

**Welcome friends to another broadcast of "Morsels for Zion's Poor"**

The most popular concept of "the ministry" is that of a profession which one chooses, trains for, and then practices with the attendant salaries, retirement programs, and other perks and benefits. According to this concept the "hired man" is paid to preach, teach, visit, counsel, pray, perform weddings and funerals, and to generally be in charge of everything. In the religious tradition I grew up in, "the ministry" was something one "surrendered" to do, as though some great sacrifice of life and liberty was at stake. Today many so called "ministers" see this office as a place of great dignity and desire to be set apart in a special class of men (and sometimes even women) called the clergy. They then make a distinction between themselves and the "common" people who are known as the "laity". This is perhaps part of the error of the doctrine of the "Nicolaitanes" spoken of in the book of the Revelation, for when that name is literally translated, it means conquering the people. This concept is even taken to the point where many believe that "the clergy" have some special place of mediation between man and GOD. This is to usurp the place of CHRIST who is the one MEDIATOR between GOD and man.

Now I in no way want to demean the offices that GOD calls men to, nor do I wish to disparage the fact that HE gives gifts to men to perform the functions of these offices (apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc.). These "callings" or "gifts" cannot be chosen as one selects a career or applies for a job. Only GOD can give a man these gifts and fit him for the work he is to do. A man cannot decide to have them or reject them; they are simply bestowed by the sovereign purpose of the ALMIGHTY. *"For the gifts and calling of GOD are without repentance" "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of GOD and not of us."* If a man thinks he has one of these gifts and is able to keep silent then it is evident that he does not have this calling.

While it is true that there is a calling and giving of gifts to men such as pastors and teachers, the "work of the ministry" is the calling of all of GOD's people, and it is the plan of GOD that the saints be equipped (i.e., perfected) for that work through the exercising of these gifts. Each of the LORD's children is called to the "work of the ministry" which is the building up of the body. We each have a great responsibility to "minister" one to the other. We might paraphrase Paul's teaching to the Ephesians on the work of the ministry as: *"To prepare GOD's people for works of service, so that the body of CHRIST may be built up."* So rather than having a "minister" we are all ministers for the benefit of the whole body. How might we minister one to the other? I believe our ministry to each other falls into three categories which all go hand in hand and in some ways are inseparable.

**We are to edify one another.** An edifice is a building and the root of the word is the same as edify. It simply means to build up and strengthen one another. We do this by helping each other understand the Word of GOD. We do this by setting a good example for our brethren by our deportment and conduct. Paul said *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."* While we have no list of dos and don'ts which we are bound to follow we need to be mindful that we do not cause our brethren to stumble because we exercise our liberty. Such a thing is harmful and does not strengthen them. We edify our brethren when we rebuke them for sin in a Christlike manner. We are our brother's keeper. We edify our brethren through the exercise of faith, by being steadfast and unmoveable.

**We are to exhort one another.** Exhortation is synonymous with encouragement. We are indeed to be supporting and cheering on our brothers and sisters in the faith. We ourselves are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (i.e., supporters). We must step up this activity in the face of the shortness of time. Often the very fact of our presence at the assembly is a great encouragement to one another.

**We are to comfort one another.** Much like an infant needs reassuring so often our brethren are in need of the same. Blessed is that man who can recognize and meet this need. We comfort one another when we handle our afflictions with faith. We comfort one another when we have a spirit of forgiveness rather than judgement. We are comforted when our brethren walk in faith.

Are you ministering to the brethren or are you content to be ministered unto? He who is the servant of all is greatest in the kingdom of GOD.

*"Thy free grace alone," #11* **If you would like a free transcript of this broadcast email us at [forthe poor@windstream.net](mailto:forthe poor@windstream.net)**