



## A Minister and His Flock

*Mark Jones*

In my mind, the only person fully equipped to be a mega-church pastor is Christ, who knows all of his sheep by name. He alone, by his Spirit, can minister to each of his sheep. He alone, by his Spirit, can meet the spiritual needs of all his flock (John 14:16-17).

In connection with that, Jesus has also delegated ministerial authority to his under-shepherds, so that we might be able to know all of our sheep and meet their spiritual needs. Christ's abilities are not limited, but ours are. We need to remember that.

This leads me to several observations.

First, the people I love preaching to the most are my people. We have a bond of love that exceeds what is possible with any other group of Christians that I might preach to. (By the way, I love hearing someone say their favourite preacher is their pastor.)

Second, because I know my people – many of them quite well – I can preach to them unlike anyone else can. A minister needs to prove himself over years so that he can speak a strong word to his people, with credibility. God's people should know that everything said from the pulpit must not only be faithful to God's word, but must spring from a heart of love – a love that often comforts

(2 Corinthians 1), but sometimes stings (Revelation 3:19).

This, I think, helps a minister a great deal because when he makes a mistake, his people are far more willing to forgive him (1 Peter 4:8) because they love him and he loves them.

Third, a minister's godliness or lack thereof has a direct effect on the ability of his people to listen (1 Peter 5:1-4). As Calvin said: "It is not enough if he frame his life to all that is good and commendable, and guard against giving a bad example, if he do not likewise add to a holy life continual diligence in teaching; *and, on the other hand, doctrine will be of little avail, if there be not a corresponding goodness and holiness of life.*"

"A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of God." – Robert Murray M'Cheyne.

Fourth, the minister should aim to get to the place where he would rather die than get up and tell his people he is leaving them. Of course, sometimes there are good and right reasons for a minister to move on. But I'm

talking about the desire to be so invested in your sheep that the very idea of leaving them causes a great deal of emotional distress. Like Christ, we should be prepared to lay

down our lives for the sheep (Jn. 10:11), not jump at the first "better" opportunity that comes our way.

It is no small blessing from God (to the pastor and his sheep) when a pastor turns down opportunities elsewhere because he can't bear to leave his flock.

Finally, as William Still said in his excellent work, "The Work of the Pastor":

*God has caused you to become pastor to some souls here who are as valuable to Him as any in the world – your quiet persistence will be a sign that you believe God has a purpose of grace for this people, and that this purpose of grace will be promoted, not*

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*by gimmicks, or stunts, or new ideas, but by the Word of God released in preaching by prayer.*

The thought that we are pastoring souls who are “as valuable to God” and Christ as “any in the world” should indeed cause us to persist (1 Timothy 4:16), not only when times are good but in the difficult times, too. Just as love for Christ causes us to persevere during hardship, love for Christ's sheep will cause us to persevere with them when they (surprise, surprise) act like sheep.

This type of relationship, I'm afraid, is not as common as it should be. If you have such a relationship with your flock or with your pastor, remember to thank God for such an indescribable spiritual blessing.



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