

Pastoral Counsels

by J.C. Philpot

J.C. Philpot's sermon emphasizes the vital role of church leaders in nurturing the spiritual growth of the congregation through love, truth, and unity.

Scripture: John 21:17, Acts 20:28, 2 Corinthians 9:10, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, 1 Peter 5:2

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

J.C. Philpot emphasizes the importance of feeding the church of God, echoing Paul's words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28. He expresses his sole desire to be instrumental in feeding living souls, free from worldly ambitions or seeking popularity. Philpot aims to speak the truth in love, to edify, comfort, instruct, and lead the family of God, promoting unity and contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Transcript

Pastoral Counsels --excerpts from Philpot's Annual Addresses.

Must reading for church leaders!

What, then, is or should be the object of a Periodical that, like the "Gospel Standard," circulates widely among the living family? The same object that Paul set before the Ephesian elders, (Acts 20:28) "to feed the church of God." "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs," was Christ's thrice repeated injunction to Peter. Every preacher, writer, and editor that addresses himself to the church of God should have this set before him as his whole aim and desire.

This we can honestly say is ours, and the only motive which keeps us at our difficult and responsible post. Here we feel our conscience clear. It is not worldly interest, or ambition, or aiming at popularity and influence; but a desire to be instrumental in feeding living souls, that bears us up and keeps us at our post amid many discouragements, from both within and without, best known to ourselves.

We can say, we trust with all honesty, that we feel an increasing desire to be made a blessing to the church of God. Placed as we are in a position unsought and undesired by us to edit a periodical widely circulated among the living family, we desire it to be a means in the Lord's hands of great and increasing profit to their souls. In laboring month after month for their benefit, we have no party ends to serve, no miserable petty ambition to gratify, no schemes of pelf or pride to advance, no rich readers to flatter, nor

worldly professors to fear. To say we have no workings of pride and self would be to say that we have no blood of the old Adam nature circulating in our veins; but we hope we can say, in the sight of God, and before his people, that our chief desire and aim is the spiritual profit of the church of Christ. If our readers believe this, and if, in addition to our assertion, they have the more convincing evidence of their own conscience that they have felt any blessing or derived any profit from our labors, they--as knowing that in many things we all offend--will overlook those blots and stains which human infirmity will ever drop on the fair page of truth, and will ascribe them not to willful design, but, to a hand unsteady through the fall.

To speak the truth in love; to be faithful yet affectionate; keeping back nothing that is profitable, but abstaining from all harsh, unbecoming language; to watch for souls as those who must give an account; to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God--if this is the spirit which should influence the servants of God who speak in their master's name, should it not equally be the ruling desire and aim of those who write for the honor of the same blessed Lord and for the benefit of his people?

To edify, to comfort, to instruct, to lead on, to encourage the family of God, amid all their trials and sorrows, temptations and conflicts, is, or should be the aim of all who, as preachers or writers, stand on the battlements of Zion. If God, then, in his providence and grace, has placed us in a position whence we can, if not with voice, yet with pen, address many, very many of his dear children; if he has inclined any of their hearts to listen to us as believing that we know and love the truth as it is in Jesus, we are bound, not only by the weight which eternal realities have with our own soul, but by the very readiness of our friends and brethren to receive our words, to seek to the uttermost their spiritual profit.

To be of the least spiritual service to the Church of Christ; to profit the souls of any, though the least and lowest, of God's dear children; to promote in any way a spirit of love and union in the churches of truth specially, and among individual believers generally; to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints earnestly, but affectionately; to testify boldly against all error and all evil; and be a favored instrument of advancing in any measure the kingdom of the Redeemer, the cause of vital, experimental godliness, and the glory of a Triune God--what earthly rank or dignity, what place of worldly power or profit can for a moment be compared with an honor such as this?

And are any of us, friends and brethren, so highly favored and honored? Blessed are our eyes, dear Readers, if they have seen any divine beauty and blessedness in Jesus; blessed are our ears if we have heard his voice with sweetness and power; blessed are your tongues, you servants of God, if, in testifying of his Person and work, love and blood, suitability and preciousness, you have felt the dew of the Spirit dropping from your lips--and blessed are your fingers, you whose pens seek to trace his worth, if what you write is attended with the unction of his grace to contrite, believing hearts. If this be our experience, and this our aim and end, one living bond of union will knit together editor, writers, readers, servants of God, members of Gospel churches, and believers generally among whom our pages come.

As an editor, the desire of our soul is to seek and pursue peace, love, and union with all who fear God and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and to avoid as much as possible contention and strife.

We wish to say little of ourselves, lest we fall into the same spirit of self exaltation that we have been condemning--but this much, we trust, we may say, that in editing this periodical, we desire to seek the good of the brethren among whom it comes. In what falls from our pen, as well as in selecting what is sent

by our correspondents for insertion, our main aim and object are to profit the Lord's people, to avoid all questions that may tend towards contention and strife; and while we contend for the truth in the power and experience of it in the heart, to do so in a spirit of tenderness, affection, and love.

We cannot but declare our honest conviction that we have never flinched from setting before our readers the truth of God from any apprehension of either offending readers or losing them.

The desire of our soul is to possess for ourselves, and to be a means of strengthening in others, nothing short of a saving faith in the Son of God, and all the gracious fruits which gladden the heart and adorn the life, as springing out of union and communion with him. However we come short of this, and we are always so failing, this is the goal towards which we run, the mark at which we aim--and to be an instrument in the Lord's hand to promote his glory and his people's good is the highest privilege he can confer upon us.

A minister of any real weight and power, of any long standing and general acceptability, when permanently fixed over a church and congregation, gradually forms his own body of hearers. Those who cannot hear him, or at least, not to profit, gradually drop off, and there remains a congregation which receives his ministry, sees as with his eyes, drinks into his spirit, and is united to him in love and affection. He stands to them in time as a father to his children; and the tie being cemented by mutual affection, he becomes enabled and warranted to speak to and deal with them in a way which would not be consistent, nor indeed tolerated, in a strange minister, or a transient supply.

No man is more despised, no man more justly despicable, than a time-serving minister. A shifting, time-serving editor is, in our judgment, scarcely less despicable. As there always have been and always will be religious parties, every party naturally, almost necessarily, if of any extent, seeks some recognized organ of opinion by which it may act and speak. Our desire and aim are, and always have been, to represent no party--or at least that party only which possesses and professes sound experimental truth, and sterling vital godliness. If we have any weight or influence, this is the secret of it, that we express what our spiritual readers believe and feel. We do not lead them, nor do they lead us. We are friends and brethren, not master and servants, nor servant and masters. It is the truth in the love and power of it which unites us--that secret, mysterious, invisible, and yet powerful bond which knits together as with ties of adamant all who see eye to eye, and feel heart to heart in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

This is a reading age; and as books are cheap, largely read, and easily procurable, the press has come to embrace a wider circle and to possess a greater influence on the public mind than any other medium of communication. The Christian press has spread itself in all directions, and exercises an influence scarcely inferior to that of the pulpit. Works, therefore, written by gracious men, whether living or dead, may be viewed as exercising a ministry of their own, running, as it were, parallel to that of the pulpit, and in harmony with it, but possessing the advantage of penetrating into places, and speaking on occasions where the voice of the living preacher cannot come, as well as of being accessible at all times, lying silently and unobtrusively on the table or the bookshelf, ready to be taken up or laid down at pleasure, and, if we have well chosen them, our truest friends and wisest counselors, who will always tell us the truth without fear and without flattery."

Now, if God is pleased to use our little monthly work as an instrument for his people's good and his own glory, how abundantly will it reward us for all the toil, care, anxiety, and responsibility of conducting it which falls to our share. Our desire is to make it as instructive, as edifying, and as profitable as we can to

the Lord's living family. We wish, therefore, to avoid all strife and contention, all doubtful disputations, all gossip, slander, and news-mongering, all flattery and time-serving, all dry and merely notional discussion of points of doctrine which usually leads to endless dispute and vain jangling, and every other thing which feeds the flesh and starves the soul.

If you have received any instruction or consolation from our writings; if they have strengthened your faith; if they have encouraged your hope; if they have drawn forth your love; if any light has been cast upon your dark path; if any truth has been learned; if any error has been exposed in which you were nearly entangled; if you have effectually felt any reproof or rebuke; if there has been any stirring up or recovery from sloth and indifference; if there has been produced any brokenness of spirit, true penitence, and godly sorrow for sin; if any backsliding has been healed; if there has been any gracious renewal or revival of the good work within effected; in a word, if any real, solid, and abiding profit has been communicated to you by our labors on your behalf; we pray that our heavenly Father "who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness." 2 Cor. 9:10

We ask that you bring us before the throne of grace, that God would bestow upon us that spiritual and experimental knowledge of His truth, that heavenly wisdom and judgment, that holy boldness and faithfulness, that zeal for His glory and desire for His people's good, which, if granted, would be both our and your best reward.

"Finally, brethren, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you." 2 Thes. 3:1

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