

LESSON TWO

CHAPTER II
THE PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER

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It has been said that truth and personality are the fundamentals of all true preaching. With reference to "truth" it is hardly necessary for the matter of the message to be considered here except to say that it must be the truth of God as it is revealed in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—that truth which is fitted for every man, and changeth not with the passing of the years.

This chapter deals with the preacher and the development of his personality. What kind of man ought the preacher to be? In the development of personality what elements in his character need to be emphasized if he is to be a real success in the ministry of the gospel?

1. He Must Not Be an Imitator.

Such a statement might seem, at first thought, to be altogether unnecessary, were it not for the fact that the average preacher is, in point of fact, almost anyone else except himself. Every truth the preacher expresses, every message he delivers ought to be stamped with his own personality, and should be expressed in his own way.

Let us remember that God has made no two faces or voices alike. Each man has his own individuality to stamp on the work which God has given him to do. If your name is David, and you are called upon to kill your Goliath, then covet not the armor of Saul, but

take your sling and stone, and, by the help of God, the boasting giant will fall and lick the dust. Many a man has failed in his ministry, when otherwise he would have been a glorious success, simply because he was not willing to take himself as God made him. The very individuality with which God has endowed us is the very thing which makes us worth hearing—otherwise a graphophone could do the work about as well and at less expense.

It is worthy of note that men who copy the ways and manners of other preachers who have been successful almost always copy their faults and not their virtues, and in the attempt to do so become ridiculous in the extreme. What ludicrous results may be observed when men imitate with servility the doings of others! The ambitious young preacher who is setting up as a genius copies the peculiarities in attitude and manner of the popular preacher near him, and causes actual merriment in the very matters in which he thinks he is most effective. Such a preacher is much like those monkeys whose imitative power, Harris says, the Indians turn to destruction in this way: Coming to their haunts with basins full of water or honey, they wash their faces in the sight of these animals, and then, substituting pots of thin glue instead of the water or honey, they retire out of sight. The monkeys, as soon as the Indians are gone, come down and wash their faces likewise, and sticking their eyelids together, become blind, and are easily captured. In other places they brought their boots into the woods, and putting them on and off, left them, well lined with glue or a sort of bird-lime, so that when the unhappy monkeys put them on, they stuck fast, and hindered their escape. How many men have found it impossible to extricate themselves from corresponding difficulties into which they have been drawn through attempting to imitate others.

Shining in the light of others we may have made a name as great preachers; our people may have canonized us. To turn now from imitating others and become our own true selves may mean temporary failure and cannonading. Better be cannonaded for being true, than canonized for being false.

The preacher should be himself, his best self, his consecrated self, his highest self. In so doing he will best prove his sincerity, honor his God, and become a means of greatest blessing to the people to whom he ministers.

2. He Should Be a Man of Deep Piety.

Again and again, in his letters to Timothy, the young preacher, the aged Apostle Paul insists on purity and piety of life. The great, and oftentimes the only difference in many sermons is simply the difference in the character of the preachers. To know the inner life of such men as Spurgeon, Moody or Finney is to understand the secret of their powerful ministry. What we are does indeed speak louder than what we say and certainly, in the long run, is more effective. A bad man cannot long remain undiscovered in the ministry. If the preacher is not living up to his preaching, the people will soon find it out—then woe be to that man. "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord."

The preacher must be clean in the habits of his life. Little foxes spoil the vines. He must have no impure habits, nor secret vices. He who sins secretly, God will put to shame openly. David's life is an illustration of this truth (2 Samuel 12:12). Paul's exhortation to Timothy is still a helpful one: "Flee youthful lusts." The preacher will be shorn of his power in the pulpit if he is not clean in his private life. He cannot face his people with confidence if he knows that his life is not pure as it ought to be. The very confidence of the people will rebuke his hypocrisy. The preacher must cleanse

himself from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. If a man shall purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor, meet and prepared for the Master's use.

The preacher must also be truthful. Exaggeration is lying; stretching the truth is lying, and a lie in the pulpit is worse than a lie anywhere else. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone"—and, certainly, this includes lying preachers. If an illustration which you are using did not occur in your own life, then do not say it did. How many a preacher has been conscious, while in the pulpit, that the story he was telling was not true, that he was exaggerating, yes, that he was actually lying. We must not do evil that good may come from it.

A preacher's life may be a lie; he may be pretending to be in life what he is not in reality. Piety in the pulpit must be accompanied by piety in the home. A certain quality of life is expected from the preacher by his people, and reasonably so too; he must see to it that he proves himself worthy of their confidence. We must tell the truth to God. If we have vowed to Him, let us keep our vows. We must tell the truth to men. If we have promised to meet an obligation on a certain day, let us meet it, and if, at the proper time we are unable to meet it, let us be men, and go and confess our inability to do so.


3. He Must Be a Man of Gravity.

He should consider whose servant he is, and what court he represents. A clerical jester is sadly out of place both in the pulpit and out of it. There should be a difference between a cheap advertising medium for a circus and an ambassador from the court of heaven. It is to be feared that some preachers grieve the Holy Spirit more by foolish talking and jesting than by any-

thing else. If our strength has departed from us and we wist not the reason why, let us examine ourselves with this thought in mind.

4. He Must Take Care of His Bodily Health.

Ordinarily a man must be a good animal before he can be a good preacher. The preacher should be his best self physically. A good physique is an attraction in the pulpit, as well as the basis for good spiritual enjoyment. Spirituality and dyspepsia are very seldom found in the same individual at the same time. Exercise; take care of your health; look well to your diet—there are many spiritual enemies that cannot be cast out “save by prayer and fasting.” A change of diet is the first thing some Christians need to attend to in order to their progress in sanctification. The Apostle Paul says, “Bodily exercise is profitable,” therefore take exercise.



This is a statement from brother Evans, not a quote of the scripture. The scripture quote in I. Timothy is: “For bodily exercise profiteth little...” Therefore, even if it only profits a little, then it is profitable as brother Evans says.

Make sure you look up this scripture and all others in this study because it is a requirement in all courses.

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