



**Remarks
By
The Honourable T. Desmond Bannister
Minister of Education**

At

**St. Paul's Baptist Church
'Boys to Men' Conference**

Thursday, 25th February, 2010

**St. Paul's Baptist Church
Bernard Road, Fox Hill**

6:30 pm

Salutations:

Reverend Dr. Carl J. Rahming, Senior Pastor of St. Paul's Baptist Church;

Reverend George Bodie; Head of the Men's Ministry and my good friend;

The Honourable Fred Mitchell, MP for the Fox Hill Constituency;

Conference Delegates;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening.

I am extremely pleased that my good friend Reverend George Bodie has invited me to address this purpose-filled conference that seeks to change lives through changing mindsets.

If you have ever seen a movie called, “The Untouchables” starring Kevin Costner as FBI agent Elliot Ness; you will recall at the end of the movie where he is being interviewed by reporters after capturing the notorious mobster, Al Capone he said, “**We never give up**”.

That is the type of momentum I feel in this hall tonight; a spirit of ‘never giving up’ and we cannot give up because too much is at stake. The men of this church, I am convinced that you are on a mission to save challenged boys so that they can make their contribution to our great nation – The Bahamas. This is indeed a noble cause; it is a national cause that has tremendous implications for the future of The Bahamas. Your refusal to be among the nay-sayers is testimony to the fact that you are doing God’s work.

The reality is that our young men are generally more inclined to be a part of the negative statistic than the positive. Statistics have shown that our young boys and men are more likely to die from violence or end up in prison or they will drop out of school and become steeped in anti-social behaviours.

When Jesus called Simon Peter and Andrew to be his disciples, He told them, 'I will make you fishers of men'. (Matthew 4:19). This is what you are doing through this conference bringing young men into a relationship with people who are doing the work of the Lord.

I applaud the Men's ministry of this church for joining with other social partners to organize this event and to provide hope and TO show that someone cares for them even though they may be lonely and rejected inside.

It is critical in this time that we live in that more step up to the plate to mentor boys. So many the men who find themselves on the wrong side the law attribute their plight to their absent father. Boys need positive role models who can teach them being is a man means being responsible and caring as well have a strong will not to cave in peer pressure.

Boys need mentors that will tell that men cry, men love, men can have fall down and get up to try again.

I am rooting for the success of this conference because; I am hoping that these young men and all who have come seeking answers will realize that we need one another and that we are one another's keepers.

Earlier, I stated that this was a purpose-filled occasion. I note that organizers hope to achieve multiple objectives during the course of this two day meeting, namely:

- To show our young men how the road will take them from boyhood to manhood;

- To explain that that one mistake or several mistakes do not condemn you to a life of failure;
- To convince you that whether you come from a dysfunctional family or not you are a promise to the world waiting to be fulfilled;
- To familiarize persons present with some of the fundamentals of raising children particularly boys in this erratic world;
- And to show you that if you have God at the centre of your life you will withstand the temptations and tribulations of this life. The fact is that Jesus who was all-perfect called on his Father God to strengthen his will against Satan's during his forty days in the wilderness; so we as mortal beings need to call on Him even more.

Ladies and gentlemen, young men in particular, as Minister of Education I am greatly concerned about the disparity within the educational system where girls outrank boys two to one in academics; attendance and most of the top categories in school.

At the same time, I know of many examples of our boys preparing to be leaders while they are in school. I see many great artists; builders; athletes and career professionals among the boys I meet in our schools. It appears that boys are on equal footing with the girls until they enter Junior High School then they become distracted by peers in and outside of the school grounds. They lose the dream they had while in primary school; that dream of becoming a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman or a fireman.

Boys, we need you if we are to survive as a country. We need you because you have a purpose in this world to make things better and be a strong family leader.

Pastor Rahming, Pastor Bodie and men of St. Paul's Baptist Church in historic Fox Hill I am confident that when these young men have completed this programme, they will begin to measure themselves and find that are worthy of all of life's opportunities.

I applaud you for investing your time and your talents in this meeting and I pray that all who are here will be enriched and impact their friends and family in a positive way You have my support, particularly in the area of education as you begin your journey to a life of purpose.

Thank you and good evening.