

Call to Obedience #323
 PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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In Search of Ministerial Standards.

The Minister and His Doctrines (Part 2)

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In this article I shall endeavor to present the doctrines that a minister of God ought to keep in his back pocket at all times. These *back pocket doctrines* should be distinguished from the *book shelf doctrines* which a minister ought to pull from his bookshelf from time to time as needed. The *book shelf doctrines* will fall short in aiding him to walk with God; the *back pocket doctrines* will lead him to walk with God as Enoch did in days of old. Before all else, let me give you the fountainhead of true doctrine from the words of Jesus. “*If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself*” (John 7:17). Martin Luther, the father of the Great Reformation, gives us a more powerful interpretation. Let me translate his German into English: “*If any man will to do His will, he shall know within himself (innewerden) whether this teaching is of God...*” This means that if we obey, the Word of God becomes a transforming fire within our souls. It means that it will drive out all doubt so that we will know absolutely and we shall have a testimony within us.

The language of the New Testament, Greek, has three words for our word ‘knowledge’. The Greek word employed here is *ginosko*; it means subjective and absolute knowledge. The best description of this *a priori* knowledge from the Old Testament is found in Job, “*I know that my redeemer liveth...and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.*” These words are like the words in our text using *ginosko* and in Ephesians 3:19. “*... I know the love of Christ*” *Ginosko* is also found frequently in all the epistles of John. This tells us that obedience and inner revelation are indelibly linked together. Let me shout this from the housetops: the primary source of doctrine is by revelation of God to the inner man and divine doctrinal revelation is only given to obedient hearts. The obedient will know! Many know intellectually but few know by the inner witness. The former will never become martyrs, but the latter will not run to save themselves.

Obedience is the gateway to revelation. A housewife, truck driver, dentist, or shepherd could have a greater revelation of the doctrines of God, than the scholar who has spent many years studying theology but has not obeyed Jesus all these years. Simply put, the obedient are the best theologians. This is why the psalmist could say, “*Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than all mine enemies*” (Psa. 119:98). Preacher, minister of God, you must be obedient in everything. Obedience is the very heartbeat of Christianity. Only the obedient are safe. They are safe from being carried away ‘by every wind of doctrine’ (Eph. 4:14.) When we come to total obedience, we can almost *smell* what is of God and what is not. Have you ever gone to a church service and everything looked good and right; but there was an inner witness in your obedient

heart, that something was missing, something was wrong. The obedient receive revelation. Obedience is the key to everything. If you are knowingly disobedient, even in one area, you are like a man who owns a palace but has no key to go in. Of course, this is not to discourage biblical study. Paul told Timothy to “study.” I’m not against studying; I merely say that studying the Word of God without obedience is unproductive, yes, even dangerous. It made the Pharisees and Crusaders killers. Studying without obedience has divided churches, and has imprisoned, tortured, and burned many godly Christians at the stake. God’s Word in the hands of the disobedient can be lethal.

America, more than any other nation in the world, is saturated with Biblical literature, TV and radio programs, and Bible studies, but still the church is divided, selfish, idolatrous, unclean and worldly. Without obedience we miss the mark of true Christianity, and never know it. Again preachers, these are *back pocket doctrines* needed for victorious living for you and your parishioners.

Here is another fruit of obedience: it brings you to oneness with the Father and the Son. Hallelujah! Obedience, in time, will bring us all together into one true Catholic (universal) Church, into one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God... (Ephesians 4:5). Oh, when you have 120 of such obedient hearts getting together, you can’t tell what’s going to happen—or can you? (Acts 2:1-4) Ecumenical councils have not been able to bring Christians together, but obedience will.

So then, what are the cardinal doctrines of a true minister of God, the ones he needs in his back pocket at all times? The **first** is the doctrine of obedience. This is the key to all the knowledge and to all the wisdom of God. It is the key to overflowing joy. If a minister does not live in obedience, he is none of His. Jesus said, “*not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*” Matt. 7:21. Again, obedience opens the library of heaven and the treasures of the kingdom. Obedience is a universal. We are blessed if we have it, and we’re cursed if we don’t (Deut. 11:26-28).

Second, another *back pocket doctrine* is the doctrine of self-denial. Jesus said, “*if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*”(Luke 9:23, Matt. 16:24, Mark 8:34). Self-denial precedes obedience: you cannot obey unless you first deny self. Historically, the expression ‘self-denial’ was not coined in Biblical writings till Jesus introduced it. Jesus fused self-denial to the cross. He had to go to His cross to do His Master’s will, so you and I have to go to our crosses in order for us to become followers of Him. Self (the carnal nature) will never take one step after Jesus. Never! Jesus died on the cross to save us, and we have to die on our cross to follow Him, to keep the Life that He has given us. No person who has Self on the throne will be found in Him. Not a one. Self must be crucified daily, that is moment by moment, for us to be His disciple. The Kingdom of God is for disciples only. Paul said, “*I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me*” (Gal. 2:20). There is no Christianity without the cross, without *His* cross and *your* cross. So, what Paul said here is this: I am living and dying at the same time. That is the formula for victory and if a minister does not understand this doctrine, and does not live it and preach

it, he does not understand Christianity. You are not likely to get much help from him. Remember we are in search of ministerial and doctrinal standards. We need to live and preach obedience, we need to live and preach self-denial. We will not obey until we deny self.

Third, we need to live and teach the doctrine of unbroken fellowship with Jesus. The doctrine of self denial and obedience will get us there. St. John of the gospels, epistles and the Revelation makes the doctrine of fellowship with Jesus the queen of all doctrines in his apostolic writings. In his gospel he calls it *abiding in Christ* (John 15), but here in his first epistle, he calls it fellowship. *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full”* (1 John 1:3, 4). Oh, do you get this fullness of joy? Who would like to be without it in this world of gloom? Everything else that John says in his epistles is instruction on what hinders and what helps this fellowship, or intimacy, with Jesus. Look at a couple of other phrases here. *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:6, 7). Is that powerful! Do you really believe that? The fellowship spoken of here is unbroken fellowship: unbroken by selfish choices, and disobedience. With this introduction, John develops the doctrine of our bridal love relationship with God. Here John introduces us to the new paradise. In the old Genesis paradise man had fellowship with God, he walked with God. Sin put him out of fellowship, but now Jesus through the cross, by His redeeming power, and His precious Holy Spirit; has opened a new paradise of fellowship with God in His kingdom. Praise the Lord. As we walk in all the light we have, in this holy fellowship, the blood of Jesus is continually cleansing us from whatever may prevent perfect union with Him. This is BIG!

So now, my dear colleagues I have given you *back pocket doctrines* to carry with you at all times to fulfill your holy calling. Let me put them in order for practical Christian living: self-denial, obedience, and intimacy with Jesus. I can give you a dozen more that a minister ought to adhere to but you can read about those in the books on your shelves. These three doctrines have served me wonderfully through 40 years of ministry, and I'm certain that they will bring you blessings abounding now and forever. **To be continued.**

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