

“Be Ye Followers of Me”

-or-

Following the Pastor

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“I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.”

--I Corinthians 4:14-16--

The Apostle Paul was here writing to the church at Corinth, a church which was started through his missionary labors as he was sent out from the church at Antioch under the Holy Spirit’s leadership to go and preach the gospel. Many of the members of the church at Corinth had been saved under the preaching of Paul, which is why he stated unto them, **“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”** In one spiritual sense, they were like children to the apostle because they had been born again unto a living hope through the labor and travail of the ministry that God had given him. As such, they were near and dear to the apostle’s heart. Paul had a God-given love for the saints at Corinth. Every godly pastor has a God-given love for the flock of God over which the Holy Spirit has made him the overseer. His desire is that the Lord’s people would grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; to that end, they are to follow him.

The church at Corinth was a church with many problems. Many were carnal – their thinking was more fleshly than it was spiritual. They judged things based on worldly wisdom rather than using spiritual judgment. Many of the church members at Corinth were babes in Christ – they had not grown up very much spiritually – and as such they lived spiritually weak lives. The church at Corinth had strife and divisions in their midst, rather than spiritual unity, all having the same love one for another, the same desire to serve the Lord, and the same concern for the work of God. One of the ways in which the Corinthians could overcome their problems and be a more spiritually minded people was to follow, or spiritually imitate, the Apostle Paul. He was himself set up as an example or pattern unto them to follow in their walk as children of God.

To many people, the pastor is just a person whom the church hired to get up so many times a week and spout out a sermon. To some, he has been hired to “get the church going”. If either of these is the case, then the church has an hireling and not a pastor. Pastors are given by Christ to His churches for their spiritual edification and

nourishment. The closer we are to the Lord and the more we know of Him, the more fit we will be to serve Him and bring honor and glory to His name. To that end, Christ **“gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,”** (Eph. 4:11,12). You who make up the body of Christ known as the Pleasant Plains Baptist Church are to be drawing closer to the Lord every day and seeking to do His will. One aspect of His will is for you to follow your God-given pastor.

The words of Paul, **“be ye followers of me,”** have the meaning of imitating the life of another. Paul was urging the members of the church at Corinth to look at himself as a pattern for their own lives, and to follow that pattern. What right did he have to do this? He had the spiritual right of being like a father to them in Christ. Pastors have the spiritual responsibility of being examples to the members of the churches to whom they minister as stewards of the mysteries of God. (Read I Pet. 5:1-4 and I Tim. 4:12.) The pastor’s age, worldly attainments, or gift of oratory matter not at all; what matters is that he conducts himself as an example of holiness, godliness, honesty, and spirituality unto men, women, boys, and girls. As he has this responsibility, that of being an example, the members of the church have the responsibility of following him, being spiritually imitative of his faith and his life.

Many people watch the pastor, but they do not follow him. They watch for signs of weakness, for personal faults, and for public failings. They announce his wrongdoings with proud rejoicing, but never follow his pattern of life humbly and submissively. The loss is theirs, for they have rejected that which God has given for their good. One of the reasons churches do not prosper spiritually is because they never learn to follow the pastor. They do not think of him as someone they should seek to imitate, as one whose behavior is an example unto them, whom they are to follow (or imitate) as he follows (or imitates) Christ. **“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,”** (I Cor. 11:1). With regard to following the pastor, let us note the manner in which he is to be followed, and then two things specifically that should be followed, his faith and his conversation, or lifestyle.

I. The Manner in Which the Pastor Is to Be Followed.

Paul was warning the Corinthians as a father would his children. A warning was necessary because they were facing grave danger. Whenever a church is not following the right example, they are facing serious danger. The manner in which the church is to follow the pastor is that of being imitative of his example. The Christ-like qualities that he manifests are to be followed. Children are imitators of their parents. They walk, talk, and act much like their parents. By imitating they learn a way of life. (This should prompt parents to a careful examination of the pattern which they are setting for their children.) Children often learn to value what their parents valued, good or bad. They learn to set the same priorities as their parents, use the same language as their parents, and adopt the same way of thinking and rationalizing as their parents. It should be no wonder that many children place so little value on spiritual things in this day in which we are living – they are simply imitating that which they have seen in their parents. The church members at

Corinth needed to exercise this child-like behavior in a spiritual sense with regard to the Apostle Paul, and follow him. They needed to follow his pattern of living, his pattern of talking, his pattern of obedience to the will and the Word of God.

(Read Judges 7:15-18.) The pattern for victory that Gideon placed before the army God had given him was thus, **“Look on me, and do likewise.”** This is the manner in which churches are to follow their pastors. The Billy Sundays of the world who preach, “Do as I say, not as I do,” aren’t worth a dime a dozen! God’s people, you follow God’s man! What godliness do you see in the man whom the Lord has placed over you in His work? What virtue and honorable deportment are exemplified in him? Hast thou seen courage in him to obey God amidst opposition, patience in trials, gentleness in dealing with the weak, and love for the brethren? Whatsoever you have seen in him that is Christ-like, that follow.

For many today there is a double standard of Christian living. Certain things are expected or are all right for the pastor, but they would never live in the same way themselves. They do not share the same priorities as the pastor. They do not think they should be expected to live like the pastor lives. Many today see no problem in going to the movie theatre or in bringing the movie theatre into their homes. They see no problem with going to restaurants that serve alcoholic beverages. They see nothing wrong with a woman wearing clothes that pertain to a man, or in either a man or woman dressing immodestly in shorts or revealing clothing. They see nothing wrong with taking their pleasure as the world takes its pleasure. If the pastor lived and talked as they do, it would surely be a scandal; but for them it is all right. These same are those who cannot find time for the services of God, or for reading the Bible, for meeting to have prayer with their fellow church members, or to go across the street and tell someone about the Lord Jesus Christ. **“I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.”** To what measure is the church to follow the pastor? Just as Paul stated to the church at Corinth, **“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”** To the measure that the pastor follows Christ, he is to be followed. Many churches follow their pastors to the measure that it is convenient. Godly pastors will follow Christ even when it is not convenient, and so church members ought to imitate their behavior. One way to follow the pastor is to be faithful to the house of God, which is His kind of church. Be faithful in attending the services, be faithful in supporting the Lord’s work with your tithes and offerings, be faithful in participating in the services, and be faithful in submitting to the Holy Spirit’s leadership.

II. **Following the Pastor’s Faith.**

Churches ought to follow their pastors’ faith (Heb. 13:7). How many people imitate the pastor’s faith? The pastor, if he is a very spiritually minded man and close to the Lord, will have a God-honoring faith. He will believe certain things, have certain convictions, and will evidence a personal dependence upon the true and the living God for all things. Many have no idea what the pastor’s faith is because they don’t have too much to do with their pastor. They aren’t faithfully attentive to his ministry and don’t seek to fellowship with him. This is a shame, because the pastor’s whole life is given to them by God for their spiritual benefit. **“For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,**

or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's," (I Cor. 3:21-23). The pastor doesn't have a life that is his; his life has been sacrificed for the sake of Christ and the flock for whom Christ shed His blood.

(Read Acts 20:17-27.) Have you a pastor who believes and declares all the counsel of God? Follow his faith. Have you a pastor whose convictions are Bible-based and who lives not for the things of this world but for the joy and reward of the world to come? Imitate his faith. Be attentive to his teaching, and consider the outcome of his life, which if it be spent for Christ is well spent. If his faith is not worth following, then get a new pastor; but if it is, then follow it and him as he faithfully follows the Lord.

III. **Following the Pastor's Conversation.**

The godly pastor ought also to be imitated with regard to his manner of life. Church members ought to observe and follow the pattern of living set forth by the pastor in his daily Christian walk. (Read Phil. 3:17-20.) The reason many church members do not live on earth like they are citizens of heaven is because they do not follow the example of those whom God has set before them as spiritual leaders. How does the pastor walk? What does he live for? What type of behavior does he manifest while living in this world? Do you talk as he talks? Do you walk as he walks?

(Read II Thess. 3:4-9.) How did the Apostle Paul live? He had the right to be supported by the churches to whom he ministered, but he worked with his own hands to provide for his needs and the needs of those who were with him. He did not make his own life easy at the expense of others. The pastor isn't responsible for taking care of the carnal needs of the church – mowing the lawn, cleaning the church building, paying the bills, visiting the sick, etc. Yet, he often does these things because he cares about the work of the Lord and because he is setting an example of how church members ought to behave.

(Read Neh. 5:14-16.) Nehemiah made himself an example to the people as their spiritual leader. He did not concern himself with the many worldly affairs of this life, buying land, building an house for himself, obtaining wealth, or living fashionably and in pleasure; rather, he concerned himself with the work to which God had called him. What kind of church would we have if the pastor had great zeal for the Lord, and the church members followed him in living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? What would you think if the pastor lived like you live, behaved like you behave, and set the same priorities that you set? **“Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.”**

(Read Matt. 4:18-22.) The greatest privilege that anyone has in life is to follow Christ. You won't follow Him unless He calls you. Is Jesus saying to you today, “Follow me?” There was a day when I heard Jesus saying unto me, “Follow me.” **“When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek,”** (Ps. 27:8). If you are saved, will you follow Christ in scriptural baptism and church membership? If you are a church member, will you imitate the pattern of those whom God has set before you as examples of Christ-likeness (Heb. 13:17)?