

True Gospel Work

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This article reviews a topic of great importance to God's people who stand in ever-increasing danger of being deceived by the master counterfeiter. After six thousand years of experience, his skill is developed to the finest pitch. It is therefore essential that we know and find refuge in the counsels given in the Scriptures.

Satan knows that we need many more workers in the field. He seeks to take advantage of this by urging forward those who do not have the divine calling. He knows the tendency to accept without close investigation, and also the dire consequences to God's work by so doing. So he works quite hard at this plan.

Despite the many clear warnings in the Spirit of Prophecy that men would arise who would appear to have the power of God upon them but were in reality working for the enemy, the Adventist people accepted men like D.L. Moody as being called of God. This led them to believe that God could bless a message in which the special truths for this time are not important. In turn they began to drop out these great truths themselves and to enter into fellowship with these bodies who had no respect for the only truths through which God can finish the work.

We cannot afford to make the same mistakes in regard to any persons either without or within our ranks. We have been through some experiences in our own past history which likewise must never be forgotten. To do so will incur terrible loss and delays.

IN the *1893 General Conference Bulletin*, the program listed on page one, promises that J. H. Kellogg would give six studies in the forenoons on medical missionary work. My interest on this subject being much enlivened of late, I desired to read what he had to say. But, to my disappointment, I found no such discourses printed anywhere in the *Bulletin*. A check through the index revealed that there was only one talk given on this topic, but it was given by a different speaker, Elder W. H. Wakeman, and is recorded on pages 286-287.

So I read it and found it to be generally a sound statement. However, there was one section of it which arrested my attention, caused me considerable concern and prompted the sharing with you of these warning thoughts. Here is that portion:

Matthew 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." The work of the gospel is not only salvation from sin, but from the effects of sin. Any work which results in removing the effects of sin is a gospel work. Sin is the cause of all sickness and its resultant sorrows, and any agency which relieves the sick, and comforts the sorrowing is a gospel work, and those engaged in it are gospel workers.

What now follows will be an examination of these words, not an examination of Elder Wakeman. While we know what he said, we do not know exactly what he meant by those expressions. He is no longer available for questioning, so it would be unfair on our part to judge him by what the words say to us, when he has no opportunity to explain himself in more detail.

What is True Gospel Work?

Therefore, I shall consider the dangerous implications of this statement from the point of view of what it actually says to me. If others read the words differently, then they must make their evaluations accordingly.

There are in the extract some declarations which are obviously true.

1. It is the truth that the work of the gospel is not only salvation from sin, but also from the effects of sin.
2. It is also true that sin is the cause of all sickness and its resultant sorrows, and we do not challenge the assertion that the gospel removes the effects of sin and comforts the sorrowing.

But it is too much to say that everything which relieves the sick and comforts the sorrowing is gospel work, and that those who do it are gospel workers. This is too broad and loose a generalization completely ignoring other qualifying considerations.

The fallacy of this kind of reasoning can be shown very simply. Here is an example:

- Italians eat macaroni.
- He eats macaroni.
 - Therefore, he is an Italian.

Compare this with the reasoning in the statement under consideration. Simply stated, it is as follows:

- Gospel workers relieve the sick and comfort the sorrowing.
- John Brown relieves the sick and comforts the sorrowing.
 - Therefore, he is a gospel worker.

The first argument overlooks the point that there are other people besides Italians who eat macaroni, so that anybody found eating it is not thereby proved to be an Italian. You could just as well be Greek, German, or American, for these people also eat macaroni.

Likewise, the second argument makes no allowance for the fact that others besides gospel workers relieve the sick and comfort the sorrowing. Therefore, just as all who eat macaroni are not Italians, so not all who relieve the sick and comfort the sorrowing are gospel workers.

A Counterfeit

The devil of course would like to have us think they are. He has skilfully prepared his deceptions so that the minds of God's children will be led to accept his work as being the work of God. He is a master counterfeiter, none being so capable as he at making the false appear to be true.

The Scriptures foretell that in these last days in particular...

Revelation 13

¹³ ...he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

¹⁴ And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do...

The Great Controversy, p. 553:

No mere impostures are here foretold. Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan's agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do.

The Great Controversy, p. 624:

They will perform wonderful miracles of healing...

Those who are the recipients of Satan's miracle working power will certainly obtain great relief from their pain and suffering, although they will not be cured in the sense of the actual effects of sin being removed. Only God has the power to restore the wasted body and to put actual life where there is death. But it will appear that they have been healed in the true sense of the word for the sufferers will experience great relief from their pain and will be comforted in their sorrow.

Satan's work is certainly not gospel work and he is no gospel worker. He is at war with Christ and seeks every possi-

ble occasion to destroy God's kingdom. Therefore, the fact that he relieves the sick and comforts the sorrowing is not proof that his is a gospel work.

Drug Healers

But this is not the only situation where the sick are being relieved and comforted. The modern medical practitioner who understands the use of drugs, is able to abate pain, thus convincing the patient, to his immense relief from physical and mental anxiety, that he has been cured. Marvelous achievements have been effected by modern medical science which looks forward with glowing confidence to even greater victories.

Long ago, we turned away from this field of healing, knowing that the use of drugs is not of the divine order. It is not a gospel work and those who practice these methods are not gospel workers. Yet, these men do provide relief from the effects of sickness, and do give comfort to the sorrowing.

Natural Healers

When we turned away from the drug practitioners, we placed our confidence in the naturopaths because they do not use the potions prescribed by the doctors. But now our understanding has been advanced by our divine teacher to see that even these are not true gospel workers. They have the appearance of being such but there is the serious problem of their making God to be only the aid to the natural treatments.

Yet, they assuredly have the knowledge and skill to bring great relief to sufferers. Consider the case of one woman who had been afflicted with serious back trouble for years. Attendance on various doctors had not brought relief. Finally, someone told her about the then relatively new science of chiropractic treatment. She determined to try this and visited the clinic. Her entry was painful, crippled, and slow, but when she

arose from that one treatment, she strode out unable to believe the relief she had experienced. Loudly and widely, she voiced her praise of this man and his methods.

However, the relief was not permanent. She found it necessary to return again and again. Now, over twenty years later, she still has difficulty. This healing science was not able to bring true restoration, but provided only a modified improvement of the life already existing.

It is not to be construed from this that no naturopath is a true gospel worker. A true medical missionary will be a naturopath although he will not call himself that. If a man who practices natural healing does so according to the principles laid down in the Word of God, and if he does it as a commission given him personally from God, then he is a true gospel worker.

Such alone are the people to whom we, as God's people, should go with our physical problems and such alone should receive our support as workers for God. It is most important, then, that we be able to accurately identify those who are true medical missionaries from those who are not.

Close the Door

The true medical missionary is a true gospel worker and is therefore also a minister of the gospel. But to be such, he must meet certain specifications very clearly laid down in the Word of God. Failure to test those who, by any means whatsoever, claim to be gospel workers by these standards, exposes the church to very serious danger. Therefore, the Scriptures impose on the believers a heavy responsibility which cannot be moved to anyone else. There is a door to be kept closed through which the enemy will enter if a careful guard is not set.

Early Writings, p. 100:

Again the danger of those traveling whom God has not called, was shown me. If they do have some success, the qualifications that are lacking will be felt. Injudicious moves will be made, and by a lack of wisdom some precious souls may be driven where they can never be reached.

I saw that the church should feel their responsibility, and should look carefully and attentively at the lives, qualifications, and general course of those who profess to be teachers. If unmistakable evidence is not given that God has called them, and that the “woe” is upon them if they heed not this call, it is the duty of the church to act, and let it be known that these persons are not acknowledged as teachers by the church. This is the only course the church can take in order to be clear in this matter, for the burden lies upon them.

I saw that this door at which the enemy comes in to perplex and trouble the flock can be shut. I inquired of the angel how it could be closed. He said, “The church must flee to God’s word, and become established upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and neglected.” This is indispensably necessary in order to bring the church into the unity of the faith.

In the early days of the Advent Movement, the church went through some periods of difficulty because of a tendency to look upon anyone who could preach pleasing sermons as being a gospel worker. Elder Wakeman appears to be expressing the same rather superficial and therefore dangerous thinking as late as 1893 despite the clear warning given in *Early Writings*. Even later, in 1909, the problem was still with them, requiring a further testimony of warning to the church. This reads in part as follows:

The Review and Herald, May 6, 1909:

Because some can readily pray and exhort, and seem to have a knowledge of the theory of the truth for this time, it has been taken for granted that these were called by God to the work of the ministry. But these are no special evidences that one has been chosen by God to teach the truth.

Men may be able to pray and to preach fluently, they may have a theoretical knowledge of truth, but unless their hearts have been sanctified through obedience to the principles of the truth, they can not exert a saving influence or build up souls in the faith.

I was shown two classes of men. One class thought themselves competent for the work of the gospel field, and were urging themselves forward in it; but their lives did not reveal a growing Christianity. They had not a high sense of the sacredness of eternal things, and in their lives there were no special marks of devotion. They did not reveal a depth of experience in the things of God.

Then I was shown another class whom God was preparing to labor for the salvation of souls. What a contrast there was between this and the first company! These were unassuming men. They did not seek to bring themselves into notice, or to exalt self, but they exalted Christ. By their modest deportment they adorned the truth they professed. They possessed refinement, good judgment, sound minds. They had elevated ideas of sacred things, and a high sense of the sacredness of the work. The language of their heart was, Who is sufficient for these things?

When, in this movement, we entered initially upon the work given us to do, we had no clear idea of these principles. The result was that we did not know how to cope with problems of this nature, leaving us exposed to evil influences which provided some very troubled periods in our history.

Today, we have no such excuse, for the Lord has given abundant information and guidance in the whole area of gospel order. If we do not learn these lessons, then we will be no better than the church from which we have been separated and, like them, will suffer the terrible confusions resulting from a failure to heed the clear instructions given.

There are quite a number of folk who have joined our ranks since these lessons were learned and it would be well to spell out again some of the guidelines for knowing who is

called of God and who is not.

Applying the Test

There is a tremendous need for workers in the cause today. There is a vast field of service to be filled, covering every nation on the face of the earth. How often I have longed and prayed for more men to be called of God to extend the frontiers of truth. I know too, that believers around the world personally feel the need as well.

There is the danger that instead of being content to wait till the Lord has prepared and called a worker, we will start to look about for one. Or, we may wait patiently until someone emerges who can pray and exhort, and then, with something of the drowning-man-clutching-the-straw reaction, be too eager to rush this man into wider responsibilities.

Then, when I, for instance, do not go along with the plan because I can plainly see that the Lord is not in it, there is the tendency to assume that a spirit is being manifested of self-protectionism. This latter could not be further from the truth, for there is no one who longs to see additional workers more than myself.

But, I also am fully aware of what the results will be from a worker who does not have the divine calling. Better to have no workers than to have one who is self-sent, for these “are a curse to the cause.” *Early Writings*, p. 99.

It is not that the person involved is a bad person basically. On the contrary, he can be most earnest and sincere and often also very capable. He knows the promises of God and longs to see the work finished, but; like Abraham and Sarah, and Rebecca and Jacob, he has not learned the principle that no one is to go forth to do a work for God, but only to remain under God’s personal direction so that He can do His work through them. No greater disservice can be done, nor worse tempta-

tion placed upon him, than to invite him to take up a work to which the Lord has not called him. More than one good soul has been irretrievably ruined by such a course.

A careful review of the lessons God has taught us is now a timely provision to guard against this problem reasserting itself amongst us. These points will be considered step by step. It is all a simple matter of being acquainted with the instructions in the Scriptures and then of applying them as directed. It is the opposite from making decisions on the basis of personal feeling or vested interest. Here are the divinely appointed guidelines:

A Well-Ordered Household

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy outlining to him the tests. Among other things, the one to be recognized by the church and worthy of support must have a household, the unity and peace of which reflects his possession of the character, spirit, and wisdom of God. He is to be:

1 Timothy 3

⁴ One that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

⁵ (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

This, of all the tests in this chapter, is the one most commented on in the Spirit of Prophecy. All true medical missionary work begins in the home. If any person who aspires to be a true gospel worker, is unsuccessful as a missionary in his own home so that it is marred by dissension, division, absence of mutual respect, and kindred problems, then that man certainly will not be successful in building up the family of God in the church.

This stipulation is final. When it is found that the aspirant fails on this count then there is no need to look any farther.

The matter is already settled. Never have I found this to fail for, in every single instance where a person was given a work to do while behind him was a family situation with which he was quite unable to cope, he proved to be a sad failure. Of course, he might be an impressive worker, devotedly doing all he can to promote the message and even making considerable sacrifices for the cause, but nothing of this is to influence the application of this test. God has laid it down. We apply it.

The Sabbath day in particular should be a season of happiness and family unity, not one which, as so often the case, is the worst of all the seven for family wrangling.

There is a reason for God's selection of this test. It is simply that the work in the home is a microcosm of the larger work outside it. The same problems, needs, and objectives to be found, supplied, and achieved in the first, are encountered in the second. Of the two, the former is the lesser, so that the possibilities of success in this sphere are greater than in the larger and more complex arena of the church. Therefore, it is a foregone conclusion that failure in the lesser will assure even greater failure in the larger.

There are those who may appear to have a well ordered household, but whose homes are in fact so dominated by the iron will of the parent that obedience is enforced by sheer power of the will. The man who rules his house in this way, will practice the same methods in the church as well. Beware of such, for his procedures are a denial of the character and ways of God.

No man shows his character so fully and clearly as when he is in his own home. It is shown by what he is there, what he will be like in the work as well. Therefore, if a man does not meet this test, then, in kindness to himself and to the work of God, he should be gently advised to seek employment elsewhere. Because of his failure, he is not to be adjudged an

evil man, but rather recognized as a beloved brother who is not able to match with results the desires of his heart.

The Seed Principle

It is never God's way to begin with a full grown tree. There is not a single living organism in existence today that did not begin with a seed. Likewise, every movement which the Lord ever called into being began in this way. Into the mind of Luther, God put first of all a single thought. It was so small and insignificant, but it had in it the power of growth. It developed until it become a mighty force capable of moving the world as it then was.

When the Lord plans a work for an individual, He will start him as a seed. Firstly comes long years of preparation until God, not man, deems him ready to begin. But, the Lord will not give him a large amount of money, nor a strong work already established. He will bring him into contact with a needy soul whose sickness calls for relief. With a sense of inadequacy, the man called of God will undertake to minister to the sick, depending upon God for the wisdom necessary to do it.

He will not recognize this as a beginning to a larger work. There was a need. God called him to fill it and by faith he did. Soon, his faithfulness and humility will be rewarded with further opportunities and successes. Larger and larger the work will grow until he finds that he cannot do it and at the same time work for a living. It is at this point that God will direct the church—not just a stray individual in it here and there—to recognize His call on this individual and to come to his help by supporting him in his work.

This means that such a person will already be a proven soul winner before the question ever arises in regard to full-time service supported by tithe. No one is ever to be taken on as a gospel worker in the hope that he will turn out to be a

successful soul winner. This is true whether we are talking in terms of a preacher or a medical missionary, the specific responsibility of both of whom is to win souls for the kingdom.

Apt to Teach

Paul specifies this in *1 Timothy* 3:2. Just as certainly as the preacher is not the savior, so surely is the physician not a healer. The word which best sums up the role of each is that of teacher. In *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 125-136, is a chapter entitled "The Physician an Educator."

This is the work of the gospel worker. He is to teach people about Jesus and His saving power. Even when the medical missionary is administering treatments as aids to the Great Physician, his task is that of a teacher.

The question of whether a person is apt to teach or not, is measured by how well he emulates the style of Christ. If he presents himself as an authority on the matter so that he expects to be believed and obeyed, then certainly he is not of Christ. The Saviour ever presented the truth as a loving servant, who in no way whatsoever, uplifted Himself. Always, He faithfully upheld the glory of the character of His loving Father who had sent Him into the world for this purpose. So the true gospel worker will never seek his own glory but the honor of His Saviour and Everlasting Father.

In order to come up to this specification, the prospective worker must be able to do much more than merely preach effectively or demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the Scriptures. He must be what he teaches, for nothing short of this will give his teaching power. In speaking of the teaching power of Christ it is written:

Education, p. 78-79:

And more than this; what He taught, He was. His words were the expression, not only of His own life experience, but

of His own character. Not only did He teach the truth, but He was the truth. It was this that gave His teaching, power.

Aptness to teach then, involves much more than the skill to import information. It requires that the living power of truth be so dominant in the life that a veritable stream of truth will flow from the worker to the needy one.

A Large Sense of Inadequacy

In *The Review and Herald* statement quoted above, a distinction was made between the two classes of workers. Those who were called of men, urged themselves forward because they regarded themselves as competent for the work. The other class were unassuming men who looked upon the sacredness of the work as being too great for them, for the language of their hearts is: "Who is sufficient for these things?"

This distinction provides us with another very reliable test. Any man whom God calls to His service will be most reluctant to join it. He will have clear views of the magnitude and sacredness of the work and will not be able to see himself as qualified for it. Only after a terrible struggle with the Spirit of God will he finally step out with trembling and fearfulness to undertake the appointed ministry. Fine examples of this are seen in the lives of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Moses, and William Miller.

Therefore, the moment a person is found arguing for a place in the work, or in any way giving an indication, even in silent, waiting anxiety, that he believes himself fitted for service, be sure that this man is not being called of God. Do not give him your support. To do so is to bring hurt both upon the man himself and the people to whom he will minister. This is an absolutely infallible test.

Other Requirements

Still other requirements are laid out in the Scriptures as

guides to the people of God. There is not the space in this short article to cover them all. The ones discussed so far are the key ones and it is usual that if a person can meet these, then there will be no problem with the remainder.

It would be a wonderful thing if people would examine themselves in the light of these principles and, when they find that they do not measure up to the specifications which God has laid down, would take a strong stand resisting any invitations which may be given to them by others, to stand out as a medical missionary or a preacher.

Sad to say, it does not work that way. The ones least called are the ones who are most anxious to push themselves forward. They seek out those whom they think will sympathize with their cause in an effort to attract as much support as possible. Those who carefully match the instructions in the Scriptures with the case, tend to be judged by these types as being selfishly motivated, because they represent a barrier to their ambitions. In this they are wholly mistaken. The warning is, beware of those who come to you and, in a subtle manner, seek to win your sympathy and support for their cause.

The fact is that not all that relieves the sick and comforts the sorrowing is gospel work, nor is everyone who does such work a gospel worker. The Lord expects us to make very careful tests of such prospective workers to see if they are truly called of God. This is a work which he will not do for us. He has said out the specification and given us the measuring lines. He has said that only those who measure up to this are called of Him.

Only we can close the door by which the enemy may enter to destroy the flock. Let us unite to see that it is done with accuracy and faithfulness.