

Homiletics: The Preacher's Holiness - Part 3

by Tim Conway

The sermon discusses the critical role of holiness in the life of a preacher and its impact on their ministry effectiveness.

Duration: 52:45

Scripture: Matthew 7:21-23, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 2 Corinthians 6:3, 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 2:20-21, Titus 2:7

Topics: "Preacher Holiness", "Spiritual Purity"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of holiness and piety in the life of a preacher, highlighting the direct connection between personal purity and the power of God in preaching. It stresses the need for clear consciences, good works, and training in godliness to be effective vessels for God's use in teaching and preaching.

Transcript

I do plan to have us start thinking about the text today. And I want us to even handle something from Scripture and talk about something. But the real meat of preparing the sermon portion of this is still ahead.

I have compiled a list of questions that I've come up with that I think we want to ask of the text itself. And then I have a whole list of questions that we want to ask of the sermon itself. And you know there's a difference.

On the one hand, we're asking questions of the text. On the other hand, we're asking questions of the message that we put together. And so, we're not going to dive into either of those two lists today.

That's for next time. And we're just going to work through those. I said initially we're going to do four classes.

Well, we're going to start that next time and we'll see how far we get. But those are the things that are really going to get to the heart of this. A lot of this has been preparatory.

It's been introductory up until now. But in saying that, what we've dealt with so far is undoubtedly foundational. It's not that which we want to lightly pass over.

So, I want to talk about two things before we dive into just discussing, interpreting certain things in Scripture. Some years ago, probably a year or two into my marriage, my wife, any of you have wives that do calligraphy? With computers now, I don't know how special it is. You can just print stuff off.

There's probably a font that's calligraphy and it looks just like that. But anyway, my wife did this. Anybody ever seen this quote before? By McShane.

Get your texts from God, your thoughts, your words from God. It is not great talents, God blesses so much, as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.

A word spoken by you when your conscience is clear and your heart full of God's Spirit is worth ten thousand words spoken in unbelief and sin. I don't know exactly where he first said that, but I know that the banner of truth, I believe it's a banner, put out a little paperback of McShane's sermons and on the back of it, they have that quote. Quite the quote, especially, a holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.

A holy minister, an awful weapon in the hand of God. I want to talk about that for a little bit. The holiness, or as the old timers like to say, piety.

ESV doesn't, I don't think it uses piety at all, but every other translation still uses the word. But the piety or the holiness, I have a number of quotes here before we dive into Scripture, but I have found that Lloyd-Jones preaching and preachers, and Spurgeon's lectures to my students, and Gardner Spring has a book on the power of the pulpit. And then of course, Brother Andy did his series on leadership training, and if you guys don't have that, I know you can get it from James.

I know that he has put all of those on MP3. He has a lot to say about holiness and the life of the preacher. Lloyd-Jones says this, I would lay it down as a first postulate that the preacher is always preparing.

In other words, his life, always. He is always preparing. The guy who teaches is always preparing.

It isn't something that you simply, that's a segment of my life over there and I'm going to do it. What you do all the time reflects on how it's going to go when you get into the pulpit. Gardner Spring wrote this book on preaching, and he called it The Power of the Pulpit.

And one of the things that we need to keep in mind is exactly what McShane says. When there is holiness in the life, you are an awful weapon in the hand of God. If there is unholiness there, it wrecks what happens in the pulpit.

It destroys the power. There is a downgrade if the life isn't right. Why? Because God is involved in what happens in that pulpit.

And if you're coming into that pulpit, and your life is unclean, probably you can think of a text. We're going to get to some texts in Scripture that deal with this. But this book by Spring, Power in the Pulpit, Joel Beeke, many of you know that name, on the back of that book by Gardner Spring.

He pastored and lived back in the late 1700's, early 1800's, pastored a big church in New York City. But Beeke said of Spring's book, I'll never forget the first time I read Spring's chapter on a minister's personal piety. It overwhelmed me, moved me to tears, to silence, to confession, to prayer for mercy and help.

Spring says in his book, it does not require much discernment to see that if one would be an effective preacher, he must be a pious man. Spurgeon, he says it this way, true and genuine piety is necessary as the first indispensable requisite. Whatever call a man may pretend to have, if he has not been called to holiness, he certainly has not been called to the ministry.

And if we just think for a second about what Scripture says about this, think with me. Think with me about certain texts. For instance, what does Paul say right at the end of 1 Corinthians 9? Think with me.

What does he say there? He talks about preaching to others. And what does he say that he does? Can anybody think? 1 Corinthians 9. Self-control. Remember, he buffets his body.

You remember what he says there? He keeps his body under control, lest what? Yeah, or you may read castaway. I mean, the idea is people have argued what the terminology, the disqualified or the castaway, but I believe it's very apparent. What Paul is saying is, look, I take such measures in my life because I don't want to preach to others and in the end miss it.

Miss what? Not just my calling as a preacher. End up being a castaway. End up missing life.

End up proclaiming life to others and miss it myself. And what he says is, there is a lifestyle to be lived so as not to be the preacher who ends up in that situation. Or we think about this.

Again, specifically has to do with speaking gifts. Think about what is said in those famous words coming in to the chapter that deals with love. Again, I remember Brother Andy, and I don't think it was in his leadership training.

I believe that it was when we had him here and he spoke in the Men's Grace House. He spoke about this verse. He said it's actually one of the most terrifying verses in the Bible to him.

I don't remember if he used the exact word terrifying, but he was emphasizing that it caused him much consternation and much fear if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels. See, there's a speaking. There's an utterance.

If I have this kind of gift, and you remember where chapter 13 is couched between 12 and 14. Definitely right in the middle of the Paul's and Scripture's most extensive treatment of spiritual gifts. And obviously, some of the spiritual gifts, utterance.

Utterance of wisdom. Utterance of knowledge. You've got preaching gifts.

You've got tongues gifts. You've got interpretation gifts. There's exhortation gifts.

The preaching and teaching. Anyway, we can go on. But if I speak and I have ability and I have spiritual giftedness, but have not love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Now guys, I hope you see how that reflects in what we do in the pulpit. I mean, basically what it's saying is that if I go into the pulpit and I don't have this, I'm just... there's emptiness there. There's emptiness from the pulpit.

Or how about this? We know that we can be involved in a lot of things. You've got that picture there in Matthew 7. So often, Matthew 7, 21-23, we all well know the shocking youth message and many of us go to that text. And it's not wrong to do so and to deal with that text in a general way.

Because we can substantiate those truths that are stated there as applying to everybody when we look other places in Scripture. But if you look at the immediate context of Matthew 7, you just look up a few verses, you know that Jesus was talking about beware of false prophets. That is really what's on his mind.

Now if you go back before that, I know in verses 12 and 14, you've got entering, there's a narrow way, there's a broad way. That's perhaps more general. But when you get down to these people that are casting out demons, you get down to people that are prophesying.

That is very much a picture of somebody that's got speaking gifts, that's perhaps taking the pulpit or taking a Bible study or taking a lead in the church. And yet in the end, many, I never knew you, you workers of lawlessness, taking a life of lawlessness into the pulpit is obviously there's warning in those passages. Or think about this, Paul's words to Timothy, 1 Timothy 4, 16.

You know these words, keep a close watch on yourself and on your teaching or your doctrine. Persist in this, for by doing so, you will save both yourself and your hearers. And you know what? I really suspect, men, listen to me, we've got to quit with the hyper-Calvinism.

We have too many people running around with this idea, well, you know, I'm saved and I've been saved by the grace of God and I'm one of the elect. And so, you know, nobody can fall away. I can't fall away.

You know what? We can't just read over passages like this and miss what they're really saying. What Paul is saying is, Timothy, there is a possibility that you in the end not be saved unless you do what I say. That's what Paul's saying at the end of 1 Corinthians 9. He is saying, I recognize that there are things that if I don't do in my life, I may end up being cast away in the end.

We have to come to grips with the reality that there is very much a possibility that if I quit following Christ, if I quit fighting the good fight of faith, if I turn back to the defilements of the world from which I've been separated and turned from and I go back to those things, there is very much a reality that in the end, I'm going to hear, depart from me. We have to be able to put our name in there and say, yes, that is very much a possibility that if I don't give attention to myself and to my doctrine, that I won't be saved. He's not just making this assumption.

Timothy, I know you're saved and I know the prophecy that was made with regards to you and I know the gift that you have that was given to you by the laying on of hands and I have all this confidence that you're my child in the faith and you have this faith which once belonged to your mother and your grandmother and I have all this. And yet, Timothy, I know that there's no way possible no matter what you do and no matter how you live your life, there's no way that anything could happen other than that you're going to have a straight route to heaven because once saved, always saved and Paul doesn't speak that way. He says, Timothy, there's a way to get to heaven.

There's a path to be followed and if you come off that path, you don't end up saved. If you don't endure to the end, you don't end up saved. As a preacher, you need to give yourself to giving attention to yourself, how you live, your holiness, your piety.

You need to give attention to your godliness. You need to give attention to the truth that you teach and by so doing, you save yourself and you save others. We know this reality from Scripture that salvation is not primarily viewed as a past tense reality.

It is primarily an ongoing and a future. When you look at salvation and being saved, more times than it's a past. Now, it is at times dealt with as a past reality and we recognize that.

We recognize it truly to be saved, but we recognize that there is a life that fulfills this. There is a life of holiness. Without holiness, nobody in the end is going to make it and including the preacher and how much more the preacher it would seem.

So, let's think about this. 2 Corinthians 6.3 Paul says this, we put no obstacle in anyone's way so that no fault may be found with our ministry. I hope you see that.

You know what Paul would say to the churches? I specifically for the Gospel's sake do this, do this, do another thing. I won't take money from people because I don't want to put an obstacle there. Do you recognize there is a reality that by your life, by the things you do, by the things you say, by the things other people observe, people looking at the testimony of your life, you can put an obstacle.

What is an obstacle? He clearly is meaning that somebody would not come to Christ because of something they saw in his life. Again, not being hyper-Calvinistic. Oh, what good hyper-Calvinists we are.

Well, if God's going to save them, if they're one of the elect, they're going to get saved no matter what I do, no matter how I live. That's not how Paul reasons. Paul is saying there is a possibility, a potential reality of putting obstacles in the way of somebody by your life.

And look, when a man teaches, the people that are listening to the teacher, it's not as though how you live your life and what you do doesn't affect them. It does. It plays into the equation of how they hear you.

It plays into the power that you have. Remember, that's Gardner Springs' book, The Power of the Pulpit. And basically, you want to kill that power? You want to kill the testimony? You go into the pulpit with a sloppy life.

How about this? Titus 2.7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works. Now, listen, Paul, when he's teaching Timothy, he's teaching Titus. These are young men.

These are young men that take the pulpit. These are young men that are teaching. These are, however we want to classify them, these are young men that Paul is working with, seeking to fashion and seeking to mold and seeking to bring up behind him to follow on in this apostolic ministry.

These are men who are moving around through the churches. Younger men. You know, Titus was sent to Crete to set things in order.

Timothy was in various places. We know that he was at Philippi and he was at Thessalonica. And he went here and there and different places.

We know that in the first letter to Timothy, he was at Ephesus. And he would go to these different places. These are men who are in positions of teaching.

Before he gets to Titus and says that your teaching needs to have integrity and dignity, he first says be a model of good works. Not just a model of good works. He says show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works.

Fully orbed, all rounded. Give yourself to good works. That's first.

And then in your teaching, show integrity, dignity. But God expects His ministers to be men of good works. He expects them to be holy men.

He expects them to be surrendered at the heart level. You remember the words that God spoke to Samuel. Samuel, don't look on the outward.

Don't look on the outward. God looks upon the heart. The Lord looks on the inside.

We need to be men that are holy on the inside. God knows. God knows what's going on.

He knows our motives. And some of you might have been already thinking about this text. This is a classic text with regards to what I'm trying to say to you right now.

It is that which is found in 2 Timothy 2.20. You might want to turn to this one. They don't get more important when it comes to the holiness of a man who is going to handle the Word of God in any respect, no matter how small the Bible study might be, no matter what the environment, no matter what the scope. This is a text that you never want to forget if you're going to handle God's Word in any capacity whatsoever.

Now, in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use. Set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

So, you see the conclusion? So, flee youthful passions. Why? Well, youthful passions are the things that contaminate, obviously, and pursue righteousness. You see, these are the things that make for honorable use.

Righteousness, faith, love, peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Purity. You see the picture in your mind.

What a simple one, but honorable use. You've got the master of the house, and there's an assortment of vessels, some for one use and some for another. Now, remember who he's speaking to.

Remember who he's speaking and who he's speaking to. Paul to Timothy. Paul to a young preacher.

Paul to a young man who had been in Ephesus. Now, we're close to the end of Paul's life. He's giving some of his final instruction to a young man that perhaps, if you read 2 Timothy, perhaps Timothy was somewhat wavering at this point, maybe somewhat discouraged, need to have his gifts stirred up.

Paul is seeking to encourage him. It seems that I don't know what was happening to Timothy. Whether he began to coast just a little bit, come off the sharp edge that he was just a little bit slackening of the pace.

Perhaps you're living in a world where the persecution is so strong and so militantly in your face all the time, and perhaps he was becoming weary and well-doing. You can just get to where a good vacation at the coast might seem good after the kind of life that these guys undoubtedly lived. And here, Paul is telling Timothy.

Paul, this is the last letter that he wrote. He's an old man. His time is short before his departure.

And he's telling this young man, look, keep yourself clean. Keep yourself clean. You have to remember this.

When we teach, it's all about being used of God. That's the real issue. We want to be used of God.

Power in the pulpit, power in the teaching seat, is going to come from the Lord. It's going to come as God dispenses it on you. And He's only going to dispense that on you if He is pleased to use you.

If He's not pleased to use you, you will not have power. You may be eloquent. You may have a radio announcer voice.

You may have natural speaking gifts. But if you're really looking for the power of God in your life, you want to be somebody that the Lord is going to look to use. When the Lord wants to say something to His people, whether they be lost and He's pulling them into the flock, or whether they're already in the flock and it's holiness or it's encouragement, when He's looking for a vessel to use to say, send a word to My people, speak on My behalf, be My ambassador, what's He looking for? It's like the master of the house going in the cupboard, opening the doors, and he goes through and he's looking.

Is the vessel that he is going to drink from, that he's going to use, is it clean? That's the picture. Your usefulness has everything to do with this. Everything.

So it's no small thing what your life looks like. And again, I know that this is preliminary. This is foundational.

This is introductory. But here's the thing. We're going to get into opening your Bible and I'm going to prepare a sermon.

But you see, the unseen Christ is viewing you. Okay, you're trying to study this text and you're trying to figure it out. You're trying to put together a message of how you're going to bring this in a way that's going to be clear and it's going to be powerful.

See, as you're striving to do this, you have to recognize there's an unseen Christ who is looking at you as either a vessel that He intends to use or as one that He does not intend to use. And it's got to do with your life. I mean, man, I can remember... Well, I'll tell you what I remember in a second.

But just think about what McShane is saying here. A word spoken by you when your conscience is clear. You think that has anything to do with your purity? You think that has anything to do with your life? A conscience that's clear.

In other words, look, you're defiled if your conscience is defiled. I mean, God is going to leave you on the shelf. And look, when we're talking about the Master taking a vessel and it's clean and He's going to use it, when I say leaving you on the shelf, that doesn't mean you don't get in the pulpit.

You can be left on the shelf even though you get in the pulpit. You can be left on the shelf even though you lead the Bible study. Being left on the shelf doesn't have to do with where your physical body goes and whether there's an opportunity to speak or not speak.

Being left on the shelf has to do with God helps you when you go into that pulpit. Or into that seat of teaching. But, blemishes in the life.

Defiled conscience. I can remember out at community one time that I was going to preach. I was doing the Sunday school and I don't remember what it was, but I must have yelled at Ruby or something.

But things were not right. And any preacher here ever been in that situation? Something not right with your wife before you go into the pulpit? Nobody's had that. And you guys have.

Well, not on Sunday morning, but remember, there's times I've had to go to someone's house on Saturday because I couldn't study. Remember, once I came to you, I had something on my conscience, so the Lord wouldn't help me until I took pain to clear my conscience. And I remember actually just recently... Let's let these guys come in.

Timing felt like you're out of hand. Yeah, I was going to say that. Come on in guys.

Grab some chairs there. But yeah, just recently, I was with Charles back in September when we preached down in Monterey. I did a message on repentance and I felt tremendous liberty.

Really helped. And there were people there that were really affected. The next day, I preached on faith.

I felt totally abandoned in the pulpit when I was expressing that to my wife. She said, that's how you made me feel recently when you did whatever it was. That I did.

And I did not walk away from that thinking that me feeling abandoned in the pulpit had nothing to do with the way I treated my wife. I had every reason to believe that she was exactly right. And it was that.

There was this defect, which is interesting because the event actually happened before the message on repentance. That was God's grace. Did you mention it came into your conscience? Yes, after I preached the message and I felt abandoned, it was like God said, that's exactly what you did to your wife.

Well then, yes, I tried to push that out, but then my wife said to me, you know, that's exactly how I felt. And so it was like, okay, two witnesses. What am I going to say? But brothers, there's reality.

We've got to have clear consciences. We've got to have clear consciences. And one of the things about having a clear conscience is you cannot have issues with brothers or sisters.

Now look, I know that there are times when relationships with certain people might be strained and perhaps you're in a position where you've sought to deal with it and maybe something is still strained. And maybe in your own heart, it's not. It's with somebody else.

I mean, there are strained relationships that people have. You know, if you ask any preacher, somebody out there, especially if you're preaching faithfully and it seems like the more God uses you and owns you, probably the more enemies there are going to be because the devil is going to be your enemy. And there are certain relationships that will be strained even though you don't feel anything towards the people, but those things that you know you need to resolve, you know aren't right, you need to make a trip to somebody's house.

You just want to make sure that when you take a position of teaching, you have a clear conscience. You don't want a defiled conscience. You talk about that which will suck the power right out.

Men, we need to be in a position where we have a clear conscience with regards to surrender to the Lord. Look, there are times when God begins to probe our conscience, prick our conscience. There's these

goads.

God is pushing us in a certain way and we are resisting, we are resisting, we are resisting, we're fighting. You may begin to tell yourself, well, I don't really think it's God. I think it's this.

It must be the bad stew I had last night or whatever. Guys, if God is prompting you, God is pushing you, and you fight that, and you put that off, and you seek... Look, you want to be in a place where your relationship with God is good. This way, your relationship with others in the church, especially in your church, in your family, that it's good that you can go in there with a clear conscience.

Last thing you want to do is open your Bible and there's something there. There's something that is not surrendered in your life. There's something that's not right there.

I mean, we know the areas. We know the big areas in Scripture. Love.

We need to be seeking to abound more and more. Humility. We need to be seeking to abound more and more there.

Training yourself for godliness. This is a big instruction that comes to Timothy, right? Here's Timothy, this young guy. He's the young preacher.

You've got the senior preacher, the gray-haired old man who's giving this instruction to the young preacher. And what does he say to him? Timothy, you need to train yourself in godliness. Train yourself in godliness.

This is what we need to be doing. McShane hits it on the head. It is not great gifts so much that God blesses.

Now look, He does gift. He does bless gifts, but it is possible to have a greater gift than holiness and to not be that powerfully used of God. What you want to do is you want to couple whatever gift.

Better to have a lesser gift and greater holiness than to have a greater gift and lesser holiness. You want to exercise yourself for godliness. Men, that is an imperative.

You have a responsibility to do that. Again, away with the hyper-Calvinism. Don't get this mindset, well, God's going to make me what I am.

By the way, doesn't Scripture say I am what I am by the grace of God? Yeah, but you find the same apostle saying that he was striving, he was giving himself, he was exerting himself, he buffeted his body, brethren, he was not a hyper-Calvinist. And he's not wanting Timothy to be one either. And he's saying, look, you need to train yourself.

That's gymnazo, is it not? Gymnasium. We have athletic terminology there. And this has to do with his responsibility.

It's an imperative to him. It is like the instruction that you give to an athlete. And what do you say to the athlete? You can sit back, do nothing, and expect to do well in the race or in the competition? Well, no, there isn't that expectation.

The expectation is that if you're going to do well when you get in the pulpit, you've got to train. If you're going to do well when you advance in life, you've got to train. You can't expect that this is just going to happen by osmosis.

This isn't just going to happen because you play Scripture as you've dripped off to sleep at night. Somehow it's going to go in your ears and you're going to listen to it all night. You've got to exercise yourself.

You've got to give yourself to this. You've got to train yourself in godliness. We have to have that if we're going to be this vessel that is going to be cleansed, that is going to be godly, that is going to have piety, that is going to be owned of God.

Brothers, we need the power of God. And look, there is a direct connection between godliness and piety and holiness and the power of God and the degree to which God is going to use you. You can't get away from the truth of 2 Timothy 2, v. 20 and following.

You need to let that permeate your mind if you're going to do any bit of teaching. Put away any idea that the degree of pride you have in your life has nothing to do with how effective you're going to be in the pulpit or how much or how little you're loving or you're giving to those that are in need or you're doing the things that pertain to godliness and good works. Let the good works be full-orbed.

Let them be all-round in your life. Give yourself to good works. Listen, again, I would just say this, you visiting widows and orphans in their affliction, or you visiting people in nursing homes, or you going out and taking the Gospel to the lost, or you laying down your life, having a meal like Scripture says, instead of inviting all your friends and your family, inviting people who can't pay you back, those that are perhaps in wheelchairs that are in our church.

Brothers, what I'm saying is this, there is a connection between how you're going to do in the pulpit and that. You cannot think that, well, to be an effective preacher, I just have to hold up in my study and study and study and study and get the right tools and have the right commentaries and then I'm going to be a good preacher. Brothers, what I'm trying to tell you and show you what McShane is saying and Spurgeon is saying and Spring is saying and what these men are saying to us and what the Apostle Paul is saying to us is there is a direct connection here.

Brothers, what we want is that when we finally do get to where we're actually considering how to put together a sermon and how to dissect the text, what you want is you want God to visit you in such a way that that message comes together at least on paper and in our notes and then you take that into the pulpit with that preparation and you stand there or you go into the Bible study and you begin to speak that there is an ownership of God, there is a power of God, there is like they like to say an unction of God, something of God's ownership and God's hand being upon you is there in such a way that it is marked, it is real, it is distinguishable and what we're basically seeing is if you got problems in your life, if you got faults in your life, if you got dirt in your life, if something isn't clean there, then it is going to affect how you perform there and it's going to create obstacles. Not only does God not come and put His power, but to the degree that your unholiness is recognized by your hearers, it puts obstacles. You see the kind of obstacle Paul was talking about.

If I am seen as being a man that is doing anything for money, when I stand in the pulpit, my ability to affect those people is I'm going to basically jam an obstacle. I'm trying to show them Christ put an obstacle

between what I'm trying to show them in their own eyeballs. Why? Because they're going to look at me and they're going to say this guy's just a money grubber.

This guy's doing this for money. This guy holds no sway on my conscience because I know he doesn't care about me. He's just doing it for money.

He's trying to put bread on his table. That's all he cares about. And see, that's what Paul was saying.

I'm not going to put any obstacle. Guys, you put obstacles if those listening to you know that there's something wrong with your life. Classic story I like to tell.

My wife, when I came down here, she was at another church. And that church, I believe this happened actually after she left, but that church, if I'm not mistaken, had three elders at the time. One of the elders started Bible study at work.

Scott started Bible study at work. This guy started Bible study at work and you know what happened? How many ever might have come at one time? Basically, fell off to where one woman was coming. They would meet together at lunchtime in the cafeteria.

Period. His heart began to be invested in this woman. His affections.

He never committed sexual immorality, but in the heart, he did. In the heart, he began to fall for this woman. And he recognized it and pulled back.

He confessed it to his wife. He confessed it to his fellow elders. Fellow elders believed he needed to confess it to the church.

He did that. His fellow elders believed that because he didn't actually fall into sexual immorality, he confessed this thing, he brought this thing to the surface, that not only did he not need to be removed from the pastorate, he was in the preaching rotation, he didn't need to be removed from that either. But you know what happened? In very short order, he did have to be removed.

You know why? The church knew. And now when he stood in the pulpit, they couldn't hear him. He bore no authority upon them.

They struggled, in fact, listening to him. In fact, they struggled to the degree where the church had to go to the elders and say, you've got to set him down. And they did.

Why? He was putting an obstacle. Whatever message he prepared in his study, whatever truth... And listen, the guy didn't stop being biblical. The guy didn't stop preparing messages from the Bible.

Undoubtedly, what he had to say to the people was truth. Needed to be said to the people and should have held sway with them, but it couldn't. Why? An obstacle.

And I tell you, people are watching all the time. And you know what? People expect the guy teaching to be superior in holiness. They expect it.

They expect the guy who's going to take the teaching position to be an example and to be exemplary. And look, guys, if your marriage isn't good, sit down. If you've got a problem with pornography, sit down.

You've got a blatant problem with pride and people know it and it just gushes out all the time, sit down. I mean, we have to look at our lives and we have to recognize if there's a blot, if there's a stain, if there's an obstacle, we need to sit down. Because here's the thing, you're not going to be a vessel that the Lord's going to be used.

And like I say, the vessel can stay on the shelf even though you're leading the Bible study. Because God leaves you there. You may take it on yourself to go into the pulpit, but don't teach if your life is messed up.

Guys, you look at your life, if prayerlessness basically describes your life, sit down. You should not be preaching. If you don't know your Bibles, you should sit down and not be teaching.

If there's some gross immaturity in your life, you should not be in that place. If you lack self-control, you can't control how you eat, you can't control getting out of bed, any glaring flaw, I guarantee to the degree that that is known, you will not be respected. And people won't be able to hear you.

When you've got some glaring issue in your life, what do you think people are thinking? You see, people aren't just listening in a vacuum. They are listening to you. Not just to the teaching.

They are listening to you teach. And the degree to which they perceive you have a life that reflects what you're teaching, is the degree to which they're going to be impacted. Your testimony is going to bear direct influence to that ability to reach their conscience.

You can't reach their conscience if they're thinking all the time, who is this guy to be telling me this? I mean, who is this guy to be teaching on giving when the guy is a miser? Who is this guy to be teaching on marriage when he is the way? Who is this guy to be preaching on prayer when he doesn't come to the prayer meetings? People are watching. We all watch each other in the church. All the time we're watching.

We should. We're our brother's keeper. People are watching, especially those who teach.

They're watching. They're making mental notes. They're making... I mean, you guys know it.

You know, we watch. We are watching and we are keeping our eyes open. Gardner Spring says this.

I love this. The preacher and the man must be one. What he's saying is, who you are in the pulpit needs to be who you are in life.

The preacher and the man need to be the same person. The preacher and the man must be one. In other words, no hypocrisy.

Because the reality is, no man goes in the pulpit and screams at his wife from there. But he can go up and wax eloquent and pray and seem very holy and then come down. You see, that's the preacher not being the man.

You want to be the same guy in the pulpit that you are in life. Well, I'll just tell you guys all this. Our elders, our five elders, we sit together.

We talk about who's leading the men that are leading Bible studies or the women that are leading Bible studies. We talk about who's preaching where, who's preaching at the prisons. We talk about these things.

We talk about who's being used at the nursing home. We talk about who goes out and maybe preaches on the street or is going door-to-door. We talk about the people that are seeking to use speaking gifts.

There are opportunities where guys get promoted into situations where we talk about and discuss who are the men that are used in the 10-minute exhortations and who's used over here and who should be. Who isn't being used as much as they should be and who can go over there or over here. Who are we going to use? Brothers, I want you to know when we discuss these matters, it's not just the preaching ability.

It's not just the gift. We're talking about the character. The most certain, the most sure way for us to disregard, no matter how much gift you have, but to disregard you with regards to any kind of opportunities.

Gift is huge. You can be the most righteous man under the sun. You can be the most holy man.

You've got to show some indication of calling. You've got to have gift. Just because you have right doctrine and just because you live a holy life doesn't mean God has called you to be a preacher.

But I can tell you this, you can know Scripture, argue doctrine to the hilt. You can know all about the deepest doctrines. You can have a full and extensive library in your house and you can wax eloquent when you're in the pulpit.

But I'll tell you, if our elders are recognizing glaring deficiencies in your life morally, we're going to pass over you. I mean, that's right. You're not qualified if there's some kind of glaring deficiency there.

Now, we're going to move on to the next point. Let's take a momentary break.

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