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stimulate a church to certain kinds of activity, but only the work of soul-winning will continuously build a church in real vitality. All over the land to-day there are churches that are practically powerless and fruitless because they are giving themselves over to multiplied forms of service which are not a direct appeal to the lost to receive Christ. The church that makes that appeal its one great business is always prosperous and powerful, and its growth is both certain in numbers and symmetrical in spiritual character.

It is as plainly taught in this passage as language can make it that the Lord gave evangelists and pastors and teachers to his people to train and perfect them in the work of soul-winning. Pastors and evangelists are not appointed to be the professional soul-winners of the Church, but "for the perfecting of God's people in *their* appointed service" of witnessing and soul-winning. The pastorate is not a religious lectureship; it is a spiritual generalship. And an evangelist is not to go to a field and reap the harvest for a church while they look on and watch him do it, but he is to lead, instruct, and direct the harvesters as they go out into the field and gather in the harvest themselves.

THE PASTOR AS AN OVERSEER

There is another term in the New Testament that brings out this truth with great clearness. The Lord has said to all pastors through Paul, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock,

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over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*.”¹ Thayer’s Greek lexicon defines the word from which “overseer” comes as, “a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly”; a “superintendent.”

The word also carries the meaning of watch-care and shepherding, as a shepherd feeds and cares for his flock.

This defines the double work of the pastor. He is to feed his people and give them such watch-care as will make them strong and vigorous for their service of soul-winning, and he is to be their overseer, or superintendent, in that service, seeing that they do that work and guiding them wherever they may need it, that they may do it successfully.

This twofold function of the pastoral office also comes out in the list of Christ’s gifts to his Church which we have been studying. After naming apostles, prophets and evangelists, he names the one who is to have direct and continuous charge of a local body of believers, and calls him a “pastor and teacher.” As a pastor, or shepherd, as that word means, he is to feed the people and give them such watchful care as shall keep them fit *for* their appointed service; as a teacher he is to give them not simply theoretical but especially practical instruction to the point of success *in* their appointed service.

That the individual members may become successful in winning the lost is therefore the one all-inclusive reason why pastors were given to the

¹Acts 20:28.

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Church. The shepherding and the superintending both have that as their main object.

THE PASTOR'S MAIN BUSINESS

The conclusion is inevitable. The main business of the pastor is not the preparation and delivery of sermons and addresses so much as the development, whether by sermon or by any other method, of every member in his church into a soul-winner. His sermons—at least those to Christians—ought always to have this in view.

Not that either the pastor or his people have no teaching ministry which it is possible to distinguish from simple witnessing, but that all such ministry is to have preparation for soul-winning witnessing, rather than the simple impartation of instruction and information, as its ultimate object. Such witnessing to Christ as will bring the lost to him is the main stream of Christian service into which all other streams of Christian instruction and activity must be made to flow. Indeed, witnessing to Christ is the very essence of the building up ministry of the Word, for he who is the theme of the Word is the Bread of God by which we grow in grace and knowledge. And growth is both certain and normal only when in the strength of that Bread we go out to the lost and give them also to eat. Food is for strength, and strength is for service, and if the strength we get from that Bread is not used in service, there will be little building up in the "most holy faith." In the teaching ministry

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of the pastor, therefore, he is to direct it all toward securing in his people ever-increasing results in soul-winning.

One of the most practical as well as successful ways of doing this is the method a factory superintendent would use with a beginner who knew little or nothing about his job. He would actually do the work and teach the beginner how. He would encourage him to do it himself, and help him in the uncertain places until he learned how.

Precisely so the Lord has given every pastor to his Church that he may train the members in soul-winning, even to the point of going right out on to the field with them and doing it by their side, or helping them to do it until they learn how, using the skilled ones in turn to help train beginners, until there is a church full of skilled and successful soul-winners.

No one can ever learn how to win the lost by studying books or listening to sermons and addresses. He can fill his mind with the Word of God by study, as he certainly should do, and he can get suggestions from others as to how to deal with various classes of the lost, but when it comes to actually knowing how to win a soul to Christ, he can learn how only by going out into the field and doing it.

WHAT ABOUT SOCIAL SERVICE?

By this time some reader is asking if social service has no place in the work of the Church.