

The Real Power of the Pastor Is in His Earnest Godliness

by Thomas Murphy

The pastor's real power lies in his earnest godliness, which is the source of his strength and character, and is essential for his success in ministry.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 5:8, Galatians 5:22, Colossians 3:23, 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Peter 5:2

Topics: "Pastoral Ministry", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

Thomas Murphy emphasizes the crucial importance of a pastor's deep piety as the real source of power in his ministry. He highlights that while other forms of preparation are necessary, it is the heart filled with love for God that gives a minister strength, energy, perseverance, and success. Murphy stresses that a minister's character, marked by consistent integrity and godliness, is indispensable for true efficiency and success in spreading the gospel. He underscores that a minister's communion with God and genuine godliness will not only disarm opposition but also give him double power in his preaching and ministry, leading to lasting impact and success in saving souls.

Transcript

This is his power with God; it is also his power with men. Though other branches of preparation are absolutely necessary, yet this it is which above every thing else will make him an able workman. His calling is such that his heart is needed in it at every point. It is the heart alone, and the heart glowing with love to God, that can give him strength and energy and perseverance and success. With it he will be irresistible, without it his ministerial life will be a failure. Where there is such an unction of the Holy Spirit it will, as a matter of course, impart a high and holy character; and a character without a spot and beyond suspicion must ever be the right arm of a minister's efficiency. It is in fact indispensable to his real efficiency. In this the calling of the pastor is different from most other callings among men. Worldly wisdom or professional skill or artistic proficiency may give a high degree of success in these callings without any aid whatever from moral or religious character. But not so with the minister. Christian integrity is that which must penetrate and give tone to all that he does. What skill is to the artist, what logical acumen is to the lawyer, what far-seeing wisdom is to the statesman, that is consistent integrity to him. It is the tower of his strength among men. It is his most attractive ornament. Rob him of that, and he becomes the most despised of mankind; give it to him in its richness, and no man is more honored and beloved. And the

heart is the true source of such exalted character. Where there is devoted godliness in the heart it will be seen in the life. It cannot be hid. It is not ostentatious, but it must necessarily work itself out into the light of day. Moreover, it cannot be counterfeited. If the genuine work is not within, no efforts to imitate it will be successful. But where it really is, life, lips, acts will all reveal it, even when it is not so intended. The heart which is elevated by communion with Christ will show itself on the countenance and in the daily communion with men.

Hence, whatever character we would bear with our fellow men, we must attain to in the depths of our own hearts. Whatever standing we would maintain before the world, we must first reach in our secret intercourse with God. Then devoted piety will almost inevitably disarm opposition, and even envy itself. There is in it such a charm of humility that enmity cannot stand in its presence. It has a gentleness of love that could not be hated. As a matter of fact, it may be generally seen that the men who live nearest to God are the ones who have the least annoyance from opposition. The good man will have but few adversaries, excepting among such as were adversaries to Him who was goodness incarnate. Because piety disarms opposition it must give power as well as peace to him who is most deeply imbued with its spirit. Moreover, to have the heart true to God and true to men through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit is the only way to obtain that abiding confidence from men which is so essential to the gospel minister. That confidence cannot be retained unless it has its source in a deep fountain of truth within. But that will secure it. Who can doubt the reliability of him who evidently lives under the power of heavenly motives? And such confidence is an armory of power for the minister. Much as it is needed in most earthly callings, in none of them is it so important as in his. When men have reason to rely upon him fully, his motives will be rightly construed, even when they cannot all be seen, and all his efforts in the gospel cause will have double weight. He will then have an influence among his fellow men that will itself be a very great power.

There are men whose reputation for high integrity makes them giants- moral giants- for good in the world. For this reason, even if for none better, should that highest of integrity, the integrity of true godliness, be assiduously sought after. It will give such weight to the minister's words that none of them will be lost. Coming, as they manifestly do, from an honest and earnest heart, they will be received, and weighed, and remembered. It will be seen that he holds communion with God, and so men will be induced to listen to him, as otherwise they would not. The respect which his manifest godliness inspires will compel them to honor his message. And then his preaching will inevitably be clothed with double power. That true sanctity which becomes the gospel minister will keep him near to God, the source of all real strength and success. He cannot retain any measure of spirituality unless he walks with God. But from that holy presence he will go out among his fellow men clothed in a might that no human training or talents could give him. Then may his soul beam with a glory like that which irradiated the face of Moses as he came down from Sinai. He would carry with him an indescribable atmosphere of sacredness that would tell effectively on all his ministry.

With almost the authority of the Master could he speak. From the source from which he received communications of grace would he also receive communications of power, and as he ministered in the name of the Lord, would the strength of that name go with him, and bring forth results that would be the crown of his rejoicing. An eminently pious minister will almost inevitably be successful in his blessed work. The pity which he has learned to feel for souls, his unquenchable love for Jesus and his all absorbing zeal for the glory of God will impart to his working an earnestness that can scarcely fail of success. Clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit, which comes down to him in answer to his effectual fervent prayer, he will be sure of seeing the cause of Christ prospering in his hands. If he be a profound theologian, a ripe

scholar or an eloquent speaker, his communion with God will hallow each gift and make it still more effective. If his attainments be of the most ordinary character, still the holy unction that accompanies his efforts will make them tell. This will make up wonderfully for other defects. Yes, it will often accomplish for the minister what no mere earthly advantages could. McCheyne well said: "A heated iron, though blunt, will pierce its way even where a much sharper instrument, if it be cold, cannot penetrate. So if our ministers only be filled with the Spirit, who is like fire, they will pierce into the hardest hearts where the sharpest wits cannot find their way." It was also a saying of his, "A loving man will always accomplish more than a merely learned one." Another of his rich aphorisms were, "It is not great talents that God blesses so much as great likeness to Christ. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God." The names of multitudes of pastors could be given which would prove that those who are the most godly are the most highly blest in saving souls and spreading that righteousness of which they are themselves bright examples.

Their work is not that which merely dazzles for a moment and then leaves deeper darkness behind it. It is abiding, and sends out great streams of influence for good that will cease neither in time nor in eternity. It is hoped that these emphatic reiterations of the fact that the pastor's deep piety is his real power will not be looked upon as platitudes. They may possibly be regarded by some who have not had much experience as commonplace truisms not needing mention. They have been repeated so often, and by so many, that here perhaps they may arrest scarcely any attention. But they cannot be thought of too profoundly. They are the words of truth and soberness. No true pastor but will understand their great importance more and more as his experience increases. It cannot be repeated too often, nor made too emphatic, that the pastor's great power is in his vital godliness. Nothing in this wide world will make up for the lack of it. Let experience be heard. This is the testimony of all those who have been the most highly blest in their ministerial work. One such testimony may be given; it is that of one of the princes of Welsh preachers, Christmas Evans: "The pulpit orator falls infinitely too short of answering the desired effect unless the fire within him is kindled by the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, for which he must pray in the name of Jesus, firmly believing in God's promise that he will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him. This is the mystery of the art of eloquence of the man of God. He must be clothed with the power from on high. Here is the great inward secret." In this work of the ministry, as in everything else pertaining to the gospel, God's great rule is, "Those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Let no one pass this point by until it has arrested his attention, sunken into his heart and fixed his life-purpose.

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