

Conference Subjects

In 1979, when I began Bible college, I started gathering conference sermons from the many great church building conferences. I have attended week-long conferences or Monday through Tuesday conferences scattered all across America. The subject of the preaching was consistent.

The preaching was on the Holy Spirit's power, preaching itself, purity and holiness, soul winning, Bible study, and separation from the world. The sermons all challenged one to do something big for God, to set goals, to attempt great things for God, and to fast and pray.

It amazes me to see the changes in subject matter in conferences and magazines for pastors today. Everything seems geared around handling stress, handling depression, management skills, and adapting to the culture or the new days in which we live. Conferences are teaching pastors how to be a CEO rather than to be a man of God.

It is no wonder that men are struggling with anxiety and depression, being overwhelmed, or facing struggles with management skills. One well-known preacher said at his conference that he would be better off with an MBA from Harvard than a BA from Bible college. That is a serious explanation for why pastors are facing so much unmanageable pressure.

We need the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7); we need the "perfect peace" that is obtained by keeping our minds on God (Isaiah 26:3). Pastors need to renew their strength by waiting on the Lord (Isaiah 40:31).

The direction that so-called leaders are bringing young pastors is not good and neither will the direction preserve the church from extinction like the old-time Gospel will. Just as President Trump is stirring up the leaders in the political swamp, a great deal of swamp draining needs to be done in the ministry as well; ministry "swamp dwellers," too, will throw a fit before they lose their positions of influence.

In our world, pressure is real. No matter which career or culture, life is hard and pressures will weigh on every one of us. Psychology will not bring perfect peace, and counseling will not produce rest. Scheduling and organizational skills cannot achieve a spiritual work. Men of God need God. The people of God need God. All the rest is fine, but preaching brings with it the power of God. Holy Spirit fullness empowers one to do superhuman deeds. Soul winning and investing time in people will bring us near to Christ and secure rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28-29). All the depression and anxiety could be related to the sorry work ethic we have in our nation. Too many are trying to achieve much with little investment. If you do not want to work, you will not be able to make an impact in the ministry. But most of our struggles are a lack of spiritual power; prayer, preaching, soul winning, and Bible will drain the anxiety right out of us.

Psalms 34:17 "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles."

vs. 18 "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

vs. 19 "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all."

Trouble will come, but if it drives us nearer to the Lord, it will bring rest and peace. If trouble drives us to the rely on the flesh, read books by CEO's, and attend management seminars, we are sure to end up with anxiety attacks. Remember the old-time spiritual song, "Where Could I Go But to the Lord?" We would do well to remember the One we truly need.

Pastor Goddard