

### **He Must Increase**

*“He [Jesus Christ] must increase, but I [John the Baptist] must decrease”* (John 3:30).

If ever a preacher was in a position to be tempted by pride, that preacher was John the Baptist. Crowds came from all over to hear him preach and to be baptised by him.

If ever a preacher was in a position to be tempted by jealousy, that preacher was John the Baptist. Jesus, whom John had baptised, began to attract more people so that it was said, “All are going to Him” (John 3:26).

Pastors are tempted by pride. They are tempted to think that the church is about them, about their abilities, talents, personality, intelligence, charm, etc. The pastor is, after all, the man on the scene. He is the one who is visibly doing so much work. Even the humblest pastor, who takes the blame when things go wrong, is therefore also tempted to take the credit when things go right.

Pastors are tempted by jealousy. They are tempted to be jealous of other pastors who are more popular or more successful in human eyes. A pastor may even be jealous of Christ if he sees that some people may be more interested in the Word of Christ than in the brilliance of the pastor or if someone corrects the pastor on the basis of the Bible.

Pride and jealousy are sins. But they are sins for which Christ died, for which He earned forgiveness. Jesus died for all human sin.

Pride and jealousy are not to dominate us. God’s power in the good news of forgiveness, for Jesus’ sake, moves us to fear and love God so that we may be humble and content with our position under Christ’s benevolent authority. Pastors and people stand together under Christ’s authority. More importantly, they stand together under the grace of Jesus Christ, which saves us.

John the Baptist is a good example of the right attitude for pastors. Christ must increase, but we must decrease. The pastor is not to be concerned with his own personal popularity. He is not to have a following of his own. The pastor is to be concerned that he does as John the Baptist did. John the Baptist directed people to Christ, saying, “*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). John told them, “*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life*” (John 3:36).

The pastor must point people to Christ, whether he enjoys the popularity which John had at one time, or whether he gets the axe as John did later. Every other idea about the ministry is nonsense.