

## ARE WE IN A RUT?

A DISCIPLE.

On reading *THE CHRISTIAN* I am led to ask this question.

It appears to me the Annual Meeting does the business for our Board; for it says to them: "We want you to pay so much to such places. Now, go ahead, beg and coax the funds from the brethren so as to do as we have voted." The Board tries, but is only able to pay the grants that have been made, consequently there is nothing to aid any other needy point.

It seems to me *we are in a rut*. Shall we stay there or shall we get out and go along on a prosperous journey?

1st. How to keep in the rut.

Find fault with the Board, say the money is being wasted, why don't they engage one of our own men for evangelist? What do they want to get a man from the States for!

I know of persons who profess to be in favor of our mission work saying these things. Of course they do it to help(?) along the cause. One says "Oh, well the Board never helps us, we won't help any other place;" another, "If the Board will spend \$25 here we will give \$10 or \$12;" others, "Nova Scotia gets more than New Brunswick," some say "there is no good being done, there are no baptisms." "They are paying the preachers too much, or they are starving them out." Such remarks as these will keep us in the rut.

2nd. How to get out.

Say a good word for the board. They get nothing for what they do and they give largely to the fund. Tell that the money is well spent, because the capital of Nova Scotia ought to have a strong man; a family like the one in Pictou ought to be backed up; and a more promising point than Main St., St. John, is not in the provinces.

Our own preachers *have* done nearly all the work for the board. The board should be praised for getting an evangelist like Bro. Romig.

Don't give because *we* expect to get the benefit. All giving should be to bless others. The idea of getting two dollars for every one we give is pure selfishness, and the man or church that is governed by it cannot prosper. For God loves cheerful givers. No matter which province is blessed, all should be glad. Are we not one family?

Sometimes it needs much sowing of the seed and careful tilling of the soil to get a good harvest. Generally the best grain and fruit ripen slowly. There will be a large increase if we plant and water.

Preachers are usually like other workmen—get what they seek for. Good or bad pay, easy or hard places. Let us put away all petty personal or place feeling and generously support the mission work.

If we furnish the funds the men are available and the doors open for grand work.

Let us realize that this is the Lord's work and give as in the sight of him who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

If we do this *we will* get out of the rut and our mission work will run smoothly and prosperously along the highway of success.

THE MINISTERIAL DEAD LINE.  
HOW TO AVOID IT.

W. H. HARDING.

What do we mean by "Ministerial Dead Line?" I have not been able to find any standard definition of the term, so I have made one to suit my own idea of what is meant; it is as follows: That period in a minister's life when his preaching ceases to be interesting to his hearers, because of its sameness; when his sermons have the same pet phrases occurring over and over again; when his sermons lack freshness and life.

In other words, an old fashioned stage coach on a railway track when there are plenty of cars, or a tallow candle on an electric light post when there is an abundance of electricity. If you do not like this definition you may make one you do like. This definition is not more applicable to old men than to young men.

I. What causes lead up to that condition? It is not a spontaneous growth; it is a development. 1st. Indolence. We take it for granted that every man must have a degree of education before he can become a successful minister. I do not believe a college training is an essential; for many of our best men have not had any such training, but I would advise all who can to receive it. A man commencing his practical ministerial career, whether a college graduate or not, must not think he knows it all, now that he is a minister. Some men think they know the plan of salvation, and can preach faith, repentance and baptism every time; they think they have no need to prepare a sermon; they need not study, their time is spent in gossip or indolently passing the time God has given them until it is gone never to return. Is it any wonder that such a man finds empty seats staring him in the face on Sunday, and the people cold or dead. They may blame sectarian opposition, or carelessness on the part of the church, but the main trouble lies with themselves. Let them arouse, put time and thought into the preparation of their sermons, get in touch with the people during the week and they will marvel at the result.

2nd. Conceit. Now conceit is as bad as the consumption if they die with it, and it leads to the dead line any way. It is surprising what big stories some preachers can tell. What battles *they* have fought, what victories *they* have won. They love to have people admire them, and laud their fine attempts at oratorical display or rhetorical finish. They do not ask, What do you think of Christ, but What do you think of me?—of my sermon? It is needless to say this is drawing to the dead line.

3rd. There are those who study but get interested in some side issue, and while they may become specialists in the department they have chosen, and be very useful as far as they go, yet they are not successful as ministers of the gospel. For instance, one gets interested in the study of language, and devotes much time to the study of philology; another has a literary turn, and devotes his time to writing poems, etc.; still another gives special attention to some of the sciences. Now if we are to be successful ministers of God's word we need to study these things; we need to be interested in the study and

development of language; we must have a taste for literature; we need to know what is the last word from science on some of the difficult questions of the day in connection with the so called conflict between science and the Bible. But if we do not want to become one sided, we must in all our studies remember that our business is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some ministers devote a great deal of time to the study of politics. I think a minister has a right to vote as he pleases, but he should not spend his time airing his views, nor be too dogmatic in his assertions.

We find indolence, ignorance, conceit, special attention to side issues, are among the things that lead up to crossing the dead line.

II. What effect does this crossing have? 1st. It discourages the ministers. 2nd. It disheartens the people. 3rd. It creates a feeling of jealousy in the man's heart when he sees others succeeding better than he, and if one of these dead liners gets into a church and can't get anywhere else, and the people have not courage enough to tell him to go, then you soon hear of a dead church.

III. But the question of practical interest is: How to avoid it? 1st. Avoid the causes. Do not think you know it all. Be willing to think there is an every day education. Be industrious, make good use of your time. There is no excuse for ignorance in these days. A man who is indolent will likely be ignorant. Study living questions. Find out what people need. Put your heart and soul into the work. "Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think" is a wise admonition today. Be a man, not a dude. Be manly. Do not neglect the poor, and if a single man, do not be too fond of the young ladies. Spurgeon advised his students to pay particular attention to their preparation for the pulpit.

2nd. Remember that the mind is governed by law as well as the body.

3rd. Remember that exercise is the law of development in the realm of mind as in the body. Look at Mr. Gladstone as an example of both. A man increases his muscular powers by using his muscles. If we would increase our mental powers we must use the faculties of the mind.

4th. Do not use too many ready-made sermons. There are volumes of sermons, notes, outlines, etc., (some of them very good) but one of the surest ways to the dead line is by the road of ready-made sermons. If the young preacher does not dig and find for himself, thus exercising his mind and developing its power; if, instead, he takes what somebody else has found, he is sure to have unused and therefore useless faculties when he grows older. Gather from every source and then produce something of your own. Bees gather from many flowers, but turn what they have gathered into delicious honey. So let us fill the cells of our minds with something sweeter than the honey-comb.

5th. We need systematic study, haphazard study is some good, but is not the best. We have not time to find out everything, and the more we know the more convinced we are that some departments of knowledge must remain almost closed to us. But we can shape our reading so as to have it all bear a practical part in our life work. There is so much in the old Book, so much about it, and so many people to reach, that we have an endless variety of themes constantly before us. If we take a pleasure in our work, life will be too short to tell it all.

6th. Remember the work is not ours, we are co-workers with God. Paul may plant, Apollos may water; God gives the increase. We need the fuller realization of our respon-