

Christian are not "works of the Law", but "fruits of the Spirit."
(F. C. Epit.; VI 5.6) "The works which are done according to the Law are, and are called, works of the Law as long as they are only extorted from man by urging the punishment and threatening of God's wrath. Fruits of the Spirit, however, are the works which the Spirit of God, who dwells in believers, works through the regenerate and which are done by believers so far as they are regenerate (Spontaneously and freely), as though they knew of no command, threat, or reward; Scripture clearly teaches that all good works of the regenerate flow from a willing spirit, or from love toward God." That spirit is pictured for us in Ps. 110:3 where we read, "Your army will volunteer on the day of your conquest: In beautiful holy garments, your youth will be like dew from the womb of the dawn." Ps. 54:1-6 shows us how God's love and blessing turn that willing spirit on. "Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul:....Behold, God is mine helper: The Lord is with them that uphold my soul. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: Cut them off in thy truth. I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O Lord; for it is good." In Romans 7:22, the Christian declares, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Ps. 119:32 pictures the Christian, his heart fattened by the love of God, as he joyfully, spontaneously declares, "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart;" No special command, threat or promise of reward are needed / once the heart has been fattened by the Grace and love of God.

Let us also realize that every work which does not flow, spontaneously and joyfully from love toward God is a transgression of God's Law: for "love is the fulfilling of the Law," Romans 13:8-10. Luther points us to the true source from which all obedience to the Law must flow when he begins the explanations of the Ten Commandments with the Words: "We should fear and love God."

There is a fundamental difference between a merely moral life and a truly Christian life. There may be little, if any, difference in outward appearance, but there is in the underlying motives and principles. Whatever may be the motives of a moral life, the principle of a Christian life and character is, as Paul expresses it, faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal. 2:20); and this faith

is a faith "which worketh by love" Gal. 5:6. The moral man is honest perhaps because he believes that honesty is the best policy. The Christian is honest for the Lord's sake, because, loving God, he would not do anything that might displease Him. Love constrains him to exclaim! "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God"? Gen. 39:9.

It is the motive behind the deed that determines its ethical value. The correct motive, yes, only motive of the truly Christian life is faith in Christ and love of God.

To create this attitude in the heart of our people, let us teach them the love of God in Christ Jesus, as it is revealed to us in the Gospel. Thereby the Holy Spirit works in their soul a sincere appreciation of God's Grace and love. This love of God kindles love toward God in the hearts of our members (I John 4:19) and spontaneously, joyfully, they lead a God-pleasing life. They will not want to offend or grieve Him with sins, but will be anxious to consecrate their lives to His service. To motivate in any other way is moralizing and must be avoided.

In view of these facts of God's Holy Word, I believe we can agree on this as a theological definition of moralizing which we want to avoid in our ministry: "Moralizing is all preaching, teaching and dealing in any way with God's children, which calls forth the Christian life or seeks to develop it by any force, other than the motivation of love, created in the heart by the Gospel". Such preaching, teaching and dealing which seeks to attain these results in any other way than by means of the Gospel, we wish to avoid in our ministry. Moralizing by another name may be called a form of legalism. It is a mixing of Law and Gospel.

HOW TO AVOID MORALIZING - SOME SCRIPTURAL INCENTIVES

To begin with, let us at all times be clear on what Scripture points out is our duty and calling as ministers.

In II Tim. 4:5 Paul places the work and calling before his understud in these three simple words - "Ergon Poieson evangelistou." He simply says, do the work of a messenger who brings good news. Be a 'good news man.' All of our work is to be done in the framework of the 'good news.' In Mark 16:15 our risen Savior outlined the work and calling of His ministers in three similar works - "Keruxate to evangelion." Like trumpeters, sound off, blast off, the good news.

Let us remember that we are not to be the authors of this good news. He furnishes the message. We are not to change it in any way. We are not to doctor it up by adding to it, or taking anything away from it. Here is where we would begin to moralize when we would alter this message in any way to make it more palatable because of something we have added to it or omitted from it.

To keep us on our guard and encourage us to avoid moralizing in our ministry let us remember that Jesus Himself has linked our ministry indissolubly to His own. He reminded His disciples, and He reminds us, (Luke 10:16) "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." Paul reminded the Corinthians that he considered his ministry to be an extension of Christ's. He wrote "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:2-21). It will give us great help to avoid moralizing in our ministry if at all times it remains clear in our minds that Christ is the Prophet. Through His perfect obedience and His innocent suffering and death as man's substitute He established the Gospel of reconciliation. Now He continues to proclaim it through His ministry to which we are called. Do you hear His words ringing in your ears? 'as my Father sent me, even so send I you.' Then let us go with the message with which He has provided us and 'blast off'. Jesus never moralized, He never changed God's Word during His ministry, ours is the extension of that ministry, let us strive to follow His example.

It will help us to avoid moralizing in our ministry as we 'blast off' to 'good news' if we remember that we are not responsible for producing the results. We don't make the Gospel acceptable to men. We are not the ones who must supply the power to that message. In the second chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians the Lord holds the apostle Paul up before our eyes as one who remembered this so well. He tells the Corinthians, v1-5 "When I came to you, fellow Christians, I didn't come to tell you God's truth with any extra fine speech or wisdom. While I was with you, I was determined to know only Jesus Christ and Him nailed to a cross. I came to you weak and afraid and with much

trembling. When I spoke and preached, I didn't use clever talk to persuade you, but I let the Spirit and His power prove the truth to you so that your faith will not depend on men's wisdom but on God's power." In His own time and His own way the Holy Spirit will produce the desired results. All that God requires of us is that we faithfully continue to 'blast off'. He will take care of producing the results He desires from our message.

Sometimes when we hear of all of the programs outlined for us in stewardship and evangelism etc., and read the statistics and projected goals that are held before us to achieve in the many reports which come to us from our various offices showing the success, and don't forget, also, showing the lack of success, we may begin to judge our ministry on that basis, or feel we are being judged accordingly. We may feel the press upon us which Paul felt coming from the Corinthians, where so many were inclined to rank the human element too highly, and feel we must alter or embellish our message or procedure with strange oratory or wisdom of our own. May we always remain true to our Lord and to ourselves. Let us dare to risk failure or meager results if such are the Spirit's will rather than resort to moralizing to produce outward results.

TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE TO WORK WITH - HEATHEN AND CHRISTIAN

As ministers we are to preach the Gospel, the whole counsel of God, to the unregenerate that through this testimony the Holy Spirit may bring sinners to faith in Christ Jesus and save them. With our preaching we are not seeking to reform sinners to merely lead chaste and decent outward lives, but to convert them from death to life, turn them from unbelief to saving faith. We will want to look back at our work and say as Paul did, Eph. 2:5 "Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ," and as Peter stated it, I Peter 2:25 "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

This can be accomplished only by proclaiming the whole counsel of God, holding before the unregenerate the Law in all its severity, as a mirror, not letting the sinner feel that it gets him even one half inch out of the grips of hell and closer to heaven. Then, when in despair, humbled, and crushed before a holy and righteous God, we must 'blast off' with the sweetest music this side of heaven, the

good news without any strings or conditions attached.

Accordingly we will lay bare the heavenly Father's loving heart before the desperate sinner. We will show how He shed the blood of His only begotten Son as a ransom for the fallen race of men. Show how "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Show how God poured out the vials of His wrath, not upon us who have deserved it, but upon Him "who knew no sin" and in this manner satisfied His righteousness through the shedding of the blood of Jesus. Through His atoning death He reconciled the whole world of lost sinners unto Himself. God above whom there is no other judge, from whose verdict there is no appeal, pronounced the innocent Christ guilty and the sinridden world He pronounced righteous. "If that God be for us who can be against us?" Rom. 8:31. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." 33.34. Show him how "God commandeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Amen! Romans 5:8-10. The full and unconditioned Gospel of the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, as we have just heard, must follow the preachment of the law.

Would you like to do a little moralizing here? Are you anxious to see the results this little homily will produce? Do you want to make sure that the Holy Spirit's timetable coincides with yours?

Moralize! Wax Billy Graham! Add after the Amen, "All you have to do now is believe." After a moment of silence continue with the clincher question, "Do you believe?" See what I mean? You have just told a lie. You conditioned the Gospel with your statement. You have tried to force results with your question. You put the poor sinner on the spot. Maybe out of shame, or to avoid slighting you who have gone to all this bother he will answer, "Yes, I believe." You have taken away from the complete Gospel of Christ and added something the sinner must and can do.

Would you like to keep yourself evangelical, avoid moralizing, and let the results rest in the hands of the Holy Spirit as John the Baptizer did? We are told that "John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and

saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Nothing happened! "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." John 1:29-35-37. John did not make them hear. The Holy Spirit opened their ears. John patiently waited till then.

If we would avoid moralizing let us learn to preach faith into a person's heart by laying the Gospel promises unconditionally before him. We are moralizing when after this we make an appeal to believe in a manner as if a person can make himself believe, or, at least help toward that end if only by not offering any resistance.

As ministers we are to preach the Gospel, the whole counsel of God, also to those who have already come to faith. They are to be strengthened and furthered in their Christian faith, joy, comfort, understanding, love, life of sanctification, and hope.

To avoid moralizing to them let us learn to recognize these people for what they are. They are God's sons and daughters. "They are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:26. They are all a free people. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father, " Romans 8:15. God wants us to know that they are not ordinary, they are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, the people of God," I Peter 2:9-10. Let us always treat them as God's children; not make slaves of them; hold them in highest respect.

Let us be aware of the fact that when Peter encourages these people of God to whom we are privileged to minister, "As newborn babes to desire the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby:" I Peter 2:2, he is alerting us that that Word, which we feed to them is to be (Sine-cere) without the wax of moralizing. My farm background lets me appreciate this picture of the pastor and people relationship in a very special way. Here is a newborn lamb, hungry, bleating for food. The ewe, through whom God has given him life, searches out her lamb. Her udder is dripping, squirting out the milk already, so the lamb can find it. How the lamb digs in! A picture of desire, real determination, as he punches, yes, roots into the mother's udder with his nose, his tail wiggling, because he isn't getting the milk fast

enough. This can only be a picture of the ideal. Oh, if it could be so! Our God expects of us that we place only the pure and wholesome board of His Word before His Children. They deserve better than moralizing.

Let us never fail to realize that while these children of God still have their sinful flesh under their skin, that they must wage a bitter battle each day with their Old Adam in their daily life of sanctification, and hence they need the law proclaimed to them as a curb, as a mirror and as a guide.

The mirror of the law must tell them their true condition; that they have sinned against God by thought, word and deed. It must show them the need to flee for refuge to God's infinite mercy and seek and implore His grace for the sake of their Lord Jesus Christ. Lest our members become insensible of the trouble of sin and feel no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament, the mirror of the law, well polished, must be held before their eyes. The Law will not drive them there, just show the need. The promise, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins" will draw them to it.

Let God's children hear the voice of their heavenly Father as He sets up curbs for the sinful flesh. Don't have any other Gods before me; Don't take my name in vain; Remember the Sabbath Day and find rest for your soul; Honor, serve and obey my representatives on earth that I can bless you through them; Don't commit murder; Don't break marriage; Don't steal; If it is going to hurt anybody, don't say it, don't listen; God's children don't hear any commands or threats in these words, they hear their loving heavenly Father speaking. Clean out the evil desires from your heart.

God's children are looking to the directives which their heavenly Father sets down for their Christian life in His law. They want to know how Jesus wants them to live. Set the law down before them as their golden rule. In the use of the law we must realize that law is law and that is it. We call attention once more to the fact that it is the norm God sets down for the Christian's life it is not its source. The law informs, it does not motivate. It is moralizing to stop with only applying, laying down, the law and then hoping for results. This is mocking God's people. It is coming to them with a dry utter, there is no milk to give them the strength to joyfully run the way of God's Commandments.

I like to picture this process to the children in this way: The law as a rule is like a section crew laying rails on the railroad track. The rails give the directives. We are the locomotive. The tracks don't move us one inch. The section crew can hammer and pound and make all the fuss they want. The old locomotive just stands there. But we shovel in the coal of the Gospel. Things begin to happen. The boiler warms up. The locomotive chugs, merrily on its way. When the going gets tough, the grade is steep, the snow is deep, what do we do, get the section crew to lay more rails, to hammer on the rails? no. we shovel in more coal.

When God gave the Law to His Children He also gave them the coal to move them down, the tracks. Before he laid a rail he provided the coal. God prefaced the Law with the words, "I AM THE LORD THY GOD, Which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Ex. 20:2. It would require a special study of this verse alone to fully uncover the tremendous Gospel message which God places before us here as the heading to His Law. Surely He lets us know that as our God He has the authority, the right, to set a life standard before us and require our perfect compliance. However, this God is the source of so much good. He is our Maker, Preserver, Blessor, and above all, our Redeemer and Savior. What a picture of His love for us God hangs above His commandments in these Words, I AM THE LORD THY GOD! Under that picture He hangs the first rail with the words inscribed on it. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Ex. 20:3 Where else would they want to go having such a God! If we would avoid moralizing we must learn to present the commandments in this manner.

We have a gem in our Synod catechism. The Commandments are presented in this framework there. Look at the II Commandment as it is presented in that light. The name of God has been revealed to us sinners to bless us and to save us. Without going into great depth let me briefly demonstrate what I mean. Take the name, Jesus Christ. That name means my Savior from sin. My Prophet, Priest and King. Use your brush and paint in all the details as beautifully as you can. On that picture God hangs the rail, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain." Ex. 20:7a. Throw a blotch of ink on the picture now! Swear! "Jesus Christ, it's cold again today!" Notice how the beauty of the picture brings out the hideousness of that sin. I used "My Savior from sin, my Prophet,

Priest, my King's name, for such a needless oath. It was enough to smash the mirror! What a wallop the Old Adam got in the head when he hit that curb! How the coal was ready for the New Man - "I am not going to use My Savior's name anymore in that way, He says". "I want to save it to call upon it in every trouble to pray to Him, to praise Him, to give thanks to Him." This is not moralizing, it is motivating correctly.

If you study them you will find every one of the Commandments prepared for us in that framework. To avoid moralizing in our teaching let us study our catechism carefully. To avoid moralizing in all of our teachings, preaching and dealing we must study the Word of God so we proclaim the whole counsel of God in His Word to all men. We must proclaim the entire Word of God without human alterations, subtractions, or additions. In proclaiming and applying any part of God's Word to men, however, we must always keep it in its proper relation to the central message of pardon and salvation, of grace and God's love to sinners. No part of our messages may be divorced from this central message of the Gospel for if it is then we are moralizing and the message is unproductive and powerless to produce God pleasing results. We may produce tons of civic righteousness thereby. Those are the results produced by moralizing.

It will help us to gain strength to avoid moralizing in our ministry if we remain aware of the affect moralizing has upon God's children. Moralizing tends to estrange them to God. It makes little selfrighteous pharisees of them. That is why moralizing is so appealing to the Old Adam. It lets him count for something too. It lets him contribute a little too. It establishes a little pride in him.

Moralizing takes away praise and glory from Jesus, yes, from the Triune God. It gives some of the praise and glory to sinful man. It may even filch a little glory for the pastor personally. Such carrying on, on our part, surely is most displeasing to our God.

I should like to summarize in this way: Since all of the acts of our ministry flow forth as a "Habitus Practicus" in our lives, it naturally follows that in order to avoid moralizing in our ministry it behooves us so to steep ourselves completely in the Gospel that we overpower the legalistic inclinations in our own lives. The cause of a pastor's moralizing tendencies lies in his Old Adam. He is proud, impatient, domineering, desirous of results, seeks honor, praise,

and reward. He cannot be converted. He must be slain in battle and die in a continuous process. It is when a pastor's New Man, because of weariness from lack of Gospel motivation or lack of understanding the Gospel begins to lose the battle and the Old Adam comes to the fore that moralizing tendencies begin to surface in his ministry.

It is only when through study of the Scriptures the pastor himself spontaneously, joyfully, lives, moves and has his being, basking in God's grace, that this will rub off on his members as he deals with them, teaches them, preaches to them. He will then seek, urge, coax, and woo them with the Gospel to share his joy in their own lives. It is to this end that we continually strive.

We might continue with many more incentives and directions from Scripture to help us to avoid moralizing in our ministry. Let these suffice for this essay.

I would close with a few practical examples of moralizing which we may all have noticed. I hope we can add others in the process of our discussion.

1. Uncle Art's Coloring Book Art Linkletter's offering to "help children in learning to cope with the problem of drug misuse and abuse." The questions and answers with appropriate pictures to color go like this: Are drugs bad? Good, when used by doctors to help sick people, bad when people take them when they don't really need them. Does marijuana have a good use? No. What is temptation? That's when someone wants you to do something that is bad for you and tries to tease you into doing it. If you just go along without asking questionsyou're S-T-U-P-I-D. What should I do if someone tries to give me drugs? Say, "no!" Say, "I'M NOT STUPID!" The upshot of the entire booklet is: Anyone who would use drugs is stupid. On the last page a large circle to be colored and worn as a button states, "I'm not stupid." If I were interested only in producing civic righteousness I could praise this little booklet. God's children deserve better treatment than that. Can't you just see the little pharisee bristle and build up in those little hearts?

2. Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories A Seventh Day Adventist publication comes in a set of ten books. They are made available to our members. Example: This is the gist of the way the materials are presented. Story is set up where Peter learns not to steal anymore. Peter stole

from a store. Peter left his football outside overnight. In the morning it was gone. Someone had stolen it. Peter felt bad. Now Peter knew how it felt when someone stole something from him. So Peter didn't steal anymore. Many stories hold Jesus before the child as a stern judge who will punish them if they don't do this or that. Jesus literally scares them into obedience. What shocked me is that one of our members liked this type of series. He wanted his children trained that way. Whenever we try to produce sanctified results by appealing to personal feeling, as we have seen in these first two examples instead of being motivated by the fear and love of God, we are moralizing. The same is true when we try to scare results out of them, or get them by offering rewards. But remember our Old Adam goes for this sort of treatment.

Just in this respect we must realize that at times to avoid moralizing in our ministry we must have to take a stand against moralizers being brought in. I went through the drug question with the teens in my congregation. On our button we had inscribed, "My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit," "I must not defile it." We did not moralize. After I had given the Gospel approach they voted to hear the man from the referral center in Watertown. He showed them all the drugs he had found in use here. Told how he had carried a pint of brandy in each boot everyday as he drove from coast to coast. How he had the sickness of alcoholism. He gave the cure. He held up anyone who used drugs and ruined his body as a fool. How the kids raved about this presentation. The evangelical approach fell flat as far as they were concerned.

Another presentation that is most popular and about which I have hear much praise is this group of prisoners which are brought out of the "pen" and put on their program. There is no Gospel motivation in their presentation to show why crime doesn't pay. To prevent this type of moralizing to come into our ministry we must patiently testify against it and point out how incomplete this is to furnish the child of God unto good works. We look to the Gospel. Let the world be led to civic righteousness by these moralizers, we have the real thing, we don't need them to help us. They are a hindrance at best.

3. Sermon. Place - Buxdahuda Text. Matt. 7:13,14. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Theme - Enter in at the strait gate. 1. Many go in threat. 2. Few find it. Treatment - The gate is heaven - What gets us through the gate is faith, but not any kind of faith! It must be the right faith! Dramatic conclusion. On the last day Jesus will stand at the gate and pick you up and look at you and ask, "Do you have the right faith?" "no." He tosses that one off into hell to the left side. The one with the right faith is tossed into heaven on the right side. The oratory was excellent, Was it Christ centered? O, Christ was mentioned often but the sermon was Christless. The sermon was a piece of moralizing. It did not center around and proceed from the gospel of Christ. It based salvation not on Jesus' blood and righteousness, but on a special kind of faith, right faith. How can such moralizing be avoided? The pastor ought to have spent some time first of all studying his text and reviewing dogmatics. Perhaps he would have found some different answers to his questions.

4. Along the same lines we often hear the pious and well meaning Christian at a meeting trying at the bitter end to spur his weak brothers into action when they seem most reluctant to move a project forward. In very pious and sincere tones he makes the plea, "have faith, brethren, have faith." "We must proceed in faith and all will be well."

When I hear this well meant appeal I always am taken back to an experience one of my poor former members had along these lines. She was afflicted with M. S. She wanted to go and see Oral Roberts. I advised her not to. She went nevertheless. She paid him \$800. She came home with the same M. S., but in despair. She explained what had happened.. She had two interviews with Oral. He said, "Have faith, believe." She didn't feel any better, however. He told her to return to her motel room and work on her faith, then come back in two days. She had a second interview at which time he again told her, "have faith, believe!" Finally at the end of this session when he had failed a second time he said she should go home and work on her faith, because, "If you don't have enough faith to drive out the M. S., how do you ever hope to get into heaven with such a faith?" After that treatment, I picked her up on the rebound.

Dr. C. F. W. Walther's Law and Gospel is an excellent source from which to seek help to prevent moralizing. It shows how properly to divide Law and Gospel. How many times have we read it? How long ago was the last time we studied it? It always is a refreshing experience for me to read it. It helped avoid moralizing.

As I look back upon over 30 years in the ministry and look at myself today and examine my teaching, preaching and dealing in a completely evangelical manner at all times, I flee for refuge to my Savior who alone knows how many times I have been guilty of moralizing in that period of time. I find my comfort in the fact that when we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

As I look ahead I do so on the basis of the passage in Phil. 3:12-14 "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In that spirit let us all keep studying the Word that the Holy Spirit may enlighten and steep us more and more in the Gospel. He is the one Who can and will help us avoid moralizing in our ministry. Amen.

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