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Seven Elements in Successful Preaching.

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By

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## ***Seven Elements in Successful Preaching.***

BY SAMUEL V. LEECH.

I look tonight on a splendid body of heroic pastors and a multitude of their friends. It is easier to point others to the path of clerical success than personally to achieve phenomenal good fortune in ministerial life. Not a few of my appointments have been in large cities. This has enabled me to have an acquaintance with some pastors of national fame, and to study their methods of work.

The numerous titles by which the New Testament designates preachers are almost self-explanatory. They involve important duties and various relationships. I cannot compass within the limits of an evening address, many of these qualities of an ideal pastor. The Bible represents him as divinely selected and commissioned for his sublime work, and to a limited extent divinely endowed for his ministry. It emphasizes the fact that his mission is that of an Ambassador for Christ to men; that he is under special divine protection; that he cannot attain signal success without divine aid; that in heart and in life he is to be as pure as crystal and that patience, impartiality, gentleness, self-denial, watchfulness and prayerfulness, are to mark his life. The Bible indicates that he is to be studious, an example to the church, not ambitious for popular praise and not abnormally anxious concerning material support. The Scriptures sparkle with these and other factors in the character and work of a true Christian pastor. I would tonight direct attention to seven overshadowing constituents in the ministrations of the ideal Methodist preacher.

1. *He must occupy the sacred office conscious that he has been called to it by the Holy Spirit.*

Men select other professions, generally, from materialistic considerations. But no man should occupy a pulpit self-elected to his holy position. He should be satisfied that God has called him there before any ecclesiastical authorities con-

secrete him to the ministry. He who assumes the responsibility of dealing with the interests of deathless souls should cherish an intense conviction that behind his work reposes divine authority. His culture may be broad and profound, his character may be as fair as a stainless lily, his natural and acquired gifts for public oratory may be majestic; but back of these must dwell an honest impression that God has shaped his professional career. Paul reminded Archippus of the heavenly origin of his commission. He wrote the Hebrews concerning his own divine direction to assume this honor. His epistles glow with this high conception of the ministerial office. Tradition tells us that Ildefonso thought he saw angels investing him with celestial regalia for the work of his priesthood. That pastor must be degraded in his own thought who has united with a Methodist conference from a professional standpoint, with his gaze riveted on salary, rank and popularity. In beautiful self denial the saintly John Fletcher declined an invitation to the wealthy parish of Durham and accepted one to the inferior parish of Madely, saying "At Durham there is too much money and too little work". Few preachers of our times clearly hear a divine call to a new field of work where there is no increase of financial support. History tells us that Francis the Monk cried mightily to heaven for overwhelming evidence of a divine call to his sacred duties. Winning a conscious favorable response, he preached with such eloquence and personal magnetism that men of culture trembled under his incisive appeals. No true preacher is ever glad to hear his public addresses eulogized as able and brilliant. But his soul is thrilled with joy when he is informed that God sanctified the sermon to the spiritual uplifting of some hearer's soul. The Italian pulpit orator, Ferrier, thought out the trend and impressive diction of his public discourses as he knelt before a crucifix. A man may as appropriately attempt to raise fruits and flowers on naked rocks as for a preacher to attempt to win men to God on the barren foundations of scholarship and oratory. The divine Ambassador must have divinely attested credentials. The Lord's Messenger must not only wear the King's livery but receive his message from the King's lips. Mere pulpit declamation, however orthodox, is like the wild Oleander. Its fruitless boughs exhibit leaves only.

Crossing the ocean by the generosity of a congregation, for summer visitations to European cities, I saw our steamship

pass many gallant steamless vessels. They depended for speed on exterior things such as sails and sea-breezes. But down in the heart of our "Ocean Greyhound" throbbed the mighty engines that made her independent of external surroundings. Far better than the winds of oratory and the sails of culture, valuable as these may be, is the seal of God on a pastor's commission to stand in the sacred desk. Philip Doddridge had a right conception of pastoral authority when he wrote:

"Let Zion's watchmen all awake,  
And take the alarm they give;  
Now let them from the mouth of God  
Their solemn charge receive."

2. *His supreme mission is to preach the gospel of Christ.*

A large percentage of the preaching of American cities is along the lines of current events. The most distinguished pulpit orator in Brooklyn has recently been presenting a course of sermons on the leading volumes of modern fiction. Take up the Saturday issues of the chief city papers, and you will find that numerous pastors have gone beyond the Bible for their Sunday themes. The trend of our pulpits should be in harmony with the fundamental doctrines of the New Testament. Current events should be chiefly employed to illustrate great gospel subjects. Ezekiel heard a divine voice directing him to look to God for his message, and to deliver it from the standpoint of a divine representative. Railroad men and other bodies of employees, look to the corporations that employ them for books of official instructions. Such publications map out their work, prescribe their duties, and emphasize their obligations. The four gospels, the celestial inspiration of which has been acknowledged by numberless scholars, are the compositions from which we are to receive our ministerial directions. The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, the twenty-one epistles of the New Testament and the remaining canonical books are to be regarded chiefly as commentaries on the gospels, in so far as they teach morals and doctrine. No catechisms or creeds of human compilation are to be exalted over the gospels as standards of doctrinal appeal. When compared with the Bible they are like so many stars parting with their splendor in the all-absorbing light of the sun that invested them with subordinate lustre. When our Bishops ordained us to the ministry they distinctly informed us that we should first promise to "teach nothing as required of necessity to salva-

tion but that which we should be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures." All compendiums of theological beliefs must be tested by their loyalty to the Sacred Oracles.

Our congregations generally would appreciate it were we studiously to ignore secular themes in the pulpit and have our discussions crystallize around the colossal facts and imperial truths that commanded the supreme attention of Christ and His apostles. The pulpit was never created for, or consecrated to, lectures on the poets, painters or reformers of the centuries; nor to discussions, other than incidental and illustrative paragraphs, concerning Presidential policies or political theories. The preaching for all centuries, lands and communities converges at Calvary. Appropriate illustrations may be gathered from the realms of nature, art, science, history, philosophy and political economy; but all themes suitable for pulpit discussion on the Lord's day should point like great index fingers to Bethlehem, Golgotha and the New Jerusalem, seen in vision by John at Patmos. The gospel is practically the message of Christ, conditionally inviting all men, women and children to the banquet of personal salvation from sin here and to the beatitude of the eternal life hereafter. To deliver it most impressively and successfully should be a pastor's chief desire and aim. His work in the sacred desk is to hold up the cross of Christ as the one and only hope of humanity. He is to emphasize the crucifixion as the solitary divine atonement for sin, the supreme manifestation of the Father's love for mankind, the overshadowing expression of God's hatred of moral evil and the exclusive basis of man's hope of pardon and purity here and everlasting life hereafter.

Faithfully to preach the gospel is to see to it that the symbols, sacrifices and Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament all find their way to Jesus. It is so to guide all illustrative material, all pulpit subjects and all biblical themes to the character and life of Christ, that they will together echo the words of His prophesied herald "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." In a Methodist pulpit He is to be the one central sun around which each planetoid and asteroid of truth is to revolve. Over our pulpits we ought, in preaching, to bend like a bow of beauty the Pauline exultation "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Paul boasted that he was not ashamed of the gospel. Be it our's to say with Charles Wesley

“His only righteousness I show,  
His saving truth proclaim;  
'Tis all my business here below  
To cry ‘Behold the Lamb!’  
Happy if with my latest breath  
I may but gasp his name;  
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,  
‘Behold, Behold the Lamb!’”

It is a difficult thing to exalt Christ in the presentation of majestic truth, and at the same time sink in thought the human messenger. But like the carving at Geneva, on the front of an old pulpit, that represents the hand and arm of an unseen personality holding up a crucifix, we are so to educate ourselves in humility as to hide the dignity of the preacher in the exaltation of Jesus, and only elevate Him who promised to draw all men to Himself when He should be lifted on the cross. Show me a pulpit where Christ is not honored in His crucifixion and I will point you to one in that edifice that may be invested with human attractions but is destitute of spiritual power.

3. *He must have an ideal religious experience.*

Paul said he knew *whom* he had believed. He knew Christ. A Methodist pastor must have travelled every inch of the path of New Testament penitence. He must thoroughly understand the faith route to rest for the soul. He must tell the people what he has spiritually seen and felt. He must possess what is termed “personal holiness.” An extraordinary experience of the power of God to save from the guilt and dominion of sin is the Samsonian lock of clerical strength in our pastorates. The conscious dedication of all endowments to Christ’s service is the Corinthian column of a preacher’s pulpit power. Nothing less than intense intimacy with Christ will qualify us for eminence of success. Severed from profound personal piety all other virtues shine with beclouded splendor. In his poetic prayer for pastors a sacred poet has justly sung:

“May they in Jesus, whom they preach,  
Their own Redeemer see;  
And watch Thou daily o’er their souls,  
That they may watch for Thee.”

Communities expect us to be outside of our pulpits what we appear to them to be when we are in them. Our daily conduct is a progressive and influential sermon. A pastor’s ability to win souls is largely graded by his own proxim-

ity to Christ in an ideal experience. A comprehensive understanding of the deep things of God must be primary in ministerial equipment. His own actual relation to God must not be pivoted on inference; but he should have a divine witness in himself. Just as the sun-flower keeps its bosom sunward from morning to evening that it may constantly imbibe his warmth and light, so he must keep his own heart Christward to steadily partake of His grace and power. Hugh Latimer won Thomas Bilney to the English Protestant reformation as he told him, in the privacy of the confessional, the thrilling story of his own conversion from papal superstition, and his marvelous new-found peace and joy. A mutual experience of a radical transfiguration by the Holy Spirit gave them surpassing ability in the pulpit, wonderful influence on public thought and led them both to martyr victories in death. No pastor should permit his saintliest member to surpass him in spiritual fruitage. Like Bonaparte leading his soldiers over the flaming bridge of Lodi to meet the common foe as he cried "Follow me", so should a Methodist preacher lead his congregation, by personal example, into the green pastures and beside the still waters of an ideal experience. Each personal endowment of body, mind and spirit should bear the motto inscribed on each piece of furniture in the second temple "Holy unto the Lord." He has become indeed a model of sanctity who can say to his congregation what Paul said to the Corinthians "Be ye followers of me even also as I am of Christ." To a young preacher he wrote "Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith and in purity." As the orator Pericles always prayed to his god in the Pantheon before he stood before the people to address them, so ought we to covet communion with God before we enter our pulpits to deliver divine messages. It is a glorious and yet a fearfully responsible work to shape the destiny of deathless souls.

4. *He should be a systematic student.*

The conferences are more and more loudly demanding well educated young men for the work of the churches. They must pass each a severe curriculum and manifest ability to grapple with the speculations of skeptical scholars. The churches desire men whose intimate friends are books, paper, pens and ink. The pastor of today must not only be his own evangelist, but he must be a trained moral teacher able to "feed the flock of Christ." That flock is not so much to be entertained as to be fed: fed not on the husks of secular litera-



ture but from the granary of inspiration, the Bible, the book represented as making the simple wise, converting the soul and bringing to us the profit of doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness.

When spending a few days in Venice I daily watched with interest the public dinner to the flocks of pigeons given each afternoon for centuries. The moment the mighty bell in the campanile of St. Mark's square struck the signal, they swarmed to their banquet of corn furnished by the sea-washed metropolis. Why do they come, ever, with regularity and promptness? Because experience has taught them that they will always be fed. So it should be in the Christian pastorate. The preacher should burn on the souls of his people the conviction that, divinely aided, he will feed them: feed them not from dishes of garlanded bones and ornamented froth, but with the bread of Life. It requires quite as much wisdom to determine what shall be excluded from a sermon as what shall enter into its delivery. I have heard great preachers like Spurgeon, Punshon, Beecher, Bishop Simpson and others preach to vast and spellbound audiences, entranced with the majesty of their utterances; and although their orations ran into a second hour, few were wearied. The glorious banquet of information seemed far too brief. I have heard preachers, illiterate and unstudious, address to their congregations sermons of but thirty minutes duration and these were twenty minutes too long. They had nothing much to say and they said nothing much. The trend of their thought was like the flow of an invisible rivulet as it meandered through a barren wilderness of words. Jeremiah pictured the divine ideal of a true preacher when he told God's ancient people that Deity would bestow on them pastors with God-like hearts, whose work it would be to give to them as food "knowledge and understanding." Bees will pass over the rose and lily to feed on the luscious fruit of an orchard. A congregation had far better sit under the ministrations of an instructive pastor than under the frothy oratory of a brilliant man, or the noisy rantings of a pulpit mountebank, whose fervid declamation, calculated only to stir the emotions of the ignorant, is too often mistaken for an indication of the extraordinary presence of the third person of the Trinity.

Instructive discourses require careful preparation. Around a deeply spiritual and studious pastor a congregation of conservative, thoughtful and cultured people will slowly

gather. No Methodist preacher need be an uneducated man. Available literary helps are multiplying around us. Moderate intellectual industry will transfigure any pastor into an accomplished scholar in the realms of biblical, theological and general literature. Periander never formulated a truer sentence than when he wrote on the walls of the Delphian temple "Nothing is impossible to industry." Many distinguished and successful ministers of Methodism have, by habits of methodical study, like the lamented Bishop Newman, bridged the chasm created by a lack of early educational advantages. They have won, by systematic perseverance in their limited libraries, a wide reputation for scholarship and authorship. Because a pastor's highest usefulness largely depends on his ability to teach; because a pastor cannot conceal from his people his mental calibre and acquisitions; and because information fades from memory as freshness fades from a painting, each Methodist preacher should average four hours per day in his study. To a great extent all pastors are architects of their ecclesiastical fortunes. There is no tapestried way to scholarship. The guide-boards along the path bid us trudge and plod, moil and toil, jog on and hold on. An ideal pastorate means hard work. The pulpit power of the most effective preachers has been based on broad information and intellectual discipline. Henry Melvill rarely preached a sermon that he had not rewritten three times. Massillon, the Prince of French pulpit orators, frequently spent ten days in giving completeness to a discourse.

A thorough mastery of the Scriptures is the central gem in the crown of ministerial culture. What great standard legal authorities are to an attorney, what renowned modern medical volumes are to a physician, what the best "Pharmacopœia" is to the apothecary, the Bible is to a pastor. His life work aided by the best commentaries and kindred books, is largely so to master the prophecies, histories, doctrines, examples, invitations, promises and general material of the Bible as always to be at home in their interpretation. He may, by preaching generally on biblical rather than sensational and current themes, have no crowded audiences to greet him; but he may repeat the remark of John Haddington, "My congregation is quite as large as I will wish to be responsible for in the day of judgment."

5. *He ought so to preach as to be understood by his hearers.*

Paul told the Corinthian Church of his own "plainness

of speech" in preaching. We should clearly place the exact truth before our congregations. Pedantry in the sacred desk is disgusting to God and men. I have heard of a young pastor who had such an abnormal fondness for the employment of Latin phrases, at a rural appointment, that almost every Sunday he would introduce two or three of these into his sermon. Referring to a deceased friend he would say *Requiescat in pace*. If the brethren would stand by the revival meetings they might finally say with Cæsar, *Veni, vidi, vici*. To the penitent backslider it was his glorious privilege to say *Nil desperandum*. He had not entered the ministry from personal considerations, but *Pro bono publico*. He had just returned from the bedside of a worthy sister *In articulo mortis*. On the following Sunday he would discourse on the parable of the Talents, *Deo volente*. He was arranging a new plan for the conference collections, but it would have no *Ex post facto* action. He had felt a desire to see the church entirely sanctified *Ab initio*. Under no circumstances would he enter a pulpit to preach *Ad captandum vulgus*. In nearly every sermon he told his illiterate auditors of a passage of scripture where the new version gave to the text a better translation than the ordinary King James version, until the membership wondered if their bibles were worthy of their confidence. Such were his pedantic pulpit habits.

A preacher need not speak in monosyllables to be understood by unlettered auditors, but he should follow Cromwell's order to his soldiers to "fire low," and not shoot, like Aguinaldo's soldiers, too high into the air. Much of the charm of a sermon lies in its perfect transparency. Luminous and crystalline should be a so-called message from God to men. The power of an address is largely resident in the fact that it is intensely lucid. Endangered souls need a clear perception of the way to Cavalry. I have seen in Colorado renowned mountains a hundred miles away. They seemed quite near because of the pure atmosphere absolutely free from moisture, haze and mist. Such an environment should surround the Sunday sermon. Many hearers in our congregations might appropriately say to us what a dying drummer boy said to his chaplain, "Can't you make it a little plainer for a boy what aint had no schooling." For forty consecutive years I have preached to Methodist congregations, some of them worshipping in churches of national fame; but I have found that great scholars and profoundly learned men were in a small minority

in the pews. Even scholarly people do not relish severely logical discourses. Christ preached pictorial and simple sermons. When he desired to have the people understand the nature and progress of personal experimental religion He told them how leaven had operated in three loaves changing their general character from centre to circumference. When He wished to exalt the priceless worth of practical piety He compared it to an oriental pearl of fabulous value. When warning his disciples against spiritual inactivity He told them the suggestive story of the Ten Wise and Foolish Virgins. In portraying the degradation, destitution and privileges of an unsaved soul He painted the matchless picture of the Prodigal Son. Proposing to impress His followers with the brotherhood of mankind He furnished them with the parable of the Good Samaritan. In that of the Lost Sheep He explained His own mission to our world. Numerous other important doctrines and duties He made clear in many stories, such as the Wise and Foolish Builders,—the Sower and the Seed,—the Laborers in the Vineyard,—the Marriage Feast,—the Blind Leading the Blind,—the Good Shepherd,—the Pharisee and the Publican,—and in other similitudes.

I was once the pastor of an editor whose name is a household word throughout the Republic. At the close of a Sunday service he walked to the front and said to me, "The sermons that I appreciate most from you are those that are most copiously set with illustrations." Many of the most successful preachers of our country inlay their discourses with pictures taken from nature, art, history, science and personal experience, so introduced as to make the truth more easy of apprehension and more permanent in its impressions. Take from the pulpit addresses of Dwight L. Moody and De Witt Talmage their effective and brilliant illustrations, designed to illumine and fasten truth, and their vast audiences are dissolved and their pulpit influence has largely departed. The pastor who can condense logical argumentation, and place in the sermonical structure windows of similitude, analogy and appropriate illustration, will not only magnetize the comparatively uncultured masses, but the most accomplished representatives of scholarship. Preachers who adorn their discourses with choice illustrative material tread in the footsteps of the world's king of moral teachers, Jesus Christ. Doctrine is thus illumined, the emotional nature affected, the intellect fed and the heart warmed. A lofty course of splendidly illustrated pulpit

addresses will draw to an auditorium more people, enlist better attention, and win more souls to Christ than a succession of argumentative discourses, cast according to the science of logical reasoning and homiletical laws.

6. *He toils under profound convictions of the importance of his work and the tremendous magnitude of his responsibility to God.*

No secular profession approximates in importance the divine calling of the Christian ministry. Other avocations touch the material and purely temporal interests of men; but the duties of a minister give shape to those that are spiritual in their nature and eternal in their duration. The material on which he works is imperishable. A sermon that he may deliver at a critical moment in a human life may give permanency of direction to the destiny of a deathless soul. The Ambassador of an earthly king represents the interests of one crowned mortal at the court of another frail sovereign; but the Ambassador for Christ authoritatively represents the King of Kings in negotiation with rebellious and doomed men. The superintendent of men representing a great corporation oversees work of brief and limited importance; but the Christian pastor has been called by Paul an "Overseer" of the church of God, the interests of which are co-extensive with the ages to come. The shepherd who feeds and guides flocks along the hillsides cares for dumb animals whose blood must run on the block for human good, even if it escape a premature flow from the teeth of wild beasts; but the shepherd of the flock of Christ feeds sheep that are immortal, and guides them to the stream of salvation that flows from the divine throne "clear as crystal." As he ponders the peril of souls entrusted to his watch care there will be generated in his heart an intense yearning after their moral purification and security. This will glow in the address and find expression in outside pastoral work. Like the celebrated Italian sculptor who visited the sepulchres of the dead in his anatomical studies, the ideal pastor meditating concerning the eternal relationships of his people, will be impressed by the august solemnity of his environment. He will feel as did the dying Summerfield when he said "If I could be raised again to health how I could preach! I have been looking into eternity."

Many secular professions are crowded with great responsibilities, but none with such as confront the Christian ministry. Why stands the New York pilot amidst the blinding snow storm watching the path of the keel as he is bringing in the

ocean steamship? Because a multitude of lives are poised on his professional vigilance. But when port is reached, and the passengers throng the shore, the burden of care drops from his spirit. But, as pastors, we are piloting a multitude of souls across the stormy sea of Time. We know no hour of release from grave responsibilities, for even when we are dead we will yet speak through the trumpet of a deathless influence.

The railroad engineer, with eagle eye slumbers not at his post of duty. He keeps his eyes on the progressive stream of light flung along the night-girt track as the long train dashes over trestle bridges and through dark and dangerous gorges and tunnels. He is thrilled by the conviction that he holds in his custody the safety of the sleeping hundreds in the cars behind him; but when his train terminates its long and perilous journey at the depot, and the passengers have passed from the coaches, his thought of responsibility is dismissed. But the pastor is guiding a greater company of immortal persons on a life-long trip to an eternal metropolis; and his responsibility never finds an hour of abatement.

The skilled physician, administering to the critically ill monarch, watches with vigilance the pulse, temperature and other symptoms of danger, aware that the fate of a kingdom may depend on his fidelity; but when the king is again blessed with robust physical health the doctor tosses from him all professional anxiety because the pressure of responsibility has departed. But in an important sense the pastor is the divinely appointed superintendent in a hospital full of diseased souls, and their moral health largely depends on his convictions of official responsibility and his steadfast fidelity to duty.

This omnipresent consciousness of stupendous responsibility will transfigure an ideal pastor into a man of tender address, intense earnestness and moral heroism amidst any possible environment. This is why Paul wept in his warnings to the church at Ephesus. This is why he told the Christians at Thessalonica that he was as gentle among them as a nurse among children. He pleaded with his young friend Timothy to be gentle unto all men. Fenelon spoke of preaching with "the exuberant affection of a mother." There is immense power in tender sermons. Denunciation from the pulpit is never the best way of building up a church. Geologists assure us that the silent influence of the atmos-

phere is a mightier force than Nature's noisier powers. Hard words, like hailstones, will ruin the plants they would nourish if first coined into soft water drops. An ideal pastor will be much like the machine exhibited at the French Exposition that could crush an iron bar when that work was needed, or touch a delicate surface as a silken ribbon may pass over the shell of an egg. A wealthy Roman emperor was accustomed at his banquets to shower on his guests rich perfumes from silken awnings. So a model preacher will desire to rain on his congregation a continuous baptism of loving words. Soft music is the most charming and affectionate preaching is the most potent and winsome. Each Sunday sermon should illustrate the central thought of the English ballad "Love knocketh at the door." Each pulpit appeal should be like the scented breath of an alabaster lamp, filling the auditorium with fragrance and luminous beauty. With tender words, and features aglow with love, should a pastor deliver his messages telling men of actual ruin and possible rescue; of pardon for sin and available peace with God; of holiness of character and the heavenly blessedness.

Splendid reasoning, eloquent sentences and dazzling periods are less influential than intense earnestness in the sacred desk. A pastor, in the pulpit, should be thrilled with a magnificent spiritual ambition akin to the emotions of William Lloyd Garrison when he exclaimed in an oration: "I am in earnest; I will not equivocate; I will not retreat a single inch, and I will be heard." In the pulpit, the Sunday School, the Epworth League, the library, and in pastoral and revival work the true Methodist preacher will part from indolence and embrace enthusiasm. Charles Simeon was a wise young minister when he hung over his desk the picture of that model of clerical earnestness, Henry Martyn, and addressing it said: "Yes, Henry! I will be an earnest pastor, for souls are perishing about me and Christ must be glorified."

Sometimes heroic ministerial-fidelity will magnetize criticism and persecution. David was not pleased when Nathan looked him in the face and said, "Thou art the man." Ahab was not exultant when, with withering scorn, Elijah said to him, "Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." The Emperor Julian was indignant when Basil rivited his gaze on him and said, "You are the bond slave of Satan." Louis the Eleventh, of France, threatened his faithful chaplain Oliver Millard for his pulpit rebukes of royal immorality. But a tender, prudent, intrepid pastor, nailing his colors to the mast in his public criticism of the various vices of communities is a blessing to a congregation. No pastor should covet a loftier compliment than his licentious king paid to the brave and eloquent Massillon when he said, "Whenever I hear you

preach I become more dissatisfied with myself." Each of us may crave the epitaph Sir Henry Lawrence formulated for his own tomb: "Here lies a man who was not afraid to do his duty."

7. *He knows by personal visitation the people to whom he preaches.*

He who preaches with superior ability, but is a stranger to the home life of his hearers, is like a condor vainly struggling to secure a lofty atmosphere with a broken wing. He who visits with needless frequency but ignores the library and pays minor attention to intellectual pulpit preparation is like a wounded bird fluttering its plumage in the dust of the furrow. He who fairly divides his opportunities between methodical study and systematic visitation among his parishioners, is like the strong eagle waving both pinions with well adjusted power around the crown of a mountain where sunlight delights to linger. There is no better method of recreation for a minister than brief religious and social calls on the families of the church. Not a few successful preachers keep an exact record, in book form and on the tablet of memory, of the names of all the boys and girls in the residences of their regular auditors. It was Periander who formulated for a temple's arch the counsel, "Know thyself." It was John Wesley who said to his preachers, "Know God." The churches add, "Know your people." The chances of winning them to Christ will increase when we have mastered their acquaintance and won their love. A preacher may be as eloquent as Bossuet, as learned as Whateley and as earnest as Savonarola; but unless souls are saved under his ministry his life work will be much of a failure. Splendid work outside of the church edifice must supplement splendid work in the sacred desk. Pursuing such a ministry each of us is an heir to the divine pledge, "Lo I am with you always."

I am thrilled by sympathetic emotions as I look tonight on this great company. I am facing one of the greatest conferences of Methodism from the standpoints of numerical strength and ministerial heroism. Your ecclesiastical territory, located in a magnificent young state, presents many weak churches and difficult fields for clerical labor. On skeleton salaries not a few of you have toiled with a sublime intrepidity. When your kind-hearted and accomplished Bishop shall, on Tuesday next, officially announce your appointments it will require divine grace, human nerve, and majestic faith in the superintending providence of God on the part of scores of pastors, now present, to restrain tears as they think of the future environment of their families and themselves. Men of Spartan build, men of dauntless bravery are hearing this address. I have a superlative admiration for your clerical mettle and only wish it were in my power to make the ministerial future of each one of cloudless beauty and financial independence. Some of you have already become familiar with the significance of such terms as



loneliness, hard work, domestic obscurity and educational disadvantages. Others of you will now stand face to face with humble compensation, pastoral humiliation and the opposition of those whom Paul called in his prayer, "unreasonable men." Permit me to cheer you on by pointing you to an example of clerical labors, sufferings, self sacrifice, persecution and bravery that stands in grand solitude in the annals of Christian history.

I stood, on a summer Sunday in an immense and costly church three miles south of Rome. Its celebrated pillars of porphyry and its three famous fountains, mark the reputed spot where this ideal preacher won immortal martyrdom. See! He has been for more than three decades a devoted Ambassador for Christ. In intellectual ability he is massive, in moral heroism matchless, in spirituality of consecration complete and in restless toil an example. He has long confronted immense and varied perils, endured many forms of suffering, occupied for five years prison cells, faced angry mobs and cruel magistrates, crossed seas in primitive ships and tramped afoot, without salary or home, many heathen provinces preaching the gospel and organizing churches. He is sixty-five years of age and hears rumors of his approaching execution. In his prison, now supposed to be covered by the dome of the octagonal church of Saint Mary of the Heaven, he dips his stylus into his inkhorn and writes to a young preacher these words: "For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only but unto all them that love His appearing."

Nero, young, sensual, and a monster of iniquity is on the throne. Tacitus, Suetonius, Merivale, Schiller, and Lehmann have told the tragic story of his life. In his veins flows the blood of the last imperial representative of Augustus Cæsar. His brutal mother, Agrippina, has had Messalina slain that her selfish and high-tempered son may wear the emperor's crown. She has had the philosopher, Seneca, train him for his kingly career. Through her influence many of the distinguished friends of his rival Britannicus have been slain or exiled. He has married Octavia, the graceful daughter of Claudius, the Roman monarch. Agrippina has slain Claudius by poison that Nero may immediately wear the imperial diadem. Invested with the emperor's honors and prerogatives he ruins the beautiful Acte. He has Britannicus poisoned at a banquet. He imprisons his wife Octavia. He becomes infatuated with his guilty, accomplished, wealthy and high-born mistress Poppœa Sabina, wife of his friend Otho, who resolves to wear the crown of the empress. To please her he murders his own mother. He assassinates men like Cornelius Sulla, Sabellius, Plautus, Piso, Rufus, Lucan and his teacher Seneca. He banishes and assassinates his wife Octavia. He kicks to death Poppœa Sabina

to marry Antonia. He poisons the lovely Antonia for refusing to be his bride. In his vast "Golden Palace" he piles crime on crime. He burns a great part of Rome and orders the massacre of Christians as the incendiaries. The senate condemns him to death for his crimes, and proclaims Galba emperor. As soldiers approach him for his arrest he commits suicide, but in his final year as monarch he has signed the death warrant of the greatest preacher who has lived since the ascension of Christ.

Farewell Paul! Thou art a great scholar, author, orator and martyr. When the name of Nero is imperishably surrounded by infamous memories thine shall sparkle with deathless glory. Thy influence shall be impressed on all of the Christian centuries as conspicuously as the wisdom and power of God blaze from the starry constellations. No traveller shall ever trace all of thy apostolical footprints. No historian's pen will ever detail all of thy sufferings. Heaven's "Book of Life" shall be the one volume enrolling thy converts. Eloquent eulogies on thy character and work shall be pronounced from tens of thousands of pulpits to the end of time; but none can surpass thy merits as minister and man. No correspondence of historical celebrity shall measure up, in influence and immortality, to thy fourteen canonical letters. Thy beautiful picture of the universal resurrection of the dead shall transfigure cemeteries into gardens of hope and transform mortuary statuary into the world's models of art. No biography of thy fearless ministry shall ever tell us who stood, in tears, by thy side when the axe of Nero fell on thy neck; nor shall we know who gave thee honorable burial or where is located thy grave under Italian skies. Among the sublime last utterances of the world's most illustrious heroes, thy dying words will never be treasured. But thy great life of saintliness and suffering, toil and bravery, shall be a stimulus to the christian ministry until the angel of the apocalypse shall usher in the deathless life. And here, at Parkersburg, in conference session assembled, we, the preachers of a strong and brave Methodist organization, pledge ourselves to an enlarged effort to incorporate into our own careers some of the virtues that shone so resplendently in thy successful ministry. Our prayer shall be,

"O may we triumph so  
When all our warfare's past,  
And dying, find our latest foe  
Under our feet at last."



