

Chapter I

Introduction

Protestants, for the most part, have lost their confidence in one of the greatest assets of their tradition: the mysterious, creative power of the Word of God proclaimed from the pulpit. The desire to preach the Word in the pulpit has not endured in current evangelicalism because of the lost sense of the Word creating either situations or people who become doers of the Word. The picture of the one who preaches the Word from the pulpit as a doer of the Word appears to be dimming. This fading picture of the pulpit is a clear picture of how many Protestant ministers see their task and function. Their time is dictated by the vision they have of the pulpit. Many “share” rather than “preach,” pray rather than pronounce blessings, and perform under a clouded vision of their ministry because they have no clear conviction about the nature of preaching. They do not see clearly the unique and supernatural nature of preaching because they do not see clearly the unique and supernatural nature of Holy Scripture.

Many ministers allocate their time accordingly. More time is spent in motivational discussions, program planning, and church administration than in sermon study and preparation.

Both pastors and congregations alike organize the minister's schedule based on his or their view of the pulpit. Demands or expectations are placed upon the minister based upon a job description that reflects a weak view of the pulpit.

Throughout history, God has raised up men and movements whose great work was to preach and apply the Word of God to their own generation. Of course, by implication, these men have affected all generations thereafter—such men were the Puritans.

There has been much debate and confusion concerning the terms "Puritan" and "Puritanism." "Unfortunately, too often, rational, political, and social elements which were closely allied with the idea of Puritanism at various stages of its progress have largely obscured the vital religious and spiritual meaning of the term."¹ Without being exhaustive in defining these terms, one may say that Puritanism grew out of three central concepts: the New Testament pattern of personal piety, sound doctrine, and properly ordered church life.²

The blending of these elements made English Puritanism the astonishing movement that carried over into the New World in the first half of the eighteenth century. A brief

¹ Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), p. 11.

² *Ibid.*