



## John Owen's *Rules for Walking in Fellowship* Rules 16-18



Owen's book contains 22 *Rules for Walking in Fellowship*: Having considered 15 *duties* for fellowship between members of the congregation, there remain 7 *duties* of the congregation to their pastor.<sup>1</sup>

**RULE 16** – *The Word and all ordinances committed administratively to him, and dispensed by his ministerial authority, are to be diligently attended and submitted to, with ready obedience in the Lord.*

Proof texts for Rule 16: 1Cor.4:1; 2Cor.5:18,20; Heb.13:7,17

1. Where does the pastor's authority come from, and where does it *not* come from? Why is the Apostle's metaphor of "ambassador" a helpful one in this regard?
2. What motivations for recognizing "ministerial authority" are given in these verses?

Explanation of Rule 16:

*"There is a twofold power for the dispensing of the word: 1. 'Dunamis', or ability; and 2. 'Exousia', or authority. The **first**, with its attending qualifications, is mentioned and recounted in 1Tim.3:2-7, Tit.1:6-9, and many other places, and is required to be in those who are to be called to the office of minister. It may also be, in various degrees and measures, in such as are never set apart to the ministry, but who are thereby warranted to share the Gospel, when the providence of God calls them to; for the work of preaching unto the conversion of souls is a moral duty, under the general precept of 'doing good to all'. The fact that some men are appointed to the performance of this work by way of office, does not prevent it.*

*The **second**, or authority, is proper to them who are set apart to this work in an orderly manner, as we see from:*

1. Christ's institution of the office, Eph.4:11.
2. God's providential designation of the persons, Matt.9:38.
3. The church's call, election, appointment, acceptance and submission, Gal.4:14; Acts 14:23; 1Thes.5:12,13; Acts 6:3; 2Cor.8:5.

*These do not give pastors dominion over the faith of believers (2Cor.1:24), nor make them lords over God's heritage (1Pet.5:3), but entrust them with a stewardly power in the House of God (1Cor.4:1-2) – that is, the particular flock over which, in particular, they are made overseers (Acts 20:28).*

*From such ministers the Word is to be received, 1. As the truth of God (as we should from all who speak according to the Gospel). 2. As the truth held out with ministerial authority by them in particular, according to the institution of Christ.*

*The lack of a due consideration of these things lies at the bottom of all that negligence, carelessness and laziness in hearing the Word preached, which has possessed many professing Christians in our day. Nothing but a respect to the truth and authority of God in the administration of the Word will establish the minds of men in a sober and profitable attending unto it. Men are not weary of hearing until they are weary of practicing."*

3. Does an *ability* to share the Gospel make one a minister? Why or why not? What elements of the calling of a minister are mentioned?
4. How does Owen suggest the office of minister might be abused?
5. Where might a lack of respect for the authority of the ministerial office lead the congregation?

<sup>1</sup> The order of these sections is actually reversed in the original.

<sup>2</sup> Ryan McGraw, *A Theology of Corporate Prayer: Preaching, Prayer Meetings and You in 1*



Motivations for Rule 16:

*Motives to the observance of this rule are:*

1. *The name wherein they speak and administer, 2Cor.5:20.*
  2. *The work which they do, 1Cor.3:9; 2Cor.6:1; 1Tim.4:16.*
  3. *The return that they make, Heb.8:17.*
  4. *The regard that the Lord has for them in His employment, Matt.10:40,41; Luke 10:16.*
  5. *The account that hearers must make of the Word dispensed by them, 2Chr.36:15,16; Prov.1:22-29,13:13; Luke 10:16; Mark 4:24; Heb.2:1-3,4:2.*
6. How many of these motivations for submission to ministerial authority center on the man himself? What do they center on instead? Which do you personally find most persuasive, and why?

**RULE 17** – *His way of life is to be observed and diligently followed, insofar as he walks in the steps of Jesus Christ.*

Proof texts for Rule 17: Heb.13:7; 1Tim.4:12; 1Pet.5:3

7. Why do you think the Apostles stress that *pastors*, in particular, should set an example in the Christian life?

Explanations and Motivations for Rule 17:

*“That an exemplary way of life was always required for the dispensers of holy things, both under the Old Testament and New, is apparent:*

- ☛ *The glorious robes of the ministering priests in the Old Testament, the soundness and integrity of their person, without maim, imperfection, or blemish, and the Urim and Thummim, with many other ornaments, though foreshadowing Jesus Christ, yet also clearly set out the purity and holiness required in the administrators themselves (Zech.3:4).*
- ☛ *In the New, the shining of their light in all good works (Matt.5:16) is likewise emphatically required. This is not only so that no offense may be taken at the ways of God, and His worship administered by them (as happened in the Old Testament with Hophni and Phineas, 1Sam.2:17; and in the New, Phil.3:18-19). But it is also so that those who are outside may be convinced (1Tim.3:7), and the churches themselves directed in the practice of all the will and mind of God revealed by their pastors, as we see in the texts above.*

*A pastor’s life should be vocal; sermons must be practiced as well as preached. Though Noah’s workmen built the ark, yet they themselves were drowned. God will not accept the tongue where the devil has the soul. We read that Jesus did “do and teach” (Acts 1:1). If a man teaches uprightly and walks crookedly, more will fall down in the night of his life than he built in the day of his doctrine.*

*Now, as to how a minister lives an exemplary life, the principle of it must be that of the life of Christ in him, (Gal.2:20), so that when he has taught others, he himself might not be “disqualified” (1Cor.9:27). Through this principle he has a spiritual understanding, and light given him into the counsel of God, which he must then communicate (see John 5:20; 1Cor.2:12,16; 2Cor.4:6-7); and that his commitment to this work be focused and not self-seeking (Matt.5:46, Luke 6:32); which is why so many eminent qualifications of his person and duties of his lifestyle are required (1Tim.2:2-7, Titus 1:6-9) – and his aim to be an example, to the glory of God (1Tim.4:12).*

*Thus, their general conduct and the end of their faith is to be observed (Heb.13:7). And their weaknesses (where they truly are such), which may arise through the many*



temptations they are exposed to in our day, or which are imposed on them through the zeal of their adversaries who contend against them, such are to be covered with love (Gal.4:13-14). And this men will do when they conscientiously consider that even the lives of their teachers are an ordinance of God, to relieve them under temptations, and to provoke them to holiness, zeal, meekness, and self-denial.”

8. What Biblical examples can you add to Owen’s list of good and bad examples in the ministry? What were the consequences of both for the Church in their day?
9. “*A pastor’s life should be vocal; sermons must be practiced as well as preached.*” Make a list of the author’s reasons for following the pastor’s example. Do you agree with them? What dangers might arise from this rule (and can you think of any examples of such ‘in the real world’)?
10. How can a pastor possibly live up to such a calling, and how might his congregation help him?

**RULE 18** – *Prayer and supplications are continually to be made on his behalf for assistance and success in the work committed to him.*

Proof texts for Rule 18: Eph.6:18-20; 2Thes.3:1-2; Acts 12:5

11. How many specific prayer requests can you find? Using these verses as a starting point, make a prayer list for your pastor and begin using it this week.

Explanation for Rule 18:

“The greatness of the work (for which who is sufficient? 2Cor.2:16); the strength of the opposition which lies against it (1Cor.16:9; Rev.12:12; 2Tim.4:3-5); the concernment of men’s souls therein, (Acts 20:26-28; Heb.13:7; 1Tim.4:16); the conviction which is to be brought upon the world thereby (Ezek.2:5; 1Cor.1:23, 24; 2Cor.3:15,16); its aim and tendency to the glory of God in Christ – all call aloud for the fervent daily union of the saints in their supplications for their pastor’s support. That these prayers are to be for assistance, encouragement, abilities, success, deliverance, and protection, is proved in the rule. As their temptations are multiplied, so ought prayers to be multiplied on their behalf. They have many curses of men against them (Jer. 15:10); it is hoped that God hears some prayers for them, too. When many are not ashamed to revile them in public, some ought to be ashamed not to remember them in private.

Motivations for Rule 18:

1. The Word will doubtless be effectual, when the ability of the pastor to administer it is the subject of prayers (Acts 10:1-6).
2. The minister’s failing is the people’s punishment (Amos 8:11-12; Is.30:20).
3. His prayers are continually for the church, (Is.62:6-7; Rom.1:9)
4. That for which he stands in so much need of prayers, will ultimately be for the congregation’s good, and not just his own. Help him who carries the burden (Eph.6:18-20; Phil.2:17; Col.1:24).

12. Why does your pastor need your constant prayers?
13. How do you benefit from your prayers for your pastor? (see also McGraw quote<sup>2</sup>)
14. To what extent might Rules 16-18 be considered unpopular today?

“The New Testament teaching is that preaching without public prayer is virtually worthless. A good sermon without prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit is like a powerful freight train that holds the potential to be very useful, yet all the while it sits on the tracks without any fuel. What good is the train without its fuel? What good is a sermon without corporate prayer?”  
(Ryan McGraw)

<sup>2</sup> Ryan McGraw, *A Theology of Corporate Prayer: Preaching, Prayer Meetings and You* in *Puritan Reformed Journal*, 4, 2 (2012): 177

