

Prepare but one good sermon a week, and preach it at all the stations on the Sabbath, and thus save time for pastoral visitation.

We pretend not to be able to meet all the difficulties arising from the felt want of time, but is there not something wrong, unjust and unreasonable, if the requirements of a church in regard to the number of public religious services are such as to render impossible the visits of the pastor? And is not that a false standard of ministerial attainment and efficiency that a minister sets before him, to gain which he must either totally neglect, or seriously abridge, so important a work?

In this connection, we might mention a difficulty, with which we as pastors are tempted to have less patience. We refer to the unreasonable expectation of many of our people in regard to the *number* of visits the pastor is expected to pay them. How many a good minister is bitterly complained of, because he cannot be every week in the house of certain of his people, and cannot devote a whole afternoon to their especial edification! His more frequent visits to certain other families are spoken of as indicating partiality, although, if all were known, they would not judge so uncharitably. Some case of sickness, or infirmity, or spiritual trouble, might explain the whole. How many have no proper estimate of the value of a minister's time, of the all-absorbing nature of his pursuits and studies, and of the multiplicity of his engagements, and foolishly clamour to see more of their minister, desiring that he were less among books and more among the people, less in the study and more in the parlor. Such complaints will usually be found to proceed not from the more devoted and enlightened of his flock. These latter are tolerant, because intelligent. In most cases the demands of the others are prompted by a love of gossip rather than a love of gospel, the best cure for which is, for the pastor to make his visits to such parties so faithful and spiritual and personal in the application of truth, that they will be regarded more in the light of a visitation, the infliction of which they will not desire too frequently.

It is not one of the least discouragements in the prosecution of this work, that the pastor is often disappointed in seeing the family when he calls. If the visit is made in the afternoon, he may see the mother of the family, but the father is in his place of business, and the children for the most part are at school. A better representation of the family may sometimes be had if the visit is previously announced, but even this does not often secure the presence of all, unless the visit be made at the evening hour, which is often most inconvenient for the minister.

In such cases the pastor can only do his best, and the greater the necessity of turning to spiritual account those accidental meetings with his people, as in walking in the same direction along the street with them, or an invitation to tea at their house, or by inviting them to visit him, or by walking home with them after an evening service. By this watching for opportunities, the work of pastoral visitation may be done, even where from the specialities of the case, the form may not be observed.

Recourse must be had to these methods, where both parents are not members of the church, or where only some of the young people are interested in the pastor's ministrations.

The only other difficulty to which I shall now advert, is one not so easily overcome, that of being able to *reach the parties* visited and engage them in profitable religious conversation.