truth.

## He Sows The Seed

Congregations must realize that each time the preacher preaches, his message offers an opportunity that may never come again. These opportunities may be of greater magnitude than we realize. Preaching is sowing the seed of the kingdom. It may just be what you need at the time. It may answer some question, provide the Biblical solution to some problem, fortify against some temptation, bring recognition to some duty to God or man. It is a dangerous omission to deliberately be absent from the sermons the preacher preaches.

Usually following a sermon, everyone is given opportunity to get right with God. The invitation of the Lord is extended. Can we afford to ignore this? The one who preaches deserves your support, respect, consideration, not because of him, but because of the glory of what he preaches, the Gospel of Christ.

Someone has coined the phrase, "God had but one Son and He was a preacher." How should we treat that preacher? Romans 10:15 says, **"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things?"** ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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