

The 21st Century Preacher & the Current State of the Church

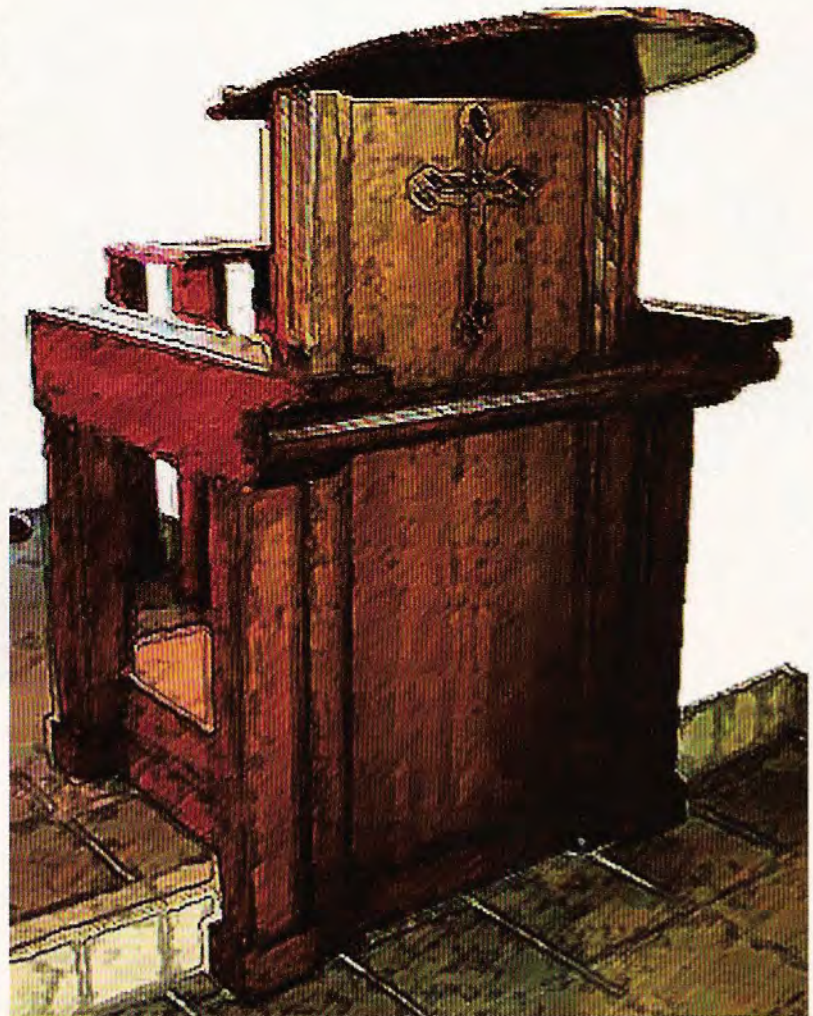
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You can travel throughout all parts of the world and you will find church denominations in every single nation. This alone reinforces the importance of the church and the influence it has on the lives of people. If you think back to growing up in church, what were your thoughts of your pastor and the church itself? The pastor was most likely a man over the age of 50. There probably weren't video cameras around the sanctuary other than the hand held one your mom brought to record your part in the church's holiday play. You'd be lucky if there was a television in the church's downstairs office let alone huge projection screens around the sanctuary. The closest ATM machine was at the nearest store, and if you were late to church, you still went straight to the same pew you sat in every Sunday. Your pastor knew every members name, and to talk with your pastor all your parents had to do was call them at home – often there were empty seats in the overflow.

Notice any changes today? Today, church leaders are younger and women leaders are rapidly increasing; technology has made it possible for churches to operate websites, stream live video across the world and send paid subscription devotional text messages to your mobile phone. With some ministries, if you get too close to the pastor you may even see bodyguards, and don't be surprised if you walk into a church and notice an ATM machine or a line for those who would like to use their credit card.

It's evident that changes are occurring, but the question is, are they changing for the better, and at what price will we pay for these changes?

In every society, the church exists, and in most cases—if not all—the church cannot operate properly without a productive and faithful leader. The primary function of a church leader, of whom many refer to as, preachers, pastors, evangelists, ministers, and bishops is to be about the business of preaching and teaching the Gospel of God, and drawing people to have closer relationships with God. It is safe to say that the church is just not what it used to be, and neither are many of its leaders. Now some may argue that this is a good thing, while others may not agree with the changes in the church.



Bishop David G. Evans, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Lindenwold, New Jersey believes that there are two types of pastors, "There are heritage minded pastors and apostolic minded pastors. Apostolic minded pastors are always looking forward and heritage minded pastors find security in things that are in the past. You may find heritage minded pastors who drag history inappropriately up into the present. But at the same time those who are considered contemporary or visionary pastors are not trying to abolish tradition, but we are trying to fulfill tradition."

Many pastors believe that like anything, change is good as long as you aren't losing sight of the word and as long as the changes don't compromise the position that God has called you to fulfill. "Progress is just considered a vanishing paradigm... and when progress is permanent it does not always include the vanishing of a previous paradigm, but the absorption of that paradigm, so that the strengths of the past are brought into the future," says Bishop Evans.

One of the biggest changes of today is that pastors are becoming much younger than what we have traditionally grown accustomed. Rev. Tyon Horne, a 33-year-old pastor of Renewed Mind Worship Center in Baltimore, Maryland says "One of the biggest mistakes that young pastors make today is compromising the gospel so that they can bring people into the Kingdom of God...I don't have to have a Hip-Hop ministry for the gospel to be effective." Horne is absolutely correct. Many young pastors, and even some of the older pastors, are compromising way too much, and in turn, people are going to church for all the wrong reasons.

Many sanctuaries are even becoming less sacred because of the changes and decisions that leaders of the church are making. While their intentions may initially be of good deed, the results aren't too positive.

24-year-old Marquis Phelps, a member of Word of Faith Family Worship Center, located in Austell, Georgia (fifteen miles outside of Atlanta) where renowned Bishop Dale C. Bronner presides, says that his biggest concern with the church and its pastors today is that "some people go to church for the wrong reasons. Some go to network, find a spouse, or gain some kind of recognition.

I would really like to see everyone who goes to church, go to honestly worship and have an encounter with God," says Phelps.

"Gandhi said, 'That if the world saw the Christ of Christians they would accept Him, but instead they see the Christians of Christ and reject Him.' The world would be in a better predicament if this was to happen."

In reference to this quote from Gandhi, a major political and spiritual leader from India, it is fair to say that many people who are skeptical about the church and the way that it's ran, frequently refer to the people of church as hypocrites, thieves, and adulterers, and because of what they witness, they make the decision to stay away from the church. When you see pastors driving luxury cars and living in million dollar homes while many of their church members are without food and heat in their homes, you then begin to question their intentions.

With many of the pastors that own opulent cars and homes, some people fail to understand that a lot of their wealth comes from the books they publish, speaking engagements they book, and some of their own separate and very profitable businesses. The fact that you are seeing an overflowing number of epicurean preachers who prosper does not necessarily mean that none of them are living the life that God has called them to have. "The man of God ought to be the example of how God can really bring favor into your life if you live the way that he asks you to live...that does not necessarily mean that every pastor that has a Bentley and a million dollar home is living the way God wants us to live," says Pastor Horne.

Unrighteous and hypocritical pastors, no matter the age, have been around for ages. However, with the increased exposure to different ministries because of things such as technology, it seems to be more prevalent today than ever before. "Back in the day people denied Christ, but today they deny the witness of Christ, the people that represent him aren't representing him right...the pastors are cheating on their wives and husbands, they are stealing money...but there are some out here right now that are fighting each and every day to live out the life of salvation that God has granted everyone," says Pastor Horne. Although the changes are inevitable the purpose remains the same.