

## Promises, Promises (#6)

### Ministerial Job Description!

- Yabber on about all the things ministers are meant to do, or be able to do!
  - pastor, teacher, manager, chairperson, youth-worker, TV repair person, social worker, friend, confidant, inspirational leader, moral guardian....
- What is the most important characteristic?
  - (vacancy committees have really good going discussions about this!)
- Real answer is: **whole-hearted devotion to God.**
  - illustrate that with a quote from **Andrew Bonar**, a Scots minister of the 1840's - this is from his diary of 22nd Feb 1846:
    - *"Preached with little freedom. Weariness of body is against me; but still more - want of prayer through the previous week. God will not let me preach with power when I am not much with Him. More than ever do I feel that I should be as much an intercessor as a preacher of the Word. Also I have been taught that joy in the Spirit is the frame in which God blesses us to others. Joy arises from fellowship with Him - and I find that whatever sorrow or humiliation of spirit presses in on us, that should give way in some measure to a fresh taste of God's love when going forth to preach."*
- Haven't you felt, as we've looked at the promises we took on joining the church, that its and **impossible task**, living up to the promises we've made?
  - *believing in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and confessing Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord: Do you promise to join regularly with your fellow Christians in worship on the Lord's Day?*
  - I do**
  - *Do you promise to be faithful in reading the Bible and in prayer?*
  - I do**
  - *Do you promise to give a fitting proportion of your time, talents and money for the Church's work in the world?*
  - I do**
  - *Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, to profess publicly your loyalty to Jesus Christ, to serve him in your daily work, and to walk in his ways all the days of your life?*
  - I do**
- At heart, really only one thing matters - summed up in the tail-end of that last promise:
  - **whole-hearted devotion to God.**
- This is not something unique to ministers or missionaries or "special Christians"
  - we are all on the same playing field before God; he asks the same of all of us....
  - .....everything is to be for God!**

### Whats Going on in Acts 6?

- Why read Acts 6?
- Situation:
  - rapidly growing church;
  - needs being met out of a common purse;
  - "system" to cope with numbers creaking under the strain;
  - Grecian / Hebraic split;
  - Grecian widows being left out.
- Problem; apostles wanted to get it sorted out.
  - mainly a problem of logistics, of administration, of practicality.
  - tempting to jump to **"who can do the task?"**
- **BUT: they looked for the quality of the people:**
  - *"choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (v.3)*

- "They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also...." (v.5)

### Result:

- "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." (v.7)

- The apostles focused on people whose lives were given over to God, not merely those who were able for the task.
- These men were those who went "all out" for God:
  - and they changed the world!

## Stories

- There's a simplicity and a fearful challenge in this:
- God's not looking for brains, or athleticism, or musical ability, or drama, or preaching, or any of the other things that we "do" around the church:
- But he is looking for those who will "walk in his ways all the days of [their] life".
- And with such people he will do marvellous things.

### Bill Gilvear

- Many of you will have heard the story, maybe even heard the man himself.
  - gang member from the Gallowgate, who God picked out;
  - "a trophy of grace" (aren't we all!);
  - gave himself completely to obeying God's call, ended up in Congo/Zaire, seeing people come to faith, and inspiring many hundreds and thousands of Christians since by the story of God at work in his life.

### Jim Eliot

- American young man; little brethren style church with no "official" status; went to Ecuador with a passion for reaching Aucas; at that time fierce and untamed; was killed with his companions for the sake of the gospel; inspired thousands to go preach!
- Countless other similar stories could be told.... most will have to wait until we reach heaven!
- But all have this common theme - a life given to God is never, ever in vain!

## Conclusion

- What is our priority in life?
- What are we all about?
- Why are we here? What value lies at the heart of everything we do?
  - do we hear the undertones in Jesus encounter with Peter.... "If you keep your eye on these things, you'll go under. If you keep your eye on me, you'll stay afloat."
  - where is our focus?
- *I quoted them last Sunday evening, but the words of Howard Guinness, whom God used to pioneer the student movements in Canada, Australia and New Zealand are an appropriate final challenge:*
  - "Where are the men and women of this generation who will hold their lives cheap, and be faithful even unto death... who will lose their lives for Christ's sake - flinging them away for love of Him? Where are those who will live dangerously, and be reckless in His service?... Where are the men of prayer? Where are the men who... count God's Word of more importance to them than their daily food? Where are the men who, like Moses of old, commune with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend?... Where are God's men and women in this day of God's power?"