



September 11, 1968

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Forty-seventh in a series)

Ministerial Itch

By T. B. Maston

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Webster says to have the itch means "to have an uneasy sensation...which inclines a person to scratch the part affected." Webster also says that the itch is "a constant irritating desire or longing."

There is some evidence that ministerial itch is rather prevalent and may be highly contagious. There are certain parts of the ministerial anatomy that are frequently affected.

Some ministers have itching hands. Their hands reach out for more and more material things: a bigger salary, more liberal fringe benefits, and a nicer home. They may stretch out their hands for special ministerial discounts. We should be grateful that this practice is not as prevalent as formerly.

The ears represent another part of the minister's anatomy that sometimes itches. Some have "a constant irritating desire or longing" to hear gossip about fellow pastors, about church members, about denominational workers, or criticism of the denomination or the denominational agency or institution.

Some have an inordinate desire for compliments. All need the encouragement that comes from a sincere word of approval or appreciation, but let us beware of an itching ear for words that will simply increase our ego.

It seems that many ministers are afflicted with itching feet. They have "a constant irritating desire or longing" to move to another church or to a different field of service.

A few ministers, at least we hope it is a few, have an "irritating desire or longing" to climb up the ladder, to advance to a larger church or to a place of "greater prestige." Some of these even itch to go to state headquarters or to "advance" to "the holy city": Atlanta, Birmingham, Nashville, or Richmond. Before their feet itch too much to get into the denominational stream it might be wise for them to talk to some who have been or are there.

Then there are those who have itching feet to run to every meeting or conference in the association or those sponsored by the state convention or the Southern Baptist Convention. They are constantly on the road going to or returning from a meeting.

How glorious it would be if all of us, ministers and members, had a constant desire or longing to use our feet to walk where the resurrected Christ would have us to go, to walk with him where there is human need, to walk into the lives and homes of suffering, sorrowing, sinning men and women.

How wonderful it would be if our hands were made available to encourage the discouraged, to hand to someone a cup of cold water in His name.

How blessed if our ears were sensitive to the cry of human need and to the still small voice of God as He speaks to us.

In addition, how glorious it would be if we had itching minds: minds that are on a constant prowl for truth, longing for a better understanding of the breadth and depth of the truth of God.

Furthermore, how wonderful if our hearts constantly desired or longed for a deeper awareness of the presence of the Lord and for an abiding fellowship and a closer walk with Him.



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DEACON RETIREMENT

By T. B. Maston

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Although I am a deacon in my church and although I would be in the first group retired, I have an increasing conviction that many churches should adopt some plan for the retirement of deacons. There are several possible reasons for such a program.

Pastors usually retire from active service by the time they are sixty-five years of age. For some years previous to that they find it difficult to change pastorates. Why should deacons, who next to pastors possibly influence the programs and policies of most churches more than any other members, continue indefinitely to serve in an active capacity?

Some older deacons are unable any longer to serve effectively. In most churches they "hang on" or gradually drop out of active participation in the work of the deacons. A deacon retirement program could provide a dignified way of caring for these men.

It is not unusual for a few older deacons to retard the progress of a church. They may represent the dead hand of the past. Sometimes a church simply has to wait until Brother _____ dies before the church can do what needs to be done. That hand of the past will be unusually heavy if the brother is wealthy, has a large family, or has been unusually influential in the church and community. A deacon retirement program might not solve such a problem, but it could reduce its seriousness.

Furthermore, a deacon retirement program might cause younger deacons and younger men of the church in general to accept more of the responsibility for the work of the church. In turn, the acceptance of responsibility would contribute to the maturing of the younger men in the church.

The retirement of older deacons would enable many churches to ordain more young men and, hence, inject new life into the deacons and the church. Some churches are "old and tired" simply because too much of their leadership is in the hands of older people.

The retirement of older deacons will not mean that they are put on the shelf. Those who are still physically active and mentally and spiritually alert can find many outlets of service in the church and in the community. For example, some can function as associate pastors, assisting the pastor in his visitation program, particularly the visitation of the old and the infirm.

Each church will need to decide for itself whether or not to adopt some type of deacon retirement. It would be good if the initiative could come from the older deacons themselves. A recommendation from the deacons to the church that a standing committee or a special committee be asked to study the matter would set it in motion. Certainly any program finally adopted should include some type of special recognition for retiring deacons. There should be a dignified designation for them such as "Deacon Emeritus" or "Senior Deacon."



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D. C. Baptists Name Negro
To Head Urban Ministries

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WASHINGTON (BP) --A Negro Baptist minister, H. Wesley Wiley, has been chosen to help Baptists in the capital city develop a total strategy for ministering in metropolitan Washington.

Sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Wiley will be the executive director of the Baptist Committee on Wider Cooperation, made up of six different Baptist groups in the Washington area.

Announcement of Wiley's appointment was made by James M. Windham, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Silver Spring, Md., chairman of the committee.

As the leader of the newly-organized metropolitan ministries for Baptists in the Washington area, Wiley will be related to the D.C. Baptist Convention as an executive staff member.

Wiley is the former pastor of the Springfield Baptist Church, located in Washington's inner city. Prior to this he served as director of missions for the SBC Home Mission Board in Winston-Salem and held several pastorates in North Carolina.

In addition, he has held positions with the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Missionary Convention and the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

The North Carolina native is a member of the executive study group for a model urban school system for the district of Columbia and is presently serving on the Board of directors of the Model Inner City Community Organization, Inc.

In releasing the announcement, Windham said he sees Wiley's appointment as "the first major step toward the type of cooperation of all Baptist bodies in a full Christian ministry to this metropolitan area."

Windham said the committee has asked Wiley to develop a program that will lead Baptists "to become involved in ministering to the total needs of persons in the urban setting."

Specifically, Windham said programs would be developed dealing with "the alleviation of poverty consequences," juvenile delinquency, dope addiction, alcoholism and housing.

"Race relations, of course," Windham added, "is the heart and basis of the whole business."

In addition, Wiley will direct research on particular urban problems, serving as a channel for this information to be given to the various Baptist groups and churches in the city.

The Baptist Committee on Wider Cooperation includes six local associations and conventions of Baptist churches, representing ties to five different national bodies. The Baptist groups include: American Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., National Baptist Convention of America and National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

The new Home Mission Board employee attended Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C., and received his theological degree from Virginia Theological Seminary and College in Lynchburg. He has done additional study at Union University, Richmond, Va., and American University.

Wiley holds a certificate in clinical pastoral training from the School of Pastoral Care of the North Carolina Baptist Hospital and the Bowman Gray School of Medicine in Winston-Salem.

Criswell Praises South
America Crusade Enthusiasm

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President W. A. Criswell, on his return from a tour of Baptist mission points in South America, had high praise for the response of South Americans to the Crusade of the Americas hemisphere-wide evangelistic campaign.

"When we look back upon it, we will see one of the most effective efforts we have ever made for Christ in our generation," Criswell said in assessing the potential of the Crusade of the Americas.

"I found unlimited enthusiasm for the crusade," Criswell said. "As you know, the idea was born there, and those dear people look upon the Crusade of the Americas as one of the greatest instruments of our present generation in moving a nation toward Christ."

Criswell was less optimistic concerning other aspects of his tour. "We are losing the numbers game in Latin America," he lamented.

Poverty, disease, slums and the population explosion were cited by the SBC president, pastor of the 15,000-member First Baptist Church of Dallas, as forces which were outracing the efforts of every religious denomination.

As an example, Criswell said that two generations ago, Baptists could have distributed 8 million Bibles and reached every family in Brazil; while today it would take 80 million Bibles to accomplish the same task.

The SBC president listed men, money, follow-up on new converts, modern church organization and personal involvement as emergency measures to stem the tide of secularism in the world.

Decrying the lack of personal involvement in modern mission activity, Criswell sharply criticized churches in the United States that "shirk their responsibility to weep for, and pray for, our mission activity by allowing Cooperative Program (financial) participation to be their only expression of concern.

"Christ loved the church and gave himself for it," Criswell declared. "We need to put awareness of missions and more financial responsibility for missions back in the local churches."

He urged Southern Baptists to capture the same enthusiasm for the Crusade of the Americas that the Latin Americans exhibited, saying: "We shall not fail them; we shall not disappoint them."



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