

Weighing Grace

I recall, from my youth, using a platform trip scale, similar to modern weight scales found in doctor's offices, where you set a weight on the platform and then slide a weight along a rail until the trip lever raises in between its two limits of upper and lower metal bars showing that the correct weight measurement has been reached and then by reading the scale where the sliding weight rests one determines the weight of the object on the platform.

We used such a scale to measure cow feed in sacks and also clover seed that we combined from the fields. The sliding scale was a measurement from zero, on one end, to a weight that was the capacity of the scale (say 300 lbs.) on the other end. They were quite accurate mechanical instruments.

I often think of that method of the weighing process when I think of how pastors must "weigh" certain situations that they encounter in the ministry. Trying to slide the marker between grace, on one end, and termination of grace on the other end and seeking the correct point where "balance" is achieved is an extremely difficult procedure.

It is this "weighing" of situations, with all their complexities, that truly requires divine guidance on the hand of the pastor as he slides the weight. Added to this dilemma is the personal character of the minister himself—which can cause a corruption in the true weight of the situation if he himself has incorrect motives or prejudices. In other words, the character flaws of the "weigher" can cause an incorrect value of the "weighed." No wonder then that God's ministers, for the good of those he leads, be found worthy of the calling.

There's the old story of the butcher with his finger on the scale in order to benefit himself and cheat the customer. I have found that judgment is like cholesterol: There's a good kind and a bad kind. Moreover, judgment fuels passions—the sense of injustice, sympathy for the underdog, the desire to right wrongs.

How can we discern when something is wrong, without being judgmental, without disliking the perpetrators, without filling our own mind with negativity? Is it even possible to eliminate the "bad" kind of judgment, without losing the good kind?

When “the finger on the scale” is performed by a minister due to his own personal failing(s) or perverted prejudices then the whole system of ministerial responsibility to his flock becomes seriously endangered.

It is the “object” on the platform which *must* determine the “weight”—and ministers who seem to be too harsh or too soft in their assessment of the setting is something that “on-lookers” will always debate among themselves, however, if he weighs in truth or if he weighs in perverted motives he will answer to God.

Truly to weigh a situation on its own merits according to divine appraisal is something that every true minister must strive to do. Regardless of loss of popularity or the lure of enhancing it or the many other factors that can enter the equation from human leanings, the true minister will endeavor to weigh in the fear of God.

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