

Parochial Ministry--Waiting

by John Newton

John Newton encourages John to consider the benefits of parochial ministry over itinerant ministry, emphasizing the importance of patient faith and consistent behavior.

Scripture: Psalm 27:14, Proverbs 3:5, Galatians 6:9, 1 Timothy 4:12, James 1:4

Topics: "Pastoral Ministry", "Faith And Patience"

Description

John Newton advises the preacher to consider the path of becoming a parochial minister, emphasizing the benefits of living among the people, understanding their needs, and guiding them in faith and holiness through consistent behavior and practical examples. He warns against the potential pitfalls of itinerant preaching, highlighting the risks of stirring up doctrinal confusion, spiritual pride, and contentions. Newton encourages patience and waiting on the Lord's timing, believing that the preacher is qualified for more significant service and could eventually obtain priest's orders with faith and perseverance.

Transcript

Dear Sir,

by your flying letter from London, as well as by your more particular answer to my last, I judge that what I formerly wrote will answer no other end than to be a testimony of my fidelity and friendship. I am ready to think you were so far determined before you applied to the bishop, as to be rather pleased than disappointed by a refusal which seemed to afford you liberty to preach at large. As your testimonium was not countersigned, the consequence was no other than might have been expected: yet I have been told (how true I know not), that the bishop would have passed over the informality, if you had not, unasked by him, avowed yourself a Methodist. I think, if you had been unwilling to throw hindrances in your own way, the most perfect simplicity would have required no more of you than to have given a plain and honest answer to such questions as he might think proper to propose. You might have assisted Mr. **** for a season without being in full orders; and you may still, if you are not resolved at all events to push out. He wrote to me about you, and you may easily judge what answer I gave. I have heard from him a second time, and he laments that he cannot have you. I likewise lament that you cannot be with him. I think you would have loved him; and I hoped his acquaintance might not have proved unuseful to you.

If you have not actually passed the Rubicon, if there be yet room for deliberation, I once more entreat you to pause and consider. In many respects I ought to be willing to learn from you but in one point I have a little advantage of you: I am some years older, both in life and in profession; and in this difference of time

perhaps I have learned something more of the heart, the world, and the devices of Satan, than you have had opportunity for. I hope I would not damp your zeal, but I will pray the Lord to direct it into the best channel for permanent usefulness: I say permanent.

I doubt not that you would be useful in the itinerant way; but I more and more observe great inconveniences follow in that way. Where you make a gathering of people, others will follow you; and if they all possessed your spirit, and had your disinterested views, it might be well. But, generally, an able preacher only so far awakens people to a desire to hear, as exposes them to the incursions of various winds of doctrine, and the attempts of injudicious pretenders, who will resemble you in nothing but your eagerness to post from place to place. From such measures, in time, proceed errors, parties, contentions, offences, enthusiasm, spiritual pride, and a noisy ostentatious form of godliness, but little of that power and life of faith which shews itself by humility, meekness, and love.

A parochial minister, who lives among his people, who sees and converses with them frequently, and exemplifies his doctrine in their view by his practice, having knowledge of their states, trials, growth, and dangers, suits himself to their various occasions, and, by the blessing of God, builds them up, and brings them forward in faith and holiness. He is instrumental in forming their experience; he leads them to a solid, orderly, Scriptural knowledge of Divine things. If his name is not in so many mouths as that of the itinerant, it is upon the hearts of the people of his charge. He lives with them as a father with his children. His steady consistent behaviour silences in some measure the clamours of his enemies; and the Lord opens him doors of occasional usefulness in many places, without provoking our superiors to discountenance other young men who are seeking orders.

I now wish I had taken larger paper, for I have not room for all I would say. I have no end to serve. I am of no party. I wish well to irregulars and itinerants who love and preach the Gospel. I am content that they should labour that way, who have not talents nor fund to support the character and fill up the office of a parochial minister. But I think you are qualified for more important service. If you had patient faith to wait a while for the Lord's opening, I doubt not but you might yet obtain priest's orders. We are hasty, like children; but God often appoints us a waiting time. Perhaps it requires as much or more grace to wait than to be active; for it is more trying to self. After all, whatever course you take, I shall love you, pray for you, and be glad to see you.

I am, &c.

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