

Southeastern News

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DON'T PLAY IT SAFE WITH UNIQUE RESPONSIBILITY, SAYS PARKS

WAKE FOREST, N.C. - While he believes the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention have a "heavy responsibility and perhaps the greatest potention" in world missions, Keith Parks feels that some ministers have decided to "play her safe, and they've become sterile, unproductive keepers of warehouses rather than stewards of the Gospel."

Parks, President of the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board told an audience at a recent Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Missionary Day that Christians "often times decided" to follow a "safe" course "because of the potential danger, because of the opposition, because loved ones insist that they can serve as well in the next town as they can around the world, and because their own desire for what they perceive to be fame and fortune conflicts with the responsibility for spreading the Gospel."

Stating that stewardship is not just the collection, giving, and management of money, Parks said he had a "simple

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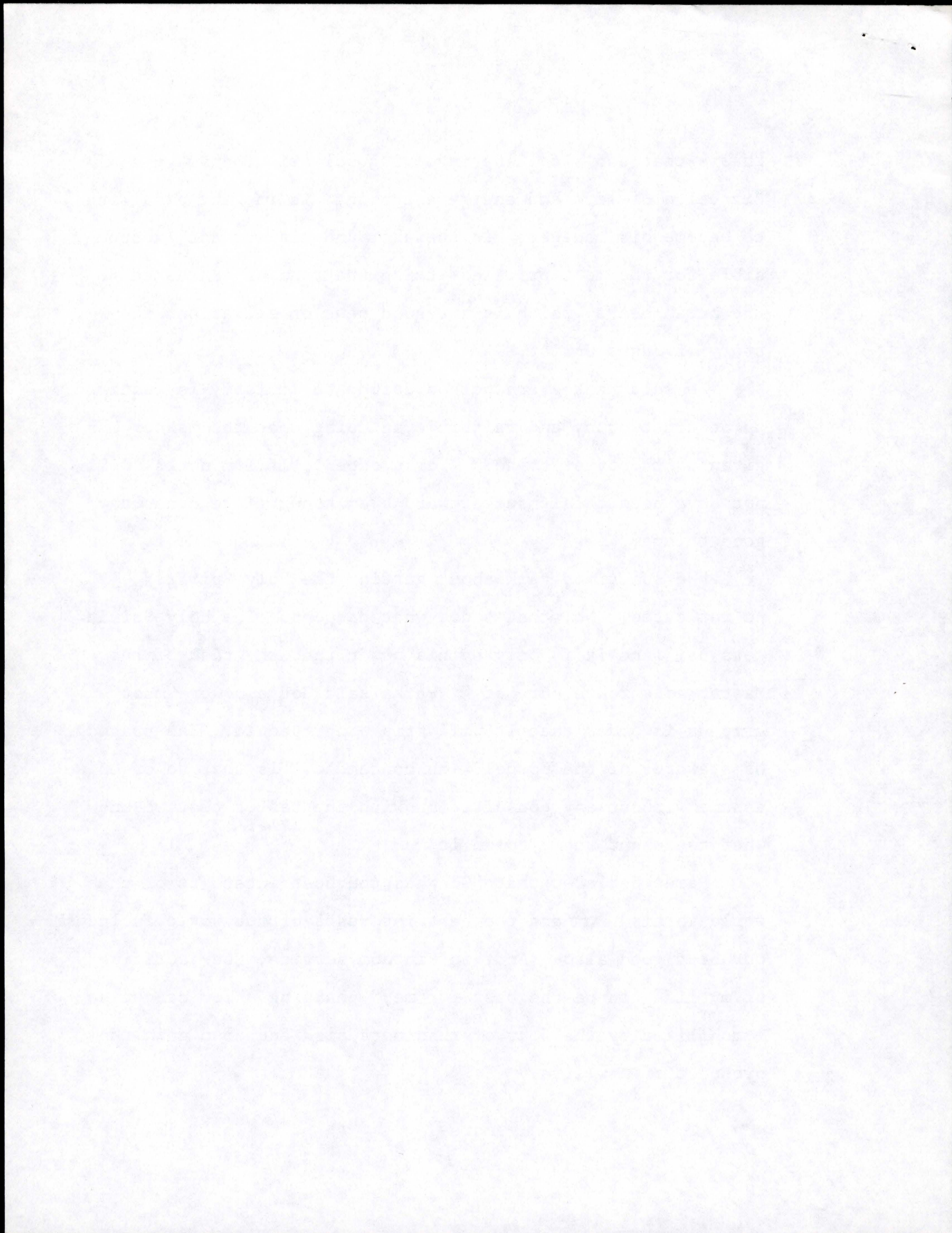


thesis that God's calling involving salvation, involving a direction of life and energy and being, is in fact a calling to become his manager, his steward, and his servant, responsible for the most priceless thing that can be entrusted to the human heart, which is the good news of salvation, the story of Jesus Christ."

He said that every person called to ministry is required to be trustworthy and faithful "in doing what the Master has given us the trust to do." Parks added, "If I'm not, I will not have been a faithful steward even though I've done many good things."

"We sometimes talk about getting the Holy Spirit," he reflected. "No, that's not what happens. The Holy Spirit gets us. And it is only by his power that the task of the Master gets taken care of." Parks said God's power "must grip us in order that it will grip other people. The tragedy of stewards of the Gospel," he contended, "is that so often we assume without any consultation with the Master that we know what to do and where to do it."

Parks declared that "God has the best interests of the world in his heart and the best interests of the world includes our best good also. And, in Kingdom service, the sacrifice of my life can be the best for me," charging, "You cannot be immobilized by the fear of running a risk and also gain the prospect of new life."



The former missionary to Indonesia lamented the fact that only about 5% of seminary graduates will become foreign missionaries, stating, "there is no way to read the Bible and reduce it to North Carolina, or North America, or the English language. You cannot read it honestly without reading into it the multiplied billions on earth." He said each redeemed person has "the responsibility of sharing the Gospel with everyone who hasn't heard."

Parks noted the current growth of Christianity in Africa, China, and Russia and added, "The only limit to the spread of the Gospel is just someone to stand up to preach." Referring to the more than 13,000,000 members of churches who work together through the Southern Baptist Convention he said, "the truth is that of all of the Christian groups today, the one that apparently has heavy responsibility and perhaps the greatest potential is the one in which we find ourselves."

"I believe God has raised us up to be a catalyst, to be a stimulant, to be a model, to be an encourager, to link hearts and hands with other groups and to at least be a part of preaching the Gospel to the world. It could be done."

