

What the
Bible
say's to
the
Minister

The image shows the spine of an old, dark leather-bound Bible. The words "HOLY BIBLE" are embossed in gold lettering on the spine. The background is a gradient from dark red on the left to light yellow on the right.

HOLY
BIBLE

What the Bible Says To The Minister: The Minister's Personal Handbook: A special book written for God's chosen servants. It speaks to the needs and concerns that ministers face every day, and tells how to best deal with the pressures they face. Great for personal growth and encouragement, or give it to your favorite pastor or seminary student! *Available in English and Spanish*

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Dedicated

To all the men and women of the world who preach and teach the
Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And to the mercy and Grace of God.

Demonstrated to us through Christ

“In whom we have redemption through His
blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the
riches of His grace.” (Eph. 1:7)

Out of the mercy and grace of God, His Word has flowed. Let every
person know that God will have mercy upon him, forgiving and
using him to fulfill His glorious plan of salvation.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (Jn. 3:16–17)

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim. 2:3–4)

This book is written and prepared for God’s people to use in their preparation for preaching and teaching.

Our Fivefold Mission & Purpose:

- 1. To share the Word of God with the world.*
- 2. To help the believer, both minister and layman alike, in his understanding, preaching, and teaching of God’s Word.*
- 3. To do everything we possibly can to lead men, women, boys, and girls to give their hearts and lives to Jesus Christ and to secure the eternal life which He offers.*
- 4. To do all we can to minister to the needy of the world.*

5. *To give Jesus Christ His proper place, the place which the Word gives Him.*

Therefore—No work of Leadership Ministries Worldwide will ever be personalized.

This material, like similar works, has come from imperfect man and is thus susceptible to human error. We are nevertheless grateful to God for both calling us and empowering us through His Holy Spirit to undertake this task. Because of His goodness and grace, ***The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible***—New Testament is complete in 14 volumes as well as the single volume of ***The Minister's***

Handbook:

God has given the strength and stamina to bring us this far. Our confidence is that, as we keep our eyes on Him and grounded in the undeniable truths of the Word, we will continue working through the Old Testament volumes, ***The Teacher's Outline and Study Bible***, and CD-ROM. Future materials will include ***The Believer's Outline Bible***, and similar *Outline* and *Handbook* materials.

To everyone everywhere who preaches and teaches the Word, we offer this material first to Him in whose name we labor and serve, and for whose glory it has been produced.

Our daily prayer is that each volume will lead thousands, millions, yes even billions, into a better understanding of the Holy Scriptures and a fuller knowledge of Jesus Christ the incarnate Word, of whom the Scriptures so faithfully testify.

Dear Friend,

Picture this: a business or professional person in the secular world has to speak at a conference before one or two hundred of his professional peers. How much time will he take out of his weekly work schedule to prepare for his speech? Two hours? Five hours? Ten hours? What if he had to speak to the same group two times—or three times—all in the same week? How much time would he then take out of his regular duties to prepare two or three different speeches?

But what if he had to do more than just prepare and deliver two or three speeches? What if he had to look after and minister to every one of the two hundred persons who attended the conference? What if he had to minister—to personally minister—to every one of them ...

- ✚ When one of them got sick and went to the hospital.
- ✚ When one of their family members was hospitalized.
- ✚ When a serious problem arose.
- ✚ When some counseling was needed.
- ✚ When a family member died.
- ✚ When a child got married.
- ✚ When a major committee met.

and on top of this ...

- ✚ What if the professional had to manage the conference: its business, work, committees, schedules, finances, building program, whatever came up—with all the surrounding problems of management?
- ✚ What if the professional had to be constantly out visiting and reaching new people to attend and join the conference association?
- ✚ What if the professional had to constantly face the scrutiny of his peers and handle any and all criticisms, grumblings, and divisions that arose?

Many a professional person would throw up his hands, walk off the job, and quit. But this is your task—the task of the minister—in today’s industrialized world. And what a task it is, humanly impossible! But not with God. You are God’s minister—His choice servant, His dear servant—whom He has called to minister to His precious people. God knows every throb of your heart ...

- ✚ Every joy, pleasure, ache, burden, cry, tear, and care.
- ✚ Every trial and temptation that often attacks you.
- ✚ Every person who criticizes, opposes, and persecutes you.
- ✚ Every duty and demand you face.
- ✚ Every sermon you must prepare and deliver and the pressure of it.
- ✚ Every burden for your dear people and for the lost of the world.
- ✚ Every care you have for the church and its believers.
- ✚ Every moment of disappointment and discouragement you face.

God knows—He knows all about you. He knows when you have need and exactly what the need is. He knows your need even better than you know. More importantly, God wants to meet your need. He wants to give you the exact provision you need—perfectly and completely. He wants to fill you with the very best, with His very own fullness, the fullness of His presence and provision.

This is what this book is all about: this is ...

✚ God's Word to the minister.

✚ What God has to say to the minister?

Most if not all of the verses in the Bible that *speak directly* to the minister are here in this book—all arranged under the subjects to which they speak.

This is what God has to say to you, His dear minister—His choice servant—whom He has called to minister to His precious people.

It is our prayer—daily prayer—that in the following pages you will find God's voice speaking through His Word, speaking the exact message you need when you need it:

✚ Brokenness before God—Comfort

✚ Rededication—Encouragement

✚ A renewed call—Peace

✚ A new challenge and vision—Strength

✚ Purpose and meaning—Power

✚ Love and understanding—Assurance

✚ Correction and instruction—Security

✚ Restoration: repentance—Victory and forgiveness

May our wonderful Lord bless you ever so richly as you use this, “The Minister’s Personal Handbook,” in your own life and ministry for Christ. May He use it to speak the exact message you need as you live day by day and go forth for Him. Refer to it often and do exactly what He says, and our Lord will meet your every need and use you beyond all imagination.

With the very warmest of regards, we are,

LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES WORLDWIDE



PART ONE

YOUR MINISTRY

You have been given the greatest ministry in the entire world, that of ministering to people and reconciling them to the Lord and Majesty of the universe, God Himself. For this reason, *you must understand and be fully committed* to the great ministry He has given you.

CHAPTER 1

What Your Call as a Minister Is

As a minister, you have been given the greatest privilege and responsibility in all the world: called to be a minister of the living God, called by the Sovereign Lord and Majesty of the universe.

1. *You are chosen by God Himself.*

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me” (Isaiah 43:10).

“Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel” (Amos 7:14-15).

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John” (John 1:6).

Thought

It is God the Father—the only living and true God, the Sovereign Lord and Majesty of the universe—who has called and chosen you to be a minister. You have been given the highest privilege in all the world: you have been called and chosen to be a minister by the Lord GOD Himself.

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak” (Jeremiah 1:5-7).

2. You are chosen by Jesus Christ.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).

“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21).

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12).

Thought

It is the Son of the living God, Christ Jesus, who has called and chosen you to be a minister. He has chosen you to go and bear fruit among men. You are the most privileged person in all the world: you have been chosen to be a minister—chosen by the Son of God Himself.

3. You are chosen by the Holy Spirit of God.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Thought

It is the Holy Spirit of God who has called you to be a minister. He has chosen you so that He can live within you—chosen you to be His instrument, His channel, His person through whom He can live and work upon earth.

- ✚ The Holy Spirit wants to use your body and your life to show how a person is to live upon earth.
- ✚ The Holy Spirit wants to conform you to the image of Christ—to make you an example for the world, an example of how God wants people to live: in all godliness and righteousness.
- ✚ The Holy Spirit wants to use you to preach and teach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

You have been given the most glorious privilege in all the world. You have been called and chosen by the Holy Spirit of God: you have been called to live just like Christ lived—a holy and righteous life—and you have been called to proclaim the gospel of Christ to a world lost and reeling under the weight of enormous need.

4. *You are counted faithful—counted trustworthy—by Christ.*

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12).

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).

“I am made a minister, according to the dispensation [stewardship, trust] of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God” (Col. 1:25).

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

Thought

This is a most wonderful thought, that Christ Jesus counts you trustworthy (1 Tim. 1:12). He trusts you to be faithful, and in the final analysis, He knows that you will be faithful to Him. This is one of the reasons He has chosen you and put you into the ministry.

Note the word “enabled.” It means strength and power. The power of your ministry comes from Christ. Christ gives you the power to minister and to conquer all. You must always remember this:

✚ No matter what may confront you or how far down you may fall, Christ counts you faithful and Christ will give you the power to be faithful. Christ knows that you will arise and begin to serve with renewed fervor.

This is the reason Christ called you: because in the final analysis you will be faithful. How can you know and be assured of this? Because of the forgiveness and the power and faithfulness of Christ. Christ will lift you up. Therefore when you fall, you must arise and seek the forgiveness of Christ and begin to walk anew in the strength and power of Christ.

5. You have been called to be a minister by the gift of God’s grace.

“I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least

of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles [unbelievers] the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephes. 3:7-8).

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1).

Thought

You have been called to be a minister of Christ (1 Cor. 4:1). Note four significant facts.

- a) The word “minister” means an *under-rower*. It refers to the slaves who sat in the belly of the large ships and pulled at the great oars to carry the boat through the sea. Christ is the Master of the ship and the minister is *one of the slaves of Christ*. Note: you are only one of many under-rowing servants. Remember also that slaves in the belly of the ship were bound by chains. They were allowed to do nothing but serve the master of the ship. You are a bound slave of Christ: you exist only to row for the Master. You do not and cannot serve anyone else.
- b) God has showered His grace upon you and made you a minister (Ephes. 3:7-8). God has been merciful to you, forgiven you so much. You owe God your life, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. No greater call and privilege could ever be given a person.
- c) Your greatest glory is God’s call and God’s work. This was certainly true of Paul (Ephes. 3:7-8). Paul saw the dignity of the ministry, the dignity of being especially chosen by God. William Barclay points out that the ministry was a radiant privilege for Paul. God did not have to persuade Paul to be a minister. No one had

to persuade Paul to teach (Ephes. 4:1); to sing (Ephes. 5:19); to speak for God (Ephes. 4:17); to visit (2 Cor. 13:1f); to administer the affairs of the church (1 Cor. 7:1f); to give his money (2 Cor. 8:1f; 2 Cor. 9:1f). Paul did not have to be coerced. He saw his call to be a minister as the greatest of all privileges. As a minister of God, you must see the glorious privilege you have in serving Christ (*The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p.145).

d) Your call to be a minister and a preacher is a gift, a free gift of God's grace. This is exactly what Paul says (Ephes. 3:7-8). God had the right to call Paul simply because God has all rights. God is God. There was no merit, no worth, no value within Paul that caused God to choose him as a minister and as a preacher. Paul simply exclaims, "What a privilege! What a responsibility! The less of the least called by God to minister and to preach!"

✚ The salvation in Christ caused Paul to become a minister (Ephes. 3:7).

✚ The salvation in Christ caused Paul to become a preacher. Note Paul's utter humility. He had what we all need: a deep, intense sense of unworthiness before God.

As a minister of God, you have the greatest of all calls. You have been privileged with the highest of privileges. God has showered His grace upon you and called you to be His minister to a world that reels under the weight of suffering and death.

6. *You have been called to be a steward—a servant—of God.*

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1).

“For a bishop [minister] must be blameless, as the steward of God” (Titus 1:7).

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

Thought

You are the steward of God. The word “steward” (oikonomos) means the overseer of an estate. The steward was always a slave, subject to a master, but he was *placed in charge* of the other slaves throughout the master’s house or estate. He controlled the staff and ran the whole operation for the master. He was set over others, yet he himself was still a slave of the master. His work was not closely supervised; therefore, he had to be trustworthy and responsible.

Note what the minister is made a steward over: the mysteries of God. A mystery is not something hard to understand. Rather, it is something that has been hidden and kept secret. It is something that was undiscoverable by human reason, but now is revealed by God. It is crystal clear to those to whom it is revealed, but it is completely alien to those who do not receive it. What are the mysteries of God? They are the truths—the glorious truths—of God’s Word. Who are the ones to whom the mysteries are revealed? The stewards, the ministers, the believing servants of Christ.

As a minister of God, you are to be esteemed highly for your work’s sake. You are *only* a servant of God’s, but you are the servant whom God has made steward over His

household, over His church and His people. You have been honored by God: you have been made responsible for the imperishable mysteries of God, the great truths of God's Holy Word. You do not deal with perishable things such as money and possessions, but with the eternal things of God Himself, the eternal truths that God wants proclaimed to the world.

7. You have been called to be an ambassador for Christ.

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit [oh! to know], that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

Thought

God has called you to be His ambassador to the world. He has given you the ministry of delivering the message of God to the whole world, the message of reconciliation. No greater call could ever be issued; no higher position could ever be held. Note two significant points.

a) You are given the highest of titles: you are an “ambassador for Christ.” The “ambassador” (presbeuomen) is a person who is sent forth as an official envoy to represent the Sender and to announce the message of the Sender. Four things are always true about the ambassador.

✚ You belong to the One who sent you out.

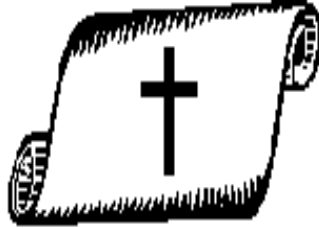
✚ You are commissioned to be sent out. You exist only for the purpose for which you were sent.

✚ You possess all the authority and power of the One who sent you out.

✚ You are sent forth with the message of the Sender. The message is not your own.

b) You are given the greatest of messages: “Be reconciled to God.” The message is so critical that you are to “beseech” (deometha) men: beg, entreat, cry, and plead with them to be reconciled to God.

Note that it is “for Christ’s sake” that you are to plead with men. Christ has paid the ultimate price to make reconciliation available to men: He has taken the sins of men upon Himself and borne the condemnation for them. Because He has done so much, every person owes his life to Christ—every person should be reconciled to God. For Christ’s sake, a person should give himself to God.



CHAPTER 2

What Your Aim as a Minister Must Be

As a minister, the aim—the target and mark—of your life is clearly spelled out in Scripture. You are to set your life upon these goals. You are to adopt these goals and be utterly consumed with reaching them.

1. *You must know, believe, and understand God.*

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me” (Isaiah 43:10).

Thought

This is the reason God created you, saved you, and called you into the ministry: that you may know, believe, and understand Him.

- a) Your aim must be to know God: know Him personally and intimately—grow to know Him more and more as you walk day by day.
- b) Your aim must be to believe God.

✚ Believe His love for the world.

✚ Believe His salvation and call.

✚ Believe His promise of eternal life.

✚ Believe His Word, the Holy Scriptures.

✚ Believe He is with you no matter the trial or temptation: that He will never forsake you, that He cares for you and is looking after you.

✚ Believe He has called and commissioned you to proclaim His Word to a lost and dying world, a world reeling in desperate need.

c) Your aim must be to understand God.

✚ Understand that He alone is God, the only living and true God, the Sovereign Lord and Majesty of the universe.

✚ Understand that God is loving as well as holy and righteous—that God is merciful and gracious as well as just—that God will forgive sin as well as judge sin.

✚ Understand that God loves and cares for man, that He has demonstrated His love in the most supreme way possible: He has given His Son to die for sin so that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.

- ✚ Understand that God alone saves man; therefore, He alone is to be worshiped and served by man.

You have been called to be God's witness and servant upon earth for this one great aim: that you may *know*, *believe*, and *understand* God.

2. *You must personally know Christ and the power of His resurrection.*

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:10-11).

Thought

As a minister, you must seek a victorious experience with Christ. You must seek to know Christ—to know Him personally and to know Him intimately—to know His glorious power over the world and all that is in the world. Your great pursuit in life must be to seek Christ.

- Your aim must be to know Christ: know Him personally and intimately—grow to know Him more and more as you walk day by day.
- Your aim must be to know the power of Christ's resurrection: to call upon the power of Christ in conquering this world with all its trials and temptations, sin and death.

- c) Your aim must be to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings: to suffer for the same reasons that Christ suffered—to save and minister to people.
- d) Your aim must be to be conformed to Christ's death: to subject yourself totally to God—to deny yourself and put your desires and flesh to death and to do only the will of God.

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

3. You must forget the past and press on for the prize.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14).

Thought

Forgetting the past and pressing on is a difficult thing to do. But as a minister you must do it. How? By concentrating and controlling your mind and by reaching forth to those things which are before you. Note the concentration and focus:

BUT THIS ONE THING I DO.

In one focused act, you must forget the past and reach forth to those things that are before you. This act involves two steps: both forgetting and reaching forth. The past cannot be forgotten without reaching forth to what lies ahead. You must not sit around moaning and regretting the past. You must not wallow around in self-pity when you come short or fail. You must not allow the feelings of being unworthy to grip you. We are all unworthy, *totally unworthy*, and we cannot be more unworthy than to be *totally unworthy*. This is not to excuse our failure and shortcoming. God holds us accountable. But we are to confess and forsake sin and failure.

This is what you—all ministers of God—must always do. Confess and repent and get up and begin to serve Christ with a renewed commitment. You must not concentrate upon the past. The things of the past are to be forgotten. The things of the future are to be the focus of your mind. You are to zero in on the things at hand and on the things that lie ahead. If you do this, you will conquer and overcome in life, and you will complete and fulfill your ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. *You must set this as your great aim and eagerly expect and hope to reach it:*

✚ *Not to be ashamed in anything.*

✚ *To exalt Christ whether it be by life or by death.*

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Phil. 1:20).

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

“I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience” (2 Tim. 1:3).

Thought

The only place people can see Jesus Christ living is in the body and life of a believer. Consequently, there is only one place where you can magnify and glorify Jesus Christ: that place is in your body. You must, therefore, commit your body totally to Jesus Christ.

a) You must guard and keep your body from. . .

- ✚ Wondering and questioning God and His Word.
- ✚ Becoming discouraged and depressed.
- ✚ Becoming complacent and slothful.
- ✚ Becoming lazy and undisciplined.
- ✚ Sinning and failing.
- ✚ Denying and turning away from Christ.
- ✚ Overeating and drunkenness.

✚ Immorality and drugs.

b) You must commit your body totally to Jesus Christ. . .

✚ So that you will not be ashamed of anything.

✚ So that you will exalt Christ, whether it be by life or by death.

5. You must have one great concern: consistency, not to offend in anything. You must prove that you are a true minister of God—that you are faithful through all the experiences of life, through all trials and temptations.

“Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God,

✚ **In much patience.**

✚ **In afflictions.**

✚ **In necessities.**

✚ **In distresses.**

✚ **In stripes.**

✚ **In imprisonments.**

✚ **In tumults.**

✚ **In labors.**

✚ **In watching.**

✚ **In fasting.**

- ✚ **By pureness.**
- ✚ **By knowledge.**
- ✚ **By longsuffering.**
- ✚ **By kindness.**
- ✚ **By the Holy Ghost.**
- ✚ **By love unfeigned.**
- ✚ **By the word of truth.**
- ✚ **By the power of God.**
- ✚ **By the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.**
- ✚ **By honor and dishonor.**
- ✚ **By evil report and good report.**
- ✚ **As deceivers, and yet true.**
- ✚ **As unknown, and yet well known.**
- ✚ **As dying, and, behold, we live.**
- ✚ **As chastened, and not killed.**
- ✚ **As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.**
- ✚ **As poor, yet making many rich.**
- ✚ **As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”**
 - **(2 Cor. 6:3-10; cp. 2 Cor. 4:8-10).**

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Thought

As a minister, you must have one great concern: consistency, to offend in nothing. You must aim to be so consistent. . .

- ✚ That you will never cause anyone to reject or turn sour on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ✚ That you will never cause a person to stumble or fall.
- ✚ That you will never be a poor reflection upon the ministry.

You must aim and seek diligently to bring only honor to the ministry and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must prove that you are a true minister of God, no matter the severity of the trial or temptation. You must be strong against all trials and temptations, struggling to conquer them all. You must not offend anyone in anything. This must be your great concern, your great aim in the ministry.

6. *You must fulfill the supreme requirement of God: that you be faithful.*

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

Thought

As a minister of Christ, God requires one thing of you: faithfulness. Faithfulness is the one essential demanded of you.

- ✚ You are not required to be eloquent, brilliant, intelligent, loaded with ability, or successful. You are required to be *faithful*.
- ✚ You are not required by God to be an administrator, counsellor, visitor, door-greeter, or socializer—as important as these ministries are. You are required to be *faithful*.

You are required to be faithful in ministering the mysteries of God. By mysteries is meant the *truths of God's Word*. You are held accountable and shall be judged for how well you minister the truths of God's Word.

- ✚ You must not hold back or fail to share the truths of God.
- ✚ You must not substitute some other message for the truths of God.
- ✚ You must not mix some other message with the truths of God.

You must be faithful to your call. You are the minister of Christ and the steward of God's mysteries, of the truths of His Word. You must—absolutely must—proclaim the mysteries of God, His Holy Word.

“According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:11-12).

“Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD” (Jonah 1:1-3).

“And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD” (Jonah 3:1-3).

7. *You must be faithful, so faithful that you are totally abandoned and surrendered to Christ.*

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

Thought

This is a striking verse, but it is also a precious verse, and should be read many times to get the full impact of its message.

Paul did not count his life “dear” unto himself. His life was not for him to use as he pleased, not for earthly comfort or pleasure. His life was not for himself; it was for Christ. His life was “dear” (timian), that is, *precious* and *valuable*; but it was not for

himself, not for his own use. His life was the *precious* and *valuable* possession of the Lord. The Lord possessed his life, for he had given it to the Lord, and the Lord was using it to the maximum.

Paul had given his life to the Lord for two reasons. First, Paul wished to finish the course of his life with joy. He wished to be faithful and diligent, running the Christian race to the end (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:13-14). Note: he did complete his course, proclaiming its fulfillment to all believers.

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

What a glorious *testimony and challenge* to you and to all others who preach the gospel of Christ. May God grant that you—that every true minister of God—finish your course with joy, faithfully and diligently running the race to the end.

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

Second, Paul wished to finish the ministry which the Lord Jesus Christ had given him. Note what his ministry was—to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God.

As the minister of Christ, you must do just what Paul did; you must have the same testimony that Paul had: you must abandon and surrender yourself totally to Christ.

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

“And thou [Ezekiel] shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious” (Ezekiel 2:7).

8. *You must be faithful to the end of life.*

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Thought

As a minister, when you come to the end of life, you must have the most glorious of testimonies. You must be able to say with Paul:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day” (2 Tim. 4:7-8a).

The way Paul describes his life is full of meaning. He quickly glances back over his life and uses three pictures to describe it, the pictures of a soldier, an athlete, and a steward. As a minister, you must be able to say the same things about your life.

a) You must live life just like a faithful soldier: “I have fought a good fight.” Paul had responded to the call of the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

✚ He had volunteered to serve Christ.

✚ He had separated himself from this world, sacrificing all that he was and had to be a soldier for Christ—a soldier totally committed to the mission of Christ.

✚ He had suffered through the trials, temptations, criticisms, and attacks launched by the enemies of Christ, both the human and spiritual enemies.

✚ He had fought a “good” (kalos) fight: a fight that was worthy, honorable, noble, and commendable.

✚ He had done his time, stuck to the mission of Christ to the very end.

Therefore, Paul could victoriously declare, “I have fought a good fight.” He was being released from his service as a soldier for the King, released to go home to live at peace in the kingdom of his dear Lord forever and ever. This, too, must be your testimony: as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you must be able to declare, “I have fought a good fight.”

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12).

“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions” (Hebrews 10:32).

b) You must run and finish the course of your life; you must complete the race of life just like the athlete runs and finishes the course of his race. This is powerful, for it means that Paul disciplined and controlled his life to the utmost—just like the Olympian athlete.

✚ He controlled what he ate and drank and what he did with his body and mind.

✚ He focused upon the course of life, how he ran it. He could not risk being distracted by the things of the world nor of the flesh lest he become a castaway and be disqualified from running the race.

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:23-27).

- c) You must keep the faith. You must look after the faith just like a good steward looks after the estate of his master. The Lord had *entrusted* the faith to Paul, and Paul had kept the faith. He had proven faithful; he had faithfully managed the faith for his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The idea is that of a trust, of a management contract between Christ and Paul. Paul is saying that he had kept the terms of the contract; he had managed and looked after the trust faithfully and well. Think about this for a moment—all the sufferings that Paul went through—the terrible trials—the times that he could have . . .

Dumped the trust of the faith or laid it aside and ignored it. But he never did. He had been chosen by the Lord and Master of life to manage the trust of God, even the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Paul took the trust and managed it through all—both good and bad times. He never forsook the faith. And because he had been faithful, it was time for him to bear the fruit of his labor. He was now to reap the benefits of the faith; he was to be given all the rights and privileges of the Lord's estate—to live and enjoy its pleasures forevermore.



CHAPTER 3

What Your Purpose as a Minister Is

Why has God called you to be a minister? What are His purposes for calling you? God has several very specific purposes He wants to accomplish through you. Scripture is clear in describing just what these purposes are.

1. *You are to be a pattern of the glorious truth that God saves sinners—a living example of God’s mercy.*

“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (1 Tim. 1:16).

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

“In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing . . .

✚ Incorruptness.

✚ Gravity.

✚ Sincerity.

✚ Sound speech.

... that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Titus 2:6-8).

Thought

God has been longsuffering toward you—very longsuffering. He has had mercy upon you, saved you, and called you to be His minister to the world. But there is a reason God has done so much for you: that you might be a living example of His longsuffering and mercy.

a) You are to be a pattern—a demonstration, an example—that God is longsuffering and not willing that any should perish or die. You are to be a pattern of God’s mercy, that He will have mercy upon anyone who comes to Him for mercy. And note: you are God’s minister to the world; therefore, you are to be *the first—the foremost—example* of God’s longsuffering and mercy. You are to be the first to live and proclaim the longsuffering and mercy of God.

b) You are to be an example to all believers. . .

✚ In word.

✚ In the Holy Spirit.

✚ In purity.

✚ In behavior.

✚ In love.

✚ In faith.

c) You are to be a pattern—an example—of good works in doctrine and teaching:

- ✚ In proclaiming a pure doctrine.
- ✚ In proclaiming the message sincerely and with dignity.
- ✚ In proclaiming the message with sound words.

As stated, you are to be the first—the foremost—example of God’s longsuffering and mercy to the human race. You are to set a blazing example in all good works and in keeping the message of God uncorrupted.

2. You are to go and make disciples of all nations.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching [making disciples of] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19-20).

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

Thought

This is the great commission of Jesus Christ to His followers (Matthew 28:19-20). This is one of the most important verses in all the Bible, for it tells you as a minister of the gospel exactly what your purpose and task are: you are to go and make disciples of all nations.

The word “teach” in some translations is the Greek word make disciples. What does it mean to make disciples? It means to do exactly what Christ did. When Christ found a person who was willing to commit his life to God—totally commit his life—Christ attached Himself to that person. Christ began to mold and make that person into His image.

The word *attach* is the key word. It is probably the word that best describes discipleship. Christ made disciples of men by attaching Himself to them, and through that personal attachment, they were able to observe His life and conversation. In seeing and hearing Him, they began to absorb and assimilate His very character and behavior. They began to follow Him and to serve Him more closely. In simple terms this is what our Lord did. This is the way He made disciples. This was His mission and His method, His obsession: to attach Himself to willing believers.

There is another way to describe what Christ did. Christ envisioned something beyond Himself and beyond His day and time. He envisioned an *extension* of Himself, an *extension* of His very being, and an *extension* of His mission and method. The way He chose to extend Himself was discipleship, attaching Himself to committed persons, and through attachment, the persons absorbed and assimilated the Lord’s very character and mission.

They in turn attached themselves to others and discipled them. They, too, expected their disciples to make disciples of others who were willing to commit their lives to Christ. This was the way the glorious message of Christ was to march down through the centuries (2 Tim. 2:2).

There is no question what our Lord's commission is: we are to go. But more than that, we are to make disciples, to *attach* ourselves to those persons who will follow our Lord until they in turn can make disciples (2 Tim. 2:2).

Your purpose as a minister of God is . . .

- ✚ To disciple others: pick out several believers who are willing to commit all they are and have to Jesus Christ and *attach* yourself to them. (Pick out as many as you can handle.)
- ✚ To teach the willing believer all you know: let him walk and talk with you and see you live, pray, teach, minister, eat, and relax. Let him observe you day by day as much as possible and absorb *Christ in you*.
- ✚ To always be discipling some believers, and then turning them loose to disciple others. (Set a goal as to how long you think it will take to train each disciple, and then turn each one loose to disciple others. As you turn each one loose, then pick out another committed believer to replace him in your group of disciples.)

Do this—disciple others—for it is the great commission of Christ, the very method He used. We can soon reach the world if you and all other ministers will follow this simple instruction of Christ: disciple—pick out and attach yourself to all who are willing to commit their lives to the ministry.


3. You are to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

“[Christ] whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28).

Thought

God wants every person to be reached and presented perfect before Him. “Perfect” means mature and complete. This is your overriding purpose, your supreme objective: to go after every person—try to reach every single soul—and present every person to God as a mature and complete believer in Christ Jesus. How can you accomplish this task? Note the verse:

 Preach Christ.

 Warn every man.

 Teach every man in all wisdom.

4. *You are to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came to earth that you might have life, both abundant and eternal life. He came to save you from the enslavement of sin, death, and judgment to come. You have been called by Christ to be a witness of His salvation. Your very purpose for existing—for being a minister—is to be a witness for Christ.*

FIRST, YOU ARE TO BE AN UNASHAMED WITNESS.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Tim. 1:8).

**“I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed”
(Psalm 119:46).**

“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5).

Thought

You are not to be ashamed of the gospel nor of strong believers who are living and witnessing for Christ. The point and verse are clear enough. You are not to shrink . . .

✚ From identifying with the gospel and the Lord of the gospel.

✚ From identifying with strong believers who are sharing and living for Christ.

You are to share the gospel—share by living for Christ and by speaking up for Him, bearing testimony of His saving grace. You are to stand up for those who share Christ when they are being ridiculed and persecuted. In fact, note the verse: you are to share in the sufferings of the gospel. You will be opposed and misunderstood by the world. Why? Because you do not live like the world; you do not live a sensual, immoral, ungodly, and worldly life.

You do not follow after the things of the world. Therefore, your righteous and godly life convicts the world of its ungodly deeds. Hence, the world will ridicule and persecute you. But you are not to let this stop you: you are not to shrink from living for and sharing the gospel. You are to jump right in with other strong believers and

share the gospel with a starving and lost world that reels under the weight of evil, corruption, and death.

SECOND, YOU ARE TO BE A STRONG, BOLD WITNESS.

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:14-15, cp. Titus 2:11-13).

“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10).

Thought

The death of Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed with all authority—strongly and boldly (Titus 2:14-15).

- ✚ You are to speak about the death of Christ, that His death redeems man. There is no argument about the grace of God, no argument about the Lord Jesus Christ and His death. Unquestionably, God loves the world. He has demonstrated His love by sending His Son into the world to redeem man. You are, therefore, to proclaim the death of Christ for the sins of the world.
- ✚ You are to use every method of speech and communication there is. You are to declare the grace of God and the death of His Son for the sins of the world.

✚ You are to exhort people in the death of Christ, how His death redeems man. The word *exhort* means to encourage. People are lonely, empty, without purpose, discouraged, distressed, and without hope. They need to hear the glorious message of God’s grace, of the Lord Jesus Christ. They need to hear about the wonderful life God gives us now and eternally—all through the Lord Jesus Christ and His death.

✚ You are to rebuke people in the death of Christ. There is no excuse for men living in sin and rejecting the grace of God. God has done too much for us in Christ Jesus, His Son. A man is a fool to reject eternal life, the glorious redemption and hope which Christ gives. Men need to be told the truth, rebuked, and put under conviction by your proclaiming the grace of God and the death of Jesus Christ.

THIRD, YOU ARE TO BE CHRIST’S WITNESS.

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

Thought

You are an ambassador for Christ. In God’s eyes, you have the highest of titles, that of being an ambassador for your Lord and Master. As the ambassador of Christ, four things are true of you (the same four things are always true of the ambassador of a nation):

✚ You—the Lord’s ambassador—belong to Christ, the One who has sent you out to the world.

- ✚ You—the Lord’s ambassador—are commissioned to be sent out. You now exist only for the purpose for which you were sent out.

- ✚ You—the Lord’s ambassador—possess all the authority and power of Christ, of the One who has sent you out into the world.

- ✚ You—the Lord’s ambassador—are sent forth with the message of Christ, the Lord of the universe. You are not free to deliver your own message nor the message of anyone else. You have been appointed by Christ as His ambassador to deliver His message and His message alone.

Note a most significant fact: you have been given the greatest of messages to deliver—“Be reconciled to God.”

FOURTH, YOU ARE TO BE A FAMILY AND COMMUNITY WITNESS.

“Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19).

Thought

You are to witness first to your own family and home. Too often, the very opposite is true: our homes—both spouse and children—are often neglected and overlooked. We just fail to make a clearcut presentation of the gospel to our loved ones. But this is not to be, not if you are a minister of Christ. Your first duty is to witness to your family.

FIFTH, YOU ARE TO BE A WORLDWIDE WITNESS.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19-20).

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

“For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard” (Acts 22:15).

Thought

Christ has given you the method to follow as you bear witness for Him (Acts 1:8).

a) You are to witness where you are (Jerusalem) and move progressively outward (Judaea and Samaria) until you have a part in reaching the uttermost part of the earth.

✚ You are to go—personally go—as far as you can.

✚ You are to give as sacrificially as you can so that others can go.

✚ You are to use every method and ministry you can to reach the world.

b) You are to witness where you are first. See to it that Christ is well known throughout your home and community before moving on. But once Christ is well

known, you are to move out, ever pressing outward from where you are. Your first witness is to be . . .

- ✚ In Jerusalem: where you are, your home and local community. (See The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible,[®] note—□ Luke 9:4 for more discussion.)
- ✚ In all Judaea: other communities and areas and cities and states. Note the word “all Judaea.”
- ✚ In Samaria: other nations and countries, perhaps even where people are antagonistic. There was bitter hatred between the Jews and Samaritans. Yet Christ tells His witnesses to carry the message of salvation even to their enemies.
- ✚ To the uttermost part of the earth: to the unknown countries and regions of the world.

A critical point is this: you are to see that each area receives the message of Christ. You are to stay where you are before reaching out. But once the area knows the message—has received your ministry and gift—the message is to be carried out into another area.

SIXTH, YOU ARE TO BE AN OBEDIENT WITNESS.

“Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught” (Acts 5:20-21a).

“Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay [refuse to witness any longer]” (Jeremiah 20:9).

Thought

Witnessing is often difficult. There are many reasons why:

- ✚ You may be busy or rushed.
- ✚ You may be tired and exhausted; you may need rest.
- ✚ You may face opposition, ridicule, imprisonment, or outright persecution.
- ✚ You may have other pressing duties demanding your immediate attention.
- ✚ You may have to go out and visit and witness alone. There may be no one available or willing to go with you.

But God’s commission to you, His minister, is clear: “Go, stand and speak . . . to the people” (Acts 5:20-21a). The Greek is strong, demanding boldness and courage.

- ✚ “Go”: go now, immediately.
- ✚ “Stand”: take your stand; stand forth without reservation or hesitation.
- ✚ “Speak”: proclaim, preach, teach—courageously, boldly, without fear.
- ✚ “All the words of this life”: the whole gospel of salvation; the glorious message of the death and resurrection of Christ; not watering down or changing

anything; not holding back; not trying to soften the message to make it more acceptable.

God has no one to go but His followers, and the leaders of His followers are His ministers. If you are not obedient in witnessing, then others—your people, your church, your class, your fellow ministers, your friends, your dynamic laymen—will not witness.

You, as God’s minister, must take the lead in witnessing. The highest authority in the universe—God Himself—has commissioned you to be His witness. You must, therefore, be obedient and bear witness to the glorious gospel of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

SEVENTH, YOU ARE TO BE A CONSTANT WITNESS.

“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name” (Malachi 3:16).

“My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers [of my days] thereof” (Psalm 71:15).

“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence” (Isaiah 62:6).

Thought

You have the most glorious message in all the world: man can now live abundantly and live forever. Man never has to die; he never has to suffer emptiness, loneliness, or anxiety; he never has to lack purpose, love, joy, or peace. The world is crying for this news, the news that they can have life—real life—both now and forever.

You must, therefore, proclaim the gospel and proclaim it constantly. You must grasp every opportunity, and even make opportunity, to share the gospel. You must never shirk your duty, never neglect or ignore anyone. Day by day as you cross the paths of others, you must constantly share the gospel, share the glorious news that the world so desperately needs, the news that man can now live both abundantly and eternally.

EIGHTH, YOU ARE TO BE A SPIRIT-FILLED WITNESS.

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27, cp. Acts 1:8).

“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32).

Thought

You cannot witness on your own, in your own physical and mental strength, and win people to Jesus Christ. Neither you nor any other person can enter the heart of a person and place the divine nature—the incorruptible seed of God—into that person. Only the Holy Spirit can do this. You must, therefore, trust God’s Spirit to convict and convert the souls of people when you share the gospel. Your task is twofold:

✚ To speak and share the gospel.

✚ To pray and trust the Holy Spirit to convict and convert the person.

When you pray and trust God’s Spirit to work through you, then God’s Spirit does just that. God’s Word—His witness—never returns to Him void.

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

God’s Spirit takes your witness, prayer, and trust, and He convicts the souls of people. He convicts and saves all who willingly receive Christ as their Savior.

NINTH, YOU ARE TO BE A BELIEVING WITNESS, A WITNESS WHO IS A TRUE BELIEVER.

“And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:27).

“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak” (2 Cor. 4:13).

“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul” (Psalm 66:16).

Thought

The Son of God came to earth; He partook of flesh and blood and became a Man just like all other men. He is called Jesus Christ or Jesus the Messiah, the Savior of the world. He was heard, seen, intensely looked upon and handled by John and the other apostles and by many others who believed and followed Him (1 John 1:3). Jesus

Christ did everything He could to show man that the Son of God had come to earth—that He had come to save and to deliver man from this corruptible world of sin and death and to give man life eternal. Jesus Christ did everything He could to show man that man can live with God forever and ever.

As a minister, you yourself believe the gospel. Now, it is your duty to declare to the world the very message proclaimed by John: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).



CHAPTER 4

What Your Resources as a Minister Are

How can you fulfill the purposes of God for your life and ministry? God has not left you alone; He has not left you with only human wisdom and strength to accomplish your task. God has provided great help—unbelievable resources—to equip you to live for Him and to carry out His great purposes for you.

1. *You are given the grace and power of Christ.*

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10; cp. 1 Cor. 1:3-4; 2 Cor. 9:8).

Thought

Christ wants to reveal His grace and power in you. But note a most significant fact: the weaker the vessel, the more Christ is glorified. This is seen in four striking points.

- a) The grace of Christ is sufficient for you. The presence of God and His grace are sufficient to help you walk through any suffering. The word “sufficient” (arkei)

means the power or strength to withstand any danger. Christ's grace within you can carry you through anything. In Paul's case, it was physical suffering. In your case it may be either physical or spiritual attacks, but no matter: Christ's grace is sufficient to see you through whatever you suffer.

- b) The strength of Christ is made perfect in your weakness. The weaker the minister, the more Christ can demonstrate His strength in the minister. If you are self-sufficient, you do not need Christ; but if you are weak, you need Christ: the help, provision, and sufficiency of Christ. You must, therefore, walk humbly before Christ, depending upon His grace and sufficiency.
- c) The power of Christ will rest upon you through all your infirmities and trials. Note the point of this statement: infirmities or weaknesses are purposeful. You suffer for a reason: that the power of Christ may be demonstrated and clearly seen in your life. The word "rest" (episkenosei) means to fix a tent upon. The idea is that the power of Christ rests upon the suffering minister just as the Shekinah glory dwelt in the holy place of the tabernacle. What a glorious thought! The strength of Christ fixes itself upon and dwells within you—filling you with the Shekinah glory of God—when you suffer trials and temptations.
- d) When you suffer some infirmity or weakness, it gives Christ the chance to infuse power into you and to overcome the weakness for you. Your infirmity gives Christ an opportunity to prove Himself. Therefore, you are to take pleasure . . .

✚ "In infirmities": a general term meaning all kinds of sufferings and weaknesses, whether moral or physical. The power of Christ can overcome any weakness or temptation for the believer.

- ✚ “In reproaches”: whether ridicule, insult, slander, rumor, or whatever.
- ✚ “In necessities”: hardships, needs, deprivations, hunger, thirst, lack of shelter or clothing, or any other necessity.
- ✚ “In persecutions”: verbal or physical attack, abuse, or injury.
- ✚ “In distresses”: tight situations, perplexities, disturbances, anxious moments, inescapable problems and difficulties.

When you are weak, you are strongest. How? By the power of Christ. And the power of Christ is much stronger than all the combined forces of mankind.

Your great need is to acknowledge your weakness before the Lord. When you do, the Lord pours His strength into your mind and heart. The Lord empowers you to overcome and conquer all infirmities and weaknesses, and all trials and temptations.

2. *You are given the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.*

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Cor. 2:12).

Thought

As a minister, you are equipped with God's very own Spirit. No greater power could ever be possessed by anyone. This is clearly seen: once the early disciples experienced the coming of God's Spirit into their lives, they *never again asked* about earthly power. Experiencing the presence and power of God's Spirit within their lives was the summit, the supreme experience of their lives. Nothing else was ever needed.

It is this for which the human heart craves, and once God's Spirit truly dwells within the minister, that minister is supremely fulfilled and satisfied. Nothing else can ever satisfy—not position or authority, recognition or fame—not if the minister has truly received the Spirit of God into his heart and life.

The point is this: you have been given a task by God, a mission to carry out on earth. You do not have the power to carry out that task, not within yourself. The power of God Himself, of His Spirit, is needed. Therefore, Christ promises: “Ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). Both the Spirit of God and His power are promised. But note a critical point: the Holy Spirit comes upon you as an *equipping power*. The major purpose for His coming is to equip you to carry out your task for God.

3. *You are given the presence and power of God.*

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:7).

“For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved” (Acts 2:25).

“But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin” (Micah 3:8).

Thought

This is a precious, yet very striking, verse (2 Cor. 4:7). “This treasure” refers back to the former verse (2 Cor. 4:6). The treasure is the presence of God Himself shining in the believer’s earthly vessel, in his heart, in his earthly body. Note three significant points.

- a) God’s presence is a treasure, a precious and priceless treasure.
- b) God’s presence is placed into earthly vessels. God enters your body, a body that is like an earthly vessel made of pottery or glass. Your body is ever so weak and worthless, corruptible and perishable. Yet imagine—God’s presence is placed into such an earthly body!
- c) God’s purpose for entering your body is to show His power by overcoming all weaknesses—all trials and temptations, all handicaps and infirmities—even death itself.

✚ “The excellency of the power” is a picture of the grandeur, glory, and preeminence of His power. It is the excellency, the great and overcoming power of God.

The presence of God in your heart and body is power.

✚ It is the power to convert and transform you into a new creature.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

✚ It is the power to convert and transform you into a new man.

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephes. 4:24).

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:10).

✚ It is the power to deliver you from all temptations and trials.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14).

✚ It is the power to put His divine nature into you.

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4).

✚ It is the power to give you life, both abundant and eternal life.

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The point is this: the treasure of God’s presence is in your earthly vessel, your earthly body that is ever so weak and frail. God does so much for you, and it is all wrought by Him. Therefore, God and God alone gets all the credit, and He is thereby praised. As the verse says, the power is of God, not of us.

4. *You are given the assurance—absolute assurance—of victory by God Himself.*

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14).

Thought

As a minister, you always triumph in Christ. God gives you absolute assurance of victory. God never fails His dear minister.

The picture of triumph is descriptive. It is the picture of a military commander returning to Rome after some great victory. The commander was always welcomed into the city in a great march of triumph. Most people have seen such scenes in films either on television or in movies.

What Paul pictures is the triumph of Christ. He sees God giving Christ the glorious and triumphant victory: the victory is gained as the Word of God is proclaimed throughout the world. And Paul sees himself, as a minister of God, being a part of that glorious and triumphant victory. Note several points.

- a) It is God who causes you to triumph. God Himself is looking after you, never taking His eyes off you as His dear servant. The journey may sometimes get rough, and you may be attacked and abused, but God never forsakes you.

- b) God always causes you to triumph. As a true minister of God, you will never know defeat—not permanently. Even if you fall and fail for a period of time, God will eventually reach you and restore you, and He will continue to use you. God will always cause His dear minister to triumph over all. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can conquer and gain the final victory and triumph over you—not if you are truly called of God—not if you truly serve Him. The glorious triumph over all is assured.

- c) The triumph is “*in Christ*” and in Christ alone. You must . . .

✚ Believe in Christ.

✚ Minister in Christ.

✚ Trust in Christ.

✚ Live in Christ.

✚ Be called in Christ.

✚ Move in Christ.

✚ Serve in Christ.

✚ Be in Christ.

You are no different from anyone else: your only victory is in Christ. You must trust and live in Christ just like everyone else. You are not acceptable to God apart from Christ. Your acceptance before God is based upon the same thing as everyone else's: faith in Christ. Therefore, to triumph "*in Christ*" you must be "in Christ"; that is, you must *believe in* and *live in* Christ. Your triumph is in Christ and in Christ alone.

- d) God uses you, the minister, to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere. This is the reason God causes you to triumph: to spread the glorious message of Christ all over the world. God is out to reach every person He can: to see to it that every person knows about the love of Christ. The word "savour" simply means fragrance or aroma, like the fragrance of a flower. God spreads the fragrance of His Word through you, His minister.

5. *You are given a spiritual gift by God.*

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Ephes. 4:11).

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28; cp. Romans 12:6-8).

Thought

God has equipped you for the ministry. Whatever He has called you to do, He has gifted you for that particular ministry. God has given you everything needed to complete your call and ministry:

- ✚ The spiritual office.
- ✚ The spiritual gift and ability.
- ✚ The authority and power.
- ✚ The grace to bear all trials and temptations in order to complete your ministry.

It is important to note what is meant by spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift does not mean the natural ability or talent of a person. God, of course, keeps natural abilities and talents in mind when He gifts a person, but spiritual gifts are special gifts given to believers.

They are highly specialized gifts—gifts that are given to build up believers in the church and in witnessing and ministering to the world. The point to note is this: you

have received a spiritual gift, a highly specialized gift. You have received your gift to carry out the ministry of the Lord upon the earth.

Note another significant point: Jesus Christ gives you the grace to use your gift. Grace means the strength, wisdom, courage, motivation, love, concern, care, power—all the favor and blessings—of Christ. Whatever is needed to use the gift, Christ gives you. He measures out the exact amount of grace needed for the maximum use of a gift.

What a glorious truth! What a spark of encouragement! You are gifted by Christ—gifted with a highly specialized gift. And you have the measure of grace—whatever measure is needed—to use your gift. Christ pours out His grace upon you, equipping you to carry out your task upon earth. This is significant, for it means that your gift is the gift of Christ. It is the very best gift for you.

You should not be displeased with your gift, nor covet someone else’s gift. Christ has placed you into your ministry and given you the very best gift—if you are truly His, yielded and committed to serve Him.

6. *You are given faith to sustain you in the ministry.*

“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak” (2 Cor. 4:13; cp. Acts 27:25; Romans 4:20-21; Hebrews 11:6).

Thought

When nothing else sustains you as a minister, your faith will sustain you. You may be tempted to give up: the trouble and pressure against you may be so great that you are

tempted to leave the ministry, to never again share the gospel. However as stated, when nothing else sustains you, your faith will sustain you.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephes. 6:16).

If you will hold on to your faith in Christ—pray and seek the face of God, believe and never give up no matter what attacks you—you will never fall, not for long.

Your faith will not allow you to become discouraged, not to the point that you would leave the ministry and fall into the depths of despair. By faith you must believe the promises of God. By faith you must stay in the ministry and continue to speak just as the Word of God exhorts you to do.

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5).

7. *You are given the love of Christ to compel you in the ministry.*

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead” (2 Cor. 5:14).

Thought

As a minister, the love of Christ constrains you to hold fast to the ministry. Note: Paul does not say that he is driven to minister because of . . .

- ✚ The great teaching of Christ.
- ✚ The great example of Christ.
- ✚ The great ministry of Christ.
- ✚ The great life of Christ.

All of these areas of the Lord's life are important, critically so, but they are not the foundation of our salvation and ministry. The foundation of the believer's life is the love of Christ. As the above verse says, the *love of Christ* is seen in His death upon the cross.

Christ died that all persons might die *in Him*. In the Greek this verse says:

- ✚ "One died for all" (heis huper panton apethanen).
- ✚ "Therefore, all died" (ara hoi pantes apethanon).

Note the exact words: "One died for all; therefore, all died." Paul is saying . . .

- ✚ That Jesus Christ died for all men; therefore all men died when He died.
- ✚ That since Christ died for all, then it follows that all men died in Him.
- ✚ That all men were represented in Christ when He died.
- ✚ That all men are counted as having died when Christ died.
- ✚ That Jesus Christ died the *ideal death*, the death that stands for all men.

Of course, this is simply saying the same thing in different ways so that we can more easily grasp exactly what Paul is saying. But note: the word “all” is not teaching universal salvation, that is, that every human being is saved by the death of Christ. This passage has to be kept in context with the rest of Scripture. The word “all” means all who are redeemed by faith in the death of Christ.

Very simply stated, when a person *believes* that Jesus Christ died for him, God takes that person’s faith and counts it as *his death* in Christ.

- ✚ God counts him as having died in Christ.
- ✚ God credits him as having *already died* in Christ.
- ✚ God credits the death of Christ to him so that he never has to die.

Another way to say the same thing is this: God takes the person’s faith and . . .

- ✚ Identifies the person with the death of Christ.
- ✚ Accepts the death of Christ as the death of the person.

Although these statements may help some to more clearly understand what Paul is saying, there is no clearer statement than the one stated in Scripture: “Christ died for all; therefore, all died [in Him].”

The death of Jesus Christ was the representative death for all. His death stands as the death for all men. No person ever has to die. All he has to do is believe that Jesus Christ died for him—truly commit his life to the glorious truth—and God will take his belief and count it as his having already died in Christ.

The point is this: it is the glorious love of Christ that constrains you to stick to the ministry and to serve the Lord so faithfully. You have been given the love of Christ to drive and constrain you to share the message of Christ with a world that is gripped and dying in corruption. (See The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible,[®] note, Justification—[□]Romans 5:1; note—[□]1 Cor. 6:11 for more discussion.)

8. *You are given the hope of the resurrection to sustain you in the ministry.*

“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you” (2 Cor. 4:14).

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thes. 4:16-17).

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12-13).

Thought

You serve Christ for *one great reason*: you know that you are to die someday, and you know there is to be a resurrection of the dead. Above all else, the one thing you want

is to be with Jesus; therefore, that glorious day of resurrection, the day of full redemption, is ever before your eyes.

You suffer and bear all—you continue to preach and teach, to serve and meet the needs of people—all because you know that the day of resurrection is coming. Just as God raised up the Lord Jesus, so God is going to raise you up to be with all those to whom you have ministered.

How do you know this? Because God raised up the Lord Jesus. When God raised up Christ, God demonstrated that it was His will to raise the dead, and that He had the power to raise the dead. You know that you, too, shall be raised, raised to live with Christ forever and ever. This is your great hope, the hope that sustains you in the ministry. As Paul said in giving his great testimony:

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:10-11).



CHAPTER 5

What Your Commission and Work as a Minister Are

As a minister, God has given you the greatest commission and work imaginable. Scripture spells out in great detail just what your duties are.

1. *You must challenge and lead people to worship the Lord, the only living and true God, in spirit and in truth.*

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24).

“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (1 Chron. 16:29).

“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker” (Psalm 95:6).

“O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth” (Psalm 96:9).

“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100:4-5).

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

“Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10).

Thought

As a minister, you must challenge and lead people to worship God. But note, God wants a very special kind of worship. God dictates exactly how He is to be approached and worshipped: in spirit and in truth. “They that worship him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

This is how you must challenge and lead people to worship God: they must come before God and worship God “in spirit and in truth.” Note three significant facts in John 4:23-24.

First, there has been a change in worship: “The hour cometh, and now is.” Christ changed worship. Before Christ, men worshipped God in special places, for example, in temples and before altars. Since Christ, place and locality mean nothing. Christ has opened the door into God’s very presence and man can now worship God from anyplace in the universe.

Second, the nature of worship—how we are to worship—is clearly spelled out: man is to worship God in spirit and in truth.

a) To worship God in spirit means to worship God . . .

- ✚ With the spiritual drive and ability of one’s soul, seeking the most intimate communion and friendship with God.

- ✚ With the spiritual core of one’s life and being, trusting and resting in God’s acceptance and love and care.

b) To worship God in truth means. . .

- ✚ To approach God in the right or true way. There is only one way: through His Son Jesus Christ.

- ✚ To worship God sincerely and truthfully, not coming half-heartedly with wandering mind and sleepy eyes.

Third, the reason for worship is clearly given: the Father seeks men to worship Him. God desires worship, for He created man to worship and fellowship with Him. Therefore, God seeks men who will worship Him in spirit and truth.

But note Hebrews 10:25 above. Some had forsaken the church even in the day of the early church. How like some in every generation. The need is just what this verse says: exhort one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching. What day? The day of the Lord's return. His return is immediately upon us. Therefore, we must exhort those who have fallen away, lest they miss the salvation of His coming and have to face His judgment.

Genuine believers need each other—the presence, fellowship, strength, encouragement, care, and love of each other. All of this is found when believers come together for worship, found in a very, very special way. You must, therefore, as a minister of God, challenge and lead people to worship God. You must challenge and lead people . . .

✚ To “give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.

✚ To “bring an offering and come before him.

✚ To “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” (1 Chron. 16:29).

2. *You must minister and serve even as Christ ministered and served.*

“But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be

your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28).







“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19).

Thought

As a minister, you are to fulfill the law of Christ. The law of Christ is the law of ministry and love. Note the verses above and this is clearly seen.

Christ gave and sacrificed Himself to the ultimate degree to reach out to men: He bore the sins of men. You, of course, cannot bear the sins of men; but you can bear the burdens of men. You can. . .

-  Be compassionate.
-  Encourage.
-  Pray.
-  Forgive.
-  Be warm and tender.
-  Share the promises of God.

- ✚ Sympathize and empathize.
- ✚ Meet needs.
- ✚ Visit and encourage and strengthen.
- ✚ Share the hope of eternal life.
- ✚ Heal the brokenhearted.
- ✚ Give sight to the blind.
- ✚ Set free the bruised.
- ✚ Share the hope of the gospel, in particular with the poor.

Note the word “servant” (Matthew 20:26-28). It means bond-slave, to be bound to the Lord every moment of life. The idea is not *occasional* service but *constant* service.

You are *always* to be *servicing and ministering*, regardless of the hour or call or difficulty. As a minister, you are the bond-slave of Christ—His servant every hour of every day—commissioned to meet the needs of people. You are to minister and serve even as Christ ministered and served.

3. *You must seek and save the lost even as Christ sought and saved the lost. (See “You are to be a witness for Christ.”)*

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21).

Thought

As a minister of Christ, your mission is linked with the mission of Christ. Your mission is the very *same mission* as the mission of Christ. Note exactly what John 20:21 says:

- ✚ God sent Christ on a specific mission.
- ✚ Christ sends you on the very same mission.

What is the mission?

“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

Man is “lost”: separated from God and wandering about without God; cut off from God, perishing and being destroyed; doomed to die and lose eternal life.

You, the minister, are sent forth to seek and save the lost, to seek and proclaim the salvation of God to the lost. You are the prophet and witness of the living Lord.

- ✚ Christ is the Way: you point the Way to the lost.
- ✚ Christ is the Truth: you proclaim the Truth to the lost.
- ✚ Christ is the Life: you share the Life with the lost. Your task as the minister of God is to go forth even as Christ went forth: to seek and save the lost of your community and world.

4. *You must work and labor for God right now: the harvest is ripe and the task is urgent.*

“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

Thought

The heart of Jesus is always upon the harvest of souls. Men focus their hearts upon the world’s harvest: the planting of seed and the reaping of grain, the investment of money and the receiving of wages and gain. But the heart of Jesus is upon people, upon the planting of the gospel seed and the reaping of souls for God.

The challenge of Jesus to you, the Lord’s minister, is this: “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields.” The challenge is to quit looking down upon the earth and upon the affairs of the world, but *look up* and observe the fields of people streaming across the world.

a) The fields of souls are white *already*: they are ready for harvesting *right now*. Since Christ has come to earth, God has put His Spirit into the world and supernaturally activated . . .

✚ A thirst for God.

✚ A sense of sin, a conviction of coming short.

✚ A deep loneliness and emptiness.

✚ A sense of purposelessness.

✚ The knowledge that Jesus Christ has come to earth claiming to be the Savior of the world, the very Son of God.

It is absolutely essential that you lift up your eyes and look *now*. If not, the ripe harvest of souls and bodies. . .

✚ Will remain in the fields of the earth.

✚ Will ripen *beyond* being tasteful and useful (be too old, too far gone).

✚ Will rot and be lost forever.

✚ Will fall to the ground and decay.

b) You must lift up your eyes in order to look. You cannot see ahead or around if you do not lift up your eyes and look. The things of the earth have to grow *strangely* dim *before* you can look and see.

c) You must look where you are. Your eyes must see the reality of what is around you. It is the harvest of souls around you that you must look upon and focus your attention upon.

Note: you can look upon foreign fields through the challenge of others. Note another fact: the world is becoming more and more *one neighborhood*. Distance is becoming more and more insignificant. Every believer is becoming more and more responsible for the individual in the foreign land. In fact, a man's country is foreign to everyone else in the world, no matter who he is.

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:8-9).

“But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come” (Mark 4:29).

“Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2).

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit [souls] should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).

“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5-6).

5. *You must preach the Word of God: correcting, rebuking, and exhorting people. (See Chapter 6, “What Your Message—Your Preaching and Teaching—Must Be.”)*

“I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

Thought

As a minister, you must preach the Word of God. This is the Lord’s call to you. Preaching the Word is to be the consuming passion of the minister’s life. Note how forcefully this is brought out in this verse:

- ✚ “Preach the Word,” the Scriptures of the Holy Bible.
- ✚ “Be instant in season, out of season”: keep a sense of urgency; grasp and make opportunities to preach.
- ✚ “Reprove” when preaching.
- ✚ “Rebuke” when preaching.
- ✚ “Exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” when preaching.

First, preach the Word. The whole thrust is obsession—the minister is to be obsessed with preaching. Preaching is to burn within your soul; you are to be consumed with preaching, with a burning passion to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Why?

- ✚ Because preaching is God’s chosen method to save men.

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . . For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:18, 21).

- ✚ Because the minister is held accountable to preach.

“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16).

It is impossible to overemphasize preaching. It is even impossible to fully grasp the importance of preaching. This is the whole thrust of this passage. Just think about the solemn charge and warning that is covered in verse one:

- ✚ God and Christ both have their eyes on the minister—to see if he is preaching the Word.
- ✚ The minister shall be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ as to whether or not he preached the Word.
- ✚ The minister shall face Christ when Christ returns in glory as the conquering Lord—face Him and give an account of his preaching.

- ✚ The minister's place and position in the Lord's kingdom will be determined by how faithful he was in preaching the Word.

Therefore, the charge is to preach the Word. Note two very significant points.

- a) The word "preach" (kerusso) is the picture of the minister standing before people in all the dignity and authority of God Himself. It is the word that was used of the ambassador who was sent forth by the king to proclaim his message in all the authority and dignity of the king himself.

"This should be the pattern for the preacher today. His preaching should be [with dignity] . . . that dignity which comes from . . . the fact that he is an official herald of the King of kings. It should be . . . [with] authority which will command the respect, careful attention, and proper reaction of the listeners" (Kenneth Wuest. *The Pastoral Epistles*. "Wuest's Word Studies," Vol.2. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952, p.154).

- b) The minister is to preach "*the Word*." What is meant by "*the Word*"?

- ✚ "All Scripture"—all Scripture that is given by the inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

The Word means the Scripture, the very Word of God itself. It is "the whole body of revealed truth" (Kenneth Wuest. *The Pastoral Epistles*, Vol.2, p.154). It is the whole counsel of God that comprises what men call *The Holy Bible*. The minister is to preach the Word, the Holy Scripture, the very Word of God Himself. He is not to preach. . .

- ✚ His own ideas.
- ✚ The ideas of other men.
- ✚ Philosophy.
- ✚ Psychology.
- ✚ Self-image.
- ✚ Self-righteousness.
- ✚ Sociology.
- ✚ Science.
- ✚ Educational development.
- ✚ Personal efforts.
- ✚ Ego-boosters.
- ✚ Man-made religion.

The great Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest has one of the most challenging descriptions of the word *preach* ever penned by man:

“The word [preach is a] command to be obeyed at once. It is a sharp command as in military language The preacher must present, not book reviews, not politics, not economics, not current topics of the day, not a philosophy of life denying the Bible and based upon unproven theories of science, but the Word. The preacher as a herald cannot choose his message. He is given a message to

proclaim by his Sovereign. If he will not proclaim that, let him step down from his exalted position” (Kenneth Wuest. *The Pastoral Epistles*, Vol.2, p.154).

Matthew Henry uses striking language:

“It is not their own notions and fancies that they are to preach, but the pure plain Word of God; and they must not corrupt it” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, Vol.5. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, p.848).

“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops” (Matthew 10:7, 27).

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

“Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:20).

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Second, be instant in season, out of season. The word “instant” (epistethi) means to stand and stick to preaching no matter the circumstances, easy or difficult.

Kenneth Wuest says:

“The preacher is to proclaim the Word when the time is auspicious, favorable, opportune, and also when the circumstances seem unfavorable. So few times are still available for preaching that the preacher must take every chance he has to preach the Word. There is no closed season for preaching” (Kenneth Wuest. *The Pastoral Epistles*, Vol.2, p.155).

Matthew Henry says:

“Do this work with all fervency of spirit. Call upon those under [your] charge to take heed of sin, to do their duty: call upon them to repent, and believe, and live a holy life and this both in season and out of season We must do it in season, that is, let slip no opportunity; and do it out of season, that is, not shift off the duty, under pretence that it is out of season” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, Vol.5, p.848).

William Barclay says:

“The Christian teacher is to be urgent. The message he brings is literally a matter of life and death. The teacher and the preacher who really get their message across to people are those who have the tone of earnestness in their voice . . .

“The Christian teacher is to be persistent. He is to urge the claims of Christ ‘in season and out of season.’ As someone has put it: ‘Take or make your opportunity’ (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. “The Daily Study Bible.” Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1956, p.234f).

The Amplified New Testament says:

“Keep your sense of urgency (stand by, be at hand and ready, whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable, whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it be welcome or unwelcome, you as preacher of the Word are to show people in what way their lives are wrong).”

Third, reprove (elegxon). The word means to stir a person to prove himself; to put a person under conviction; to lead a person to see his sin and to feel guilt over it. It means to put a person under conviction of sin and to lead him to confession and repentance.

“The preacher is to deal with sin, both in the lives of his unsaved hearers and in those of the saints to whom he ministers, and he is to do it in no uncertain tones. The word ‘sin’ is not enough in the vocabulary of our preaching today” (Kenneth Wuest. *The Pastoral Epistles*, Vol.2, p.155).

Fourth, rebuke (epitimeson). This is a strong word, very strong. It means a sharp, severe rebuke and carries the idea of judgment to come if one does not repent.

“A word of warning and rebuke would often save a brother from many a sin and many a shipwreck. But, as someone has said, that word must always be spoken as ‘brother setting brother right.’ It must be spoken with a consciousness of our common guilt. It is not our place to set ourselves up as the moral judge of anyone; nonetheless it is our duty to speak that warning word when it needs to be spoken” (William Barclay. *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.236f).

“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:20).

“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers [opposition]” (Titus 1:9).

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:15).

Fifth, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. The word “exhort” means to beseech, encourage, comfort, and help. It is not enough to reprove and rebuke people. The minister must encourage and comfort, help and carry the person to Christ. Note how crucial this point is.

- a) The minister must “exhort with all longsuffering” (makrothumia). The idea is that the minister patiently endures in exhorting people—no matter the circumstances. He exhorts and exhorts, encourages and encourages. He suffers a long, long time with people . . .

✚ Enduring whatever weaknesses and failings they have.

✚ Enduring whatever evil and injury is done.

The minister suffers a long time without resentment or anger, and he never gives up, for he knows the power of Christ to change lives.

b) The minister “exhorts with all doctrine.” He does not teach bits and pieces of God’s Word. He does not focus upon subjects . . .

✚ That is popular.

✚ That is favorites.

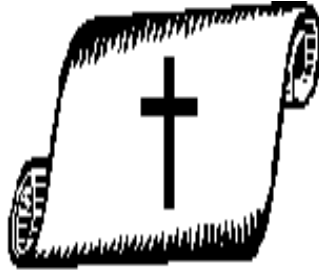
✚ That arouses curiosity.

✚ That he thinks are needed.

He focuses upon all the doctrines of God—the whole counsel of God. He exhorts people in all the doctrine of God.

“But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13).

As a minister, you must preach the Word of God with all the authority of God Himself.



CHAPTER 6

What Your Message—Your Preaching and Teaching—Must Be

God wants to reveal Himself to the world; He longs for all men to know Him, to know Him personally. This was the very reason God created man, that man might know Him personally. Consequently, your first duty is to share the Word of God—His message, His revelation—with the world. What you preach and teach is, therefore, of critical importance to God. As a minister of Christ, Scripture has far more to say to you about your preaching and teaching than it does about any other subject. (See both Chapters VI and VII.)

A. YOU AND YOUR MESSAGE

1. *You must hold fast to sound doctrine and you must preach and teach sound doctrine.*

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13).

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

Thought

As a minister, the first thing you must do is hold fast to *sound doctrine* (2 Tim. 1:13). The word “sound” (hugiainonton) is interesting. It means healthy and health-giving. You must hold fast to sound, healthgiving words, that is, to words that will make you and your people sound and healthy. What *words* will make you and your people sound and healthy? The words just covered by the Scripture:

- ✚ The words of the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8).
- ✚ The words of salvation (2 Tim. 1:9).
- ✚ The words about Jesus Christ, the glorious message that He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to man (2 Tim. 1:9-10).
- ✚ The words that Paul himself taught, the words that he taught to Timothy and to the believers of the early church (2 Tim. 1:13).

Simply stated, you are to hold fast to the Holy Scriptures, to the very Word of God Himself. The Word of God alone can bring health and life to the human soul. Note what the verse says (2 Tim. 1:13).

- a) You must hold fast to sound words in faith. That is, you must believe in Christ, surrender your heart and life to Him, and you must be loyal to Christ. If you do not believe the words and message about Christ—if you do not have *faith in Christ*—then you are not holding fast to sound words.

- b) The very first sign that a person is clinging to sound words is his faith in Christ. If a person does not believe in Christ, he is believing a false doctrine, a false philosophy of life, and will thereby perish. The only words that can bring health and soundness to your people are the words of Christ—the life-giving words of His salvation.
- c) You must hold fast to sound words by believing in Christ Jesus, the only Savior who has brought the life-giving words of God to earth. This is the only way you can bring true health and soundness to your precious people.
- d) You must hold fast to sound words in *love*. It is not enough to believe in the sound words about Christ; you must also do what Christ did: love everyone regardless of who they are or what they have done. A person who truly believes the gospel believes in Christ, and he loves both Christ and those for whom Christ died and came to save.
- e) The point is this: it is impossible to truly believe Christ and His gospel without loving Christ and His Word. If you truly love Christ and His Word, then you do what Christ did: you see the people of the world through the eyes of Christ and you love everyone even as Christ loved everyone.
- f) You hold fast to sound words in love: you seek to share the words of health and soundness with all men. You want all men to know the sound words of salvation that bring health and soundness to the human soul.

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16).

Second, you must preach and teach sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). This is in contrast to the false teachers discussed in the Book of Titus. As stated above, the word “sound” means wholesome and healthy. Therefore, *sound doctrine* means the doctrines and teachings of God’s Word—the wholesome and healthy teachings of God’s Word in contrast to the diseased teachings of false teachers.

The teachings of false teachers will only implant a cancerous disease into the human heart and result in death and destruction. Therefore, the exhortation is urgent. The health and destiny of God’s people and of the church are at stake. You must preach and teach sound doctrine—the teachings of God’s Word. You must not preach and teach your own ideas or opinions, nor the latest fads of theology. You must not add anything to the Word of God nor take anything away from it. You must take the teachings of God’s Word in all their soundness and preach and teach them.

“Charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies [godly heritage and traditions], which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do” (1 Tim. 1:3-4).

2. *You must preach and teach the Word of God, the Holy Scripture.*

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

“Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also” (Acts 15:35).

“And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (Acts 18:11).

Thought

As a minister, the eyes of God and of Christ are watching you. You are “[ever] before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Why? To see if you are preaching and teaching the Word of God. Note 2 Tim. 4:1-2 above. This is exactly what is being said. The thrust of this great passage is the two previous verses:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Therefore, “I charge you . . . preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:1-2). You must preach the Word, for God and Christ are watching: their eyes are upon you. They are watching to see if you preach the Word. You are not to be preaching your own ideas nor the ideas of other men. The message of the gospel is not the message of human philosophy, psychology, sociology, or education. It is not the message of

self-image and personal development. As helpful as these subjects may be, they are not the gospel; they are not the Word of God.

What is the Word of God? The Word is the glorious gospel of our salvation. The Word is the Scripture which we hold in our hands and study and teach to all who will listen and heed. The Word of God is . . .

- ✚ The very revelation of God Himself, the record of what God wants us to know, the record that is recorded in the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- ✚ The unbelievable love of God that tells us about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to earth to save man from the sin, suffering, and death of this world (John 3:16; Romans 5:1-5; Romans 5:6-11).
- ✚ The great mercy of God that He has poured out upon us through the death of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephes. 2:4-7).
- ✚ The coming resurrection and judgment of all men (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-30; 1 Cor. 15:1-58).

This is the Word of God. This is the Word you are to preach. This is the Word you are to proclaim from the housetops ever so boldly and courageously. No matter the trials or the threats of men, you are to “preach the Word”—the Word of the living God.

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22).

Now, note 2 Tim. 4:1-2 again: there are three strong reasons why you must preach the Word of God.

a) The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the living and the dead. If you are living when He returns, He is going to judge you. If you die before He returns, He is going to judge you. The idea is twofold.

✚ First, He is going to judge you as to whether or not you preached. If He calls you to preach and you do not preach, you shall be judged and condemned.

✚ Second, He is going to judge you as to whether or not you preached the Word. If you preach the ideas of men instead of God’s Word, you shall be judged and condemned. If you preach a mixture of men’s ideas and God’s Word, you shall be judged and condemned. William Barclay states it well:

“Some day Timothy’s work will be tested, and that test will be carried out by none other than Jesus Christ Himself. A Christian’s work [is] not to satisfy men, but to satisfy Jesus. He must do every task in such a way that he can take it and offer it to Christ. He is not concerned with either the criticism or the verdict of men. The one thing he covets is the ‘Well done!’ of Jesus Christ” (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.232f).

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matthew 16:27).

“And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick [living] and dead” (Acts 10:42).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

- b) The Lord Jesus Christ shall appear in glory. He is returning to earth and nothing is going to stop His return. This is seen in the word “appearing” (epiphaneian). It means the glorious and visible appearance of the Lord Jesus (Kenneth Wuest. *The Pastoral Epistles*, p.153).

The history of the word is found in the appearance of the great Roman Emperor, especially when he was scheduled to visit a city. Thorough preparations were made: buildings and streets were scrubbed and cleaned; people worked hard to prepare themselves and their city for their coming king.

They were excited about his coming and focused their attention and energy upon his coming. As a minister, this is exactly what you must do: you must preach the Word, keeping your mind upon the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must be prepared for His return, and you prepare by preaching the Word. The conquering Lord is returning; if you fail to preach the Word, you will stand

before Him unprepared—embarrassed and ashamed. If you fail to be subjected to Him now—fail to preach His Word—you shall be subjected and judged by Him.

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:44).

“So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:7).

“That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:14).

- c) The Lord Jesus Christ shall set up His kingdom forever and ever. As a true minister of God, you shall be a citizen of the Lord’s kingdom. Your position and rank—the amount of responsibility assigned you in that kingdom—will be based upon your faithfulness in this world.

Therefore, you must preach the Word faithfully. You must keep your eye upon the kingdom of Christ even as Christ is keeping His eye upon your faithfulness. “So live and so work that you will rank high in the roll of citizens of the Kingdom when the Kingdom comes” (William Barclay. *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.234).

“And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30).

3. *You must proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:1-2).

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:23).

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5).

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35).

Thought

As a minister, you must proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The phrase “I determined” (ekrina) means to have decided, to have made a decision. Paul made a *deliberate decision*, a *strong determination* to preach only Jesus Christ and Him crucified. His theme was not . . .

✚ Jesus the great model for men.

✚ Jesus the great teacher.

✚ Jesus the great man of purpose.

✚ Jesus the great example.

✚ Jesus the great martyr.

The message of Paul was Jesus Christ, *His Person as the Son of God*, who was made unto us “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30-31). The message of Paul was Jesus Christ and Him *crucified*. Paul declares, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). This is an emphatic, forceful statement:

✚ The thrust of Paul’s preaching was the death of Jesus Christ.

✚ The theme of Paul’s preaching was the death of Jesus Christ.

✚ The message of Paul’s preaching was the death of Jesus Christ.

✚ The principle of Paul’s preaching was the death of Jesus Christ.

✚ The heart of Paul’s preaching was the death of Jesus Christ.

You, too, must know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. You must do as Paul did: concentrate on the death of Jesus Christ. The reason is clearly seen when we look at what Scripture says about the death of our Lord (see Jesus Christ, Death, The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible,[®] Vol.14—Master Outline & Subject Index for more discussion.)

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are cleansed and freed from all sin.

“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24; cp. John 1:29; 1 Cor. 15:3; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 3:5).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are accepted and reconciled to God and have peace with God.

“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephes. 1:6-7).

“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:20).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are justified.

“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:9).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are eternally redeemed.

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14).

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2:5-6; cp. Romans 3:24-25; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18; Rev. 5:9).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are delivered from death.

“Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are delivered from condemnation.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are delivered from the curse of the law, that is, from death and separation from God.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are delivered from the judgment and wrath to come.

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thes. 1:10).

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (1 Thes. 5:9-10).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are delivered from this present evil (corruptible and dying) world.

“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Galatians 1:4).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that Satan’s power over death and the world is broken and destroyed.

“Having spoiled principalities and powers [Satan and his demonic forces], he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it [the cross]” (Col. 2:14-15).

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15; Rev. 12:11).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are healed.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are given all things.

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that those without strength are saved.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6).

“And through thy knowledge [spiritual liberty] shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?” (1 Cor. 8:11).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that the ungodly are saved.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that sinners are saved.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that the enemies of God are saved.

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that the unjust are saved.

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that all men are drawn to Christ.

**“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”
(John 12:32).**

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you have access into the holy presence of God.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:19-20).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that the great love of God is revealed to you.

**“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour”
(Ephes. 5:2; cp. Romans 5:8).**

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are freed from a self-centered life and live for Christ.

“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:15).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20; cp. 2 Cor. 4:10-11; 1 Peter 4:1).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are enabled to live a righteous life.

“For ye are bought with a price [the death of Christ]: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20).

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21; cp. 1 Peter 2:24).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are taught to love and sacrifice your life for others.

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Ephes. 5:2).

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that your *conscience* is genuinely cleared so that you can serve God and bear fruit.

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you know the power of God.

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are enabled to purge out your old sins.

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).


✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that you are reconciled to men.

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby . . . For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Ephes. 2:13-14, 16, 18).

✚ It is by the death of Jesus Christ that Christ gained the right to be exalted as the Lord of the dead and the living.

“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living” (Romans 14:9).

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2; cp. Phil. 2:8-11; Hebrews 1:3).

 It is by the death of Jesus Christ that the church of God was purchased.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephes. 5:25).

God has done so much for you through the cross—so much for both believers and unbelievers. This is the reason you must know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the reason you must focus your preaching and teaching upon the death of Christ. The death of our Lord must consume your life and ministry, for His death is our salvation and life, and the only hope for a world lost in corruption and death.



CHAPTER 7

What Your Duty as a Minister Toward False Teaching Must Be

As a minister of Christ, you face false teaching at every turn of life. The world—both the secular and the religious world—is bombarded with false teaching. What does Scripture say about false teaching? What is your duty as a minister toward false teaching? Scripture is very clear in its instructions to you as you deal with false teaching.

A. YOU AND FALSE TEACHERS OR HERETICS

1. *You must make sure you yourself are genuine, that you yourself are not a false teacher—not a ravenous wolf in sheep’s clothing.*

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

Thought

This thought may be offensive to some ministers, but we must constantly examine ourselves. Everyone of us—you, me, and all other ministers—must make sure we are genuine, that we are not false teachers—not ravenous wolves in sheep’s clothing. These are the words of our Lord Himself (Matthew 7:15).

Now, to make this personal, let each one of us ask ourselves: “Am I sure that I am a genuine minister of Christ? Am I sure that I am not a false teacher, not a ravenous wolf in sheep’s clothing? We must always remember this: every false prophet or teacher claims to be a minister and to be representing and teaching the truth. But he is not a true minister nor does he teach the truth of God, not the truth of the only living and true God, not the truth which God has revealed in His Son and in His Holy Word. It is this that makes him a false teacher. Note exactly what Christ says:

“False prophets . . . come to you [God’s people] in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

a) False teachers *appear in sheep’s clothing*, that is, they appear to be committed to Christ just like true ministers and believers. They profess to know Christ and behave like Christians. They claim to be called ministers, and they hold the position of ministers within churches and use Bible verses or texts for their messages. They appear to be messengers of light (2 Cor. 11:13-15). They appear harmless, innocent, and good. They start out as excellent examples of society, but they lack two things: a life and a testimony changed by the Word of God.

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is

transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

b) False teachers are ravening wolves: they are anything but sheep.

✚ Some false teachers are just like wolves in that they may not be aware they are *not* what they should be. They go about doing what they know to do, not knowing that what they do is corrupt and evil (Matthew 7:17). They appear as sheep, but consume all they can in order to fill whatever appetite—personal conviction or doctrine—they have.

✚ Some false teachers are just like wolves in that they are out for self and personal gain: ego, recognition, fame, prestige, position, livelihood, career, and comfort. They are concerned primarily with realizing their own motives and purposes and with pushing their own thoughts and formulas for succeeding in life.

✚ Some false teachers are just like wolves in that they want a pack in which to move and with which to identify. They want a following to acknowledge their lead in intelligence and creativity or knowledge and ability. They appear as sheep, but they howl their own formulas (false gospels), crying aloud: “This is the way; walk in it.” When possible, they use all the media they can: screen, radio, journals, magazines, books, newspapers, pamphlets, and tracts.

c) False teachers preach heresies. They proclaim justice, morality, righteousness, and good. They teach mental and emotional and physical strength; self-image,

self-improvement, and positive thinking—all the high ideals and commendable ideas of men. But they never preach the true gospel of the living Lord.

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:6-10; cp. Isaiah 56:10-11; Jeremiah 23:1-40; Jeremiah 50:6; Ezekiel 34:2-3; John 10:12).

d) Inwardly false prophets are wolves, real wolves, knowingly or unknowingly. They may appear as sheep, but they are wolves.

✚ They have not confessed the *Lord Jesus*: that God has raised Him from the dead.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

✚ They have not “put off the old man” of the world.

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation [behavior] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Ephes. 4:22).

✚ They have not been “renewed in the spirit of their mind” nor “put on the new man.”

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephes. 4:23-24).

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:10).

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

✚ They have not been put into the ministry by God. (Note especially 1 Tim. 1:12: the fact that God counts the men whom He chooses as *trustworthy*.)

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12).

e) A false prophet sometimes does not know he is false. He is *deceiving* because he is *being deceived*.

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4. Cp. 2 Tim. 3:1-15.)

As a minister of Christ, you must constantly make sure you are genuine and remaining true to Christ. You must never become a false prophet, a ravenous wolf, out for yourself.

- 2. You must test yourself: Do you believe—really confess and preach—that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh: that God actually sent His Son to earth as a man to save the world?*

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:1-3).

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7).

Thought

As a minister, your confession and preaching are to be tested and examined by believers. This is reason enough for us to test and examine ourselves.

What is it that makes a teacher true or false? Jesus Christ.

What a man believes about Jesus Christ makes the teacher true or false. What a man confesses about Jesus Christ exposes his spirit, a spirit of truth or a spirit of error. And note what it is about Jesus Christ that exposes a teacher: the incarnation. That is, did Jesus Christ—God’s own Son—come in the flesh or not?

a) The true spirit, the Spirit of God Himself, confesses that Jesus Christ did come in the flesh, that the incarnation is true. If a minister or teacher has the Spirit of God dwelling in him, then he confesses the incarnation, the wonderful truth that God did become Man and did come to earth to save man.

b) The Spirit of God *cannot confess* anything other than the truth; therefore, every teacher who has the Spirit of God will confess the same truth. He cannot confess anything else because the Spirit of God Himself dwells within him. If he confesses anything else, then the spirit within him is not the Spirit of God. Now note the confession in detail, exactly what it is that a true teacher confesses: “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”

✚ The true teacher confesses *Jesus*. The name *Jesus* means *Savior*. It is believing that Jesus Christ did come from God to save man, to be the Savior of the world.

✚ The true teacher confesses *Christ*. The name *Christ* means *Messiah*, the Anointed One of God. It is believing that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah

of Scripture; that He is the fulfillment of all the prophecies of Scripture; that He is the Anointed Savior sent from God to earth.

✚ The true teacher confesses that Jesus Christ is the *Son of God*; that God did send His Son *out of* (ek) heaven, out of the spiritual world and dimension into this world; that God sent His Son in human flesh to save man in fulfillment of Scripture. It means that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Scripture predicting the coming death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Messiah. Simply stated, it means that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to earth to save man.

This is the confession of the true minister, true teacher, and of every true believer. We must always remember that a true minister and a true teacher are indwelt by the Spirit of God Himself. Therefore, the true minister and the true teacher *will always* confess the incarnation, the wonderful truth that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” (Luke 1:31).

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest [revealed] in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

b) The false spirit denies that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. He denies the incarnation. He does not believe that God took on human flesh and became a man.

✚ The false teacher does not believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. He may accept Jesus Christ as a great teacher and a great religious leader, perhaps the greatest, but he does not believe that Jesus Christ is *the Savior*. He believes that there are other ways to God, that other people who believe in God will be as acceptable to God as a follower of Jesus Christ.

✚ The false teacher does not believe that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah and Anointed One from God. He does not believe that the Scriptures are the

inspired Word of God. He accepts them only as the writings of great religious people of the past; therefore, there are no prophetic promises of a Messiah, no promise of a coming Savior. To the false teacher, Jesus Christ is only a great religious teacher, only one way to reach God. He is not *the Anointed One* sent from God to save all men. He is not the only way to God.

- ✚ The false teacher does not believe that Jesus Christ has *come from God*. He does not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that Jesus Christ came out of heaven, out from the spiritual world and dimension. He does not believe that God sent His Son into the world in human flesh as a man.
- ✚ Again, the false teacher believes that Jesus Christ is only a man just like all other men—a great man, perhaps the greatest, perhaps the man who got closer to God than any other man. Nevertheless, to the false teacher Jesus Christ was only a man who taught us how to worship and serve God. The false teacher would say . . .
- ✚ That Jesus Christ was not sinless. He lived close to God, but no man can achieve sinlessness.
- ✚ That Jesus Christ died, but not as a substitute for man's sins. He died as a great martyr showing us how we should face death and how we should be willing to die for the great cause of righteousness.
- ✚ That the resurrection of Jesus Christ did not take place. It is only a picture of the spiritual truth that man can live in God's presence.

Now, note the fatal mistake of the false teachers: to deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is to deny that man can ever be saved beyond this world. Why? Because man can never know for sure that God exists nor can he know how to reach God if He does exist.

No person has ever seen God or heaven, and no person ever will, not by physical and material technology. This physical world cannot penetrate or cross over into the spiritual world and dimension, no matter what some persons may claim. If man is ever to know God and the spiritual world, then God has to come to earth and reveal the truth to us. There is no other way. Therefore, to deny that God sent His Son into the world is to deny that we can ever be saved.

There is another fact that needs to be noted as well, that of perfection. God is perfect and man is imperfect. Therefore, God could never let man penetrate or cross over into perfection. Why? Because man's imperfection would affect the perfect world of God. Heaven would no longer be heaven; it would no longer be perfect if God allowed imperfect beings to enter it.

No matter what some people may claim about penetrating heaven, they have not. Imperfection just cannot cross over into perfection. The fatal mistake of false teachers is just that, *fatal*—fatal and eternally dooming.

The consequences of denying the incarnation of Jesus Christ are terrible. If Jesus Christ has not come in the flesh, then it means . . .

✚ That God has not loved us enough to reveal Himself to us (1 John 1:2).

- ✚ That God has not loved us enough to send us the Word of life (1 John 1:1).
- ✚ That God has not loved us enough to show us eternal life (1 John 1:2).
- ✚ That there is no eternal life (1 John 1:2).
- ✚ That there is no fellowship with God, not for sure (1 John 1:3).
- ✚ That the message of hope and of Scripture are not true, not for sure (1 John 1:3).
- ✚ That there is no joy beyond this life, not for sure, no fulness of joy (1 John 1:4).
- ✚ That Jesus Christ is not our Advocate (1 John 2:2).
- ✚ That there is no forgiveness of sin (1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:2).
- ✚ That there is no perfect sacrifice for sin (1 John 2:2).

On and on the list could go, but the point is clearly seen. The false teacher destroys the hope of salvation and of eternity with God. We are left without hope and without God in this world unless God has loved us, loved us so much that He sent His Son Jesus Christ into this world. Jesus Christ is the crux of the message of the gospel. Note that the spirit of the false teacher is the spirit of antichrist (see The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible,[®] outline—1 John 2:18-23 and notes—1 John 2:18-23). If a teacher confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, he is a true teacher. If not, he is a false teacher who promotes the very spirit of antichrist.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits” (1 John 4:1).

“But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:33).

“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

3. *You must ask yourself: Am I really truthful? Do I honestly believe and confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God?*

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also” (1 John 2:22-23).

Thought

As a minister of Christ, you must be truthful to yourself and to people. Do you honestly believe and confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God? The false teacher is antichrist: he stands against Christ. He is a person who denies that Jesus is the Messiah, the very Son of God whom God had promised to send as the Savior of the world. Two terrible things are said about this person (note the above verse): first, he is a liar; and second, he denies the Father if he denies the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is this so? How is it that a person denies God if he denies Christ? The answer is twofold.

First, if a person denies that God sent His Son into the world, then his image of God differs entirely from the God who is the Father of Jesus Christ. God has sent His Son into the world. Therefore, if we picture a *god* in our minds that did not send His Son, then our image of God differs entirely from the true and living God. The true and living God is love, perfect love. Therefore, He has loved man perfectly. God has done the greatest thing that can be done for man: He has sent His only Son into the world to save man by dying for man's sins. No greater love could ever be demonstrated for man. Therefore, if a man says that God did not send His Son into the world—that Jesus Christ is not the Son of God—then that man is thinking of some *god* other than the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

✚ By denying Jesus Christ, the man denies the Father.

✚ By denying the Son, the man does not have the Father, not the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is separated from the Father, standing against and opposed to both God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The man is doomed, for he has denied that God loves the world enough to send His Son to save the world.

Second, any person who denies Jesus Christ is denying the New Testament. Why? Because the New Testament says time and again that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the one Person who reveals God the Father to the world. Just a few of the verses are these (the whole Gospel of John was written for the very purpose of revealing the Son of God to the world):

“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matthew 11:27).

“Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me” (John 12:44-45).

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John 14:9-11).

The point is clear: any person who denies Jesus Christ is denying the Father of Jesus Christ, God Himself, the only living and true God. Any person who denies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is a false teacher, a forerunner of the antichrist.

4. *You must not depart from the faith.*

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of

devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

Thought

As a minister, you must not depart from the faith. God has called you to preach and teach the glorious gospel of His dear Son. This you must do: you must never turn away from your calling. You must never commit apostasy; you must not become an apostate.

But note the above Scripture: the Holy Spirit clearly warns that some ministers will turn away. And note where they come from: from within the church. There was a time when they actually held to the faith, a time when they believed and taught the Word of God. But they turned away from the Word of God and from God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone can save us.

As stated in the verse, this is a warning from the Spirit of God Himself. Therefore, it is a warning that every minister must heed. The Spirit of God gives three warnings.

- a) As a minister, you must not give attention to seducing spirits and teachings of devils. There are all kinds of evil spirits throughout the world, spirits that are set on seducing and deceiving you. They are set on leading you to follow them and their ideas and teachings. They do all they can to turn you away from the doctrine and faith of Christ. And note: the method they use is not a frontal attack, not a clear or loud declaration against the truth. They mix some truth with error. Their method is to . . .

- ✚ Seduce.
- ✚ Persuade.
- ✚ Entice.
- ✚ Delude.
- ✚ Appear as light and truth.
- ✚ Lure.
- ✚ Deceive.
- ✚ Charm.
- ✚ Attract.

“For such are false apostles [representatives of Christ], deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision [religionists]: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake [personal gain, livelihood]” (Titus 1:10-11).

b) You must not speak lies in hypocrisy. Very simply, you must not teach something different from what the Scripture says. There are some who know they are not teaching what Scripture says. In fact, they take pride in their stand against what they call “a literal interpretation” of Scripture. They even mock and poke fun at those who believe and hold to the truth of Scripture. But note what is so often overlooked:

- ✚ “Speaking lies” means speaking and teaching what is contrary to Scripture. This is exactly what Scripture is declaring. In the eyes of Scripture, a lie is a teaching that is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.
- ✚ “In hypocrisy” means the teacher knows that he is teaching contrary to Scripture. He claims to be a minister or teacher of God, Christ, and the Word (Scripture); and yet he teaches something contrary to what Scripture says. A hypocrite is a person who claims to be one thing but he is something else.

The point is this: you must not be a person who speaks lies in hypocrisy. The false teacher denies, refutes, or ignores what Scripture says and he knows it; yet he claims to be a minister or teacher of Christ and the gospel. This is the minister who is an instrument or tool of some seducing and deceptive spirit, a minister who teaches the doctrines of evil spirits. As the minister of Christ, you must never be a hypocrite. You must not speak lies in hypocrisy. You must never allow yourself to turn away from the faith.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18).

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments [elementary notions and teachings] of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8).

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16).

William Barclay has an excellent statement on men becoming tools of Satan and of evil spirits.

“It was from these evil spirits and demons that this false teaching came. But though it came from the demons, it came through men. . . . Now here is the threatening and the terrible thing. We know that God and God’s Spirit are everywhere looking for men to use. God is always searching for men who will be His instruments, His weapons, His tools in the world. But here we come face to face with the terrible fact that the forces of evil are also looking for men to use. Just as God seeks men for His purposes, the forces of evil seek men for their purposes. Here is the terrible responsibility of manhood. Man can accept the service of God, or the service of the devil. Man can become an instrument of the Supreme Good or the Supreme Evil. Men are faced with the eternal choice—to whom are we to give our lives, to God or to God’s enemy? Are we to decide to be used by God, or are we to decide to be used by the devil?” (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.107).

- c) You must guard your conscience lest it become seared, that is cauterized, hardened, and insensitive. It does not bother most false teachers to teach contrary to the truth of Scripture. They can ignore and deny the Scripture and present their own ideas and it does not bother them at all. They are totally

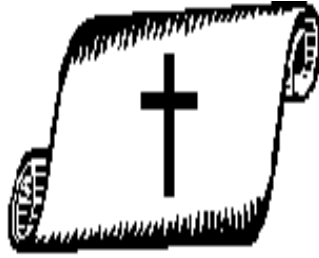
insensitive to the pricking and convictions of God's Spirit. They have no conscience and no remorse about twisting the Scriptures and the truth about Christ. They are completely past feeling any kind of movement from God's Spirit.

You must not let this happen to you. You are the minister of Christ. You must not allow any teaching in your life that would harden your conscience. You must never turn away from the faith.

“For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Acts 28:27).

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:20-22).

“Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief” (Proverbs 28:14).



PART TWO

WHAT YOUR DAILY WALK AS A MINISTER MUST BE

God's Word tells you how to live and walk in Christ day by day. *Consistency, obedience, faithfulness*—this is what God is after. Following Him—doing exactly as He says—bears the most fulfilling and fruitful life and ministry imaginable. For this reason, you must be diligent in living and walking exactly as God says. Again, God's Word stresses that *consistency, obedience, and faithfulness* must be the hallmarks of your life.

CHAPTER 8

What Your Daily Walk as a Minister Must Be

As a minister of Christ, you must walk in three things every day of your life: in Christ, in the Scriptures, and in prayer. These three things are absolute essentials as you live and minister for Christ in the midst of a broken and hurting world.

A. YOU AND CHRIST

1. *You must make sure—absolutely sure—that your belief in Christ is the right kind of belief.*

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9).

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Thought

As a minister of Christ, you must have the right kind of faith—a true saving faith—in Christ. You are saved by believing in Jesus Christ. But what does believing mean? How can you know that your belief is the right kind of belief, a true saving faith?

The right kind of faith, saving faith, is not this:

- ✚ Saving faith is not head knowledge, not just a mental conviction and intellectual assent.

- ✚ Saving faith is not just believing the fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.
- ✚ Saving faith is not just believing history, that Jesus Christ lived upon earth as the Savior just as George Washington lived upon earth as the President of the United States.
- ✚ Saving faith is not just believing the words and claims of Jesus Christ in the same way that a person would believe the words of George Washington.

The right kind of faith, saving faith, is two things.

- a) Saving faith is believing in Jesus Christ, who and what He is, that He is the Savior and Lord of life. You must believe in Jesus Christ with your heart, believe to such a degree that you give your whole life to Him. You must confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and turn your life over—completely and totally—to live for Him (Romans 10:9-10).
- b) Saving faith is commitment—the commitment of your total being and life to Jesus Christ. It is the commitment of all you *are and have* to Christ. Saving faith gives everything to Christ; therefore, it involves all of your affairs. You trust Christ to take care of your past (sins), your present (welfare), and your future (destiny). You entrust your whole life, being, and possessions into Christ's hands. You lay yourself upon Jesus' keeping, confiding in Him about your daily necessities and acknowledging Him in all the ways of life. You follow Christ in every area and in every detail of life, seeking His instructions

and leaving your welfare up to Him. Saving faith is simply commitment of your whole being, all you *are and have* to Christ.

As a minister, you must make sure that what you profess is true. You must make sure—absolutely sure—that your belief in Christ is the right kind of belief, that you have a true saving faith. Your life and ministry will come up short—very short—if you do not know Christ yourself, know Him personally and intimately.

2. *You must make sure—absolutely sure—that you are a new creation in Christ Jesus.*

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

“Put off concerning the former conversation [behavior] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and . . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephes. 4:22-24).

“Put off the old man with his deeds; and . . . put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:9-10).

Thought

The message of the gospel is this: a person can become a new creation in Christ Jesus. A person can be changed, truly changed, and become a better person—just like a new man. As a minister, you preach and teach this gospel, the gospel that a person can be changed and start life all over again—by the power of Christ. You

must, therefore, make sure you yourself are a changed person that you are what you preach:

a) You must make sure you are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) ...

- ✚ That old things have passed away.

- ✚ That all things are become new.

b) You must make sure you have put off the behavior of your old man and have put on the behavior of the new man (Ephes. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10) ...

- ✚ That the spirit of your mind has been renewed.

- ✚ That you are living a life of righteousness and true holiness.

- ✚ That your knowledge (mind) is being renewed and conformed to the image of Christ more and more (Col. 3:10).

As a minister, you must be a new creation, a new man, in Christ. You cannot be His representative nor adequately preach that a person can be changed by Christ, that he can start life all over again, not unless you have been changed. To preach one thing and live something else is hypocritical. You must, therefore, make sure you yourself are a new creation, a new man, before you can represent Christ and teach and preach to others.

3. *You must constantly examine yourself—make sure you continue in the faith of Christ—lest you become disqualified, unfit, and rejected.*

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor. 13:5).

Thought

As a minister, you must make sure you are genuine—constantly make sure. Living in sin makes your faith suspect, especially since you are a professing minister of Christ. There is no place for sin in a minister’s life, no excuse for a minister to *continue practicing* some sin. You must constantly examine yourself and make sure there is no known sin in your life. When you find sin, you must repent, turn away from it, and confess it to Christ, asking forgiveness. And He will forgive you. But note: if you find sin in your life and do not turn away from it, then you are what Scripture calls “*reprobate*.” Reprobate means to be disqualified and unfit for the ministry. Reprobate means you are *disapproved* and rejected by God. As a minister, you must constantly examine yourself and make sure you are genuine—make sure you continue in the faith, that you are living a righteous and godly life.

4. *You must always walk in Christ: you must always seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [the necessities of life] shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33, cp. Matthew 6:25-34).

Thought

As a minister, you are always to walk in Christ: you are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. You are not to be preoccupied with material possessions, not even with the necessities of life such as food, clothing, and housing. Your first duty and preoccupation is to seek God first. God gives you the greatest promise in all the world: your necessities—all of your needs—will be met if you will seek His kingdom and His righteousness first.

There are two ways you can go about taking care of yourself in this world.

- a) Working and seeking in your own strength: depending upon your own ability and energy alone, fighting and struggling to make it through life, and fretting and worrying about succeeding and about how to keep what you have secured.
- b) Working and seeking in both God's strength and your own strength: trusting and acknowledging God while doing all you can; putting your hand to the plow and plowing; working diligently and not looking back, and while working, trusting the results to God. God says He will see to it that such a trusting person will always have the necessities of life.

God is your heavenly Father, and He knows your needs. You are very, very special to Him. Just do one simple thing and He will take care of you and meet all your needs: walk in Christ, always seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

5. *You must live a crucified life in Christ, a life of self denial and sacrifice.*

“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

“Knowing this, that your old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6).

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11).


“[We are] always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Cor. 4:10-11).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:24).

Thought

You must count yourself—consider yourself—crucified with Christ. What does this mean? It means this: when Christ died upon the cross, He denied Himself—sacrificed Himself totally—for us. To be crucified with Christ means just this:

-  You sacrifice yourself—deny yourself, count yourself as dead—and live for Christ (Galatians 2:20).

✚ You treat yourself as though you are dead to self, but alive to God (Romans 6:11).

✚ You sacrifice yourself—deny yourself completely and totally—to Christ and His cause: to follow Him (Luke 9:23).

Note Luke 9:23: the verse tells you what you must do to follow Christ.

“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

- a) You must deny yourself. Man’s nature and tendency is to indulge himself, to do what he wants, to do his own thing. But you are not to indulge yourself: you are not to seek more and more of this world and its things and comforts. You are to deny yourself by discipline and control, by loving and caring for others, by sacrificing and giving to others, and by helping and ministering to others.
- b) You must take up your cross. The cross does not mean merely bearing one’s particular hardship in life, such as poor health, abuse, criticism, gossip, opposition, persecution, unemployment, invalid parents, spouse, a wayward child. The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. Therefore, to take up your cross means that you die to self daily—die mentally and actively. You let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling yourself to the point of death, be in you and fill your thoughts every day (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). You put your will, your desires, your wants, your ambitions to death. In their stead, you follow Christ and do His will all day

long. Now, note a crucial fact: this is not negative, passive behavior. It takes positive, active behavior to *will*, to *deny self*, to *take up one's cross*, to *follow Christ*. You have to act, work, get to it, and be diligent, consistent, and enduring in order to die to self.

c) You must follow Jesus. Man's tendency, however, is to follow someone else and to give his first allegiance to something else. Within the world, there are many things available for you to serve and put first. There are ...

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| ✚ Service organizations. | ✚ Profession. |
| ✚ Social acceptance. | ✚ Houses. |
| ✚ Humanitarian needs. | ✚ Pleasure. |
| ✚ Religion (institutional). | ✚ Livelihood. |
| ✚ Fleshly stimulation. | ✚ Family. |
| ✚ Self (fame, honor). | ✚ Appearance. |
| ✚ Recreation. | ✚ Clubs. |
| ✚ Sports. | ✚ Hobby. |
| ✚ Comfort. | ✚ Health. |
| ✚ Education. | ✚ Clothing. |

As a minister, you must live a crucified life in Christ, a life of self-denial. You must walk day by day dying to yourself—your own desires and wishes—and live for Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

6. *You must be inwardly renewed day by day, changed into the image of Christ.*

“For which cause [the glory of God] we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Thought

Your walk before the Lord is a day by day affair. You must struggle day by day to be inwardly renewed, to be changed more and more into the image of Christ. Note five significant points in 2 Cor. 4:16-18 above.

- a) You must not faint in your call and ministry. This means you must not give up or quit; you must not lose heart or become discouraged; you must not allow anything to defeat you: not people, circumstances, events, fatigue, exhaustion, or even persecution and severe opposition. Nothing, absolutely nothing, must be allowed to drive you from the ministry nor keep you from preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b) Your outward man perishes every day.

- ✚ The “outward man” is the *earthen vessel* (2 Cor. 4:7), the *human body* (2 Cor. 4:10), the *mortal flesh* (2 Cor. 4:11), and the *earthly house* (2 Cor. 5:1).
- ✚ The word “perish” (*diaptheiretai*) means to age, wear out, waste away, deteriorate, decay, corrupt, and die.

Your “outward man” or body is wearing out and wasting away every day. It is in the process of perishing and dying. As you age your body will become weaker and weaker, less able to go on: it will ache, slow down, need more rest, and most likely develop some serious problems or diseases. In addition to the normal wear and tear upon the body, people may put enormous demands and pressure upon you and even persecute you. But note the glorious truths of the next three points.

c) The minister’s “inner man” is renewed day by day. The inner man is ...

- ✚ Your spirit that has been “born again” or created anew by the Spirit of God (John 3:3, 5-6).
- ✚ Your spirit that was dead in trespasses and sins until it was quickened and made alive by Christ (Ephes. 2:2, 4-5).
- ✚ The “new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17) and the “new man” (Ephes. 4:24; Col. 3:10).
- ✚ The highest and deepest part of your being where the Holy Spirit dwells.
- ✚ The “hidden man of the heart” (1 Peter 3:4).

You are renewed day by day when you draw near God for strength and growth, for relief and deliverance. But remember: it is the presence and power of God within your body that renews you. You must seek His presence and power, His renewal, day by day. Seeking Him is your duty. When you fulfill your duty—seeking Him—then He renews and conforms you into the image of Christ day by day.

- d) Your afflictions are light when compared to the glory you shall receive in heaven. Note the phrase “weight of glory.” This picture should always be kept in mind by every minister. The picture is that of a set of scales sitting before the minister. You balance your afflictions on one end and the eternal glory you are to receive on the other end. The afflictions may be heavy and severe, but when you place the eternal glory you are to receive on the scales, the afflictions become light. It is as though they weigh nothing.

- e) Your eyes must not be focused on the physical and temporal, but on the spiritual and eternal. The word “look” (scopeo) means to focus your eyes and attention on a set goal or end. The goal, of course, is spending eternity with God in the new heavens and earth. You must not look at the things which are seen (the physical and corruptible), but at the things which are not seen (the spiritual and incorruptible). The reason is strikingly clear: the things which are seen are temporal (brief, temporary, fading, passing, fleeting, and transient); but the things which are not seen are eternal (lasting, endless, forever, permanent, immortal, and glorious).

“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:23).

“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:43).

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:17-18).

“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:21).

“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12).

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

The point is this: if you will keep your eyes on the spiritual and eternal—on Christ and on the great glory He has planned for you as one of His dear servants—you will be inwardly renewed day by day, changed more and more into the image of Christ. May the Spirit of God help you to focus upon the

spiritual and eternal as you serve our wonderful Lord day by day. Amen and Amen!

7. *You must put on the whole armour of God and be strong in Christ.*

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore ...

- + “having your loins girt about with truth ...**
- + “having on the breastplate of righteousness ...**
- + “[having] your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;**
- + “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.**
- + “And take the helmet of salvation,**
- + “and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God ...**
- + Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephes. 6:10-18).**

Thought

As a minister, your calling is not to a life of enjoyment and ease but to a life of hard conflict. There are foes within and foes without. From the cradle to the grave, there is constant struggle against the corruptible lusts of the flesh and the imposing temptations offered by the world and Satan—a struggle against fleshly corruptions that inevitably lead to death. What can you do? Learn and know that your warfare is not human or physical, but spiritual. You are not struggling against flesh and blood—against another person—but against spiritual forces that possess unbelievable power. You must, therefore, protect yourself. How? By putting on the armor of God. There are seven pieces to the armor of God:

- a) The belt of *truth*: you must put on the truth of Christ and of the Word of God.
- b) The breastplate of *righteousness*: you must put on the righteousness of Christ and live righteously as you walk day by day.
- c) The sandals of the *gospel of peace*: you must put on the gospel of peace—make sure you possess the gospel yourself—and share the gospel wherever your feet take you.
- d) The shield of *faith*: above all you must put on faith—belief in God and His Word. Faith—believing God and His Word and promises—will quench all the fiery temptations and trials of the devil.
- e) The helmet of *salvation*: put on salvation. Salvation means deliverance. Put on the salvation of Christ and work out your own salvation or deliverance (Phil. 2:12). Do all you can in saving and delivering yourself and God will deliver

you. The result will be a glorious salvation and deliverance from all the temptations, trials, and corruptions of this world.

- f) The sword of the *Word of God*: take up the Word of God—study, learn, memorize, and use the Word. Live by the Word of God and you will be protected more and more from the onslaught of the temptations and trials of the enemy. Use the Word of God to fight and win battle after battle, day after day.
- g) The supernatural provision, *prayer*: put on prayer—clothe yourself in prayer—a constant spirit of prayer. As you enter conflict after conflict throughout the day, pray and ask God to protect and deliver you from the temptations and trials of the enemy.

As a minister, you must put on the armor of God. You can never stand against the onslaught of Satan’s temptations and trials unless you are clothed in God’s armor. A suggestion: pray for the armor of God—each piece of the armor—every morning as you begin the day. Ask God to clothe you with each piece of armor. (See The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible, outline—Ephes. 6:10-20 and notes—Ephes. 6:10-20 for more discussion.)

B. YOU AND SCRIPTURE

1. *You must study and obey the Scriptures daily: you must live by the Word of God and proclaim it.*

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”(2 Tim. 3:16).

“Meditate upon these things [the teachings of God’s Word]; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Tim. 4:15).

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2-3).

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).





“But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2).

“My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes” (Psalm 119:48).

Thought

As a minister, you must study and obey the Scriptures daily. Two significant points need to be noted.

a) The Bible is God’s Word: it is *inspired* by God (2 Tim. 3:16). The Word “inspired” means *breathed by God*. God has given you the Bible so that you will know how to live upon the earth. You are to study the Bible ...

-  For doctrine or teaching.
-  For reproof.
-  For correction.
-  For instruction in righteousness.

Note these four things: they cover the whole scope of life—everything we need to live a life that conquers and overflows with the fulness of life.

As a minister of God, you must always remember this: the Scripture alone will perfect or mature you and equip you to do every good work. You were made for God; therefore you must live by the Word of God. Your aim must be to study and learn exactly how God wants you to live and minister.

b) You must study and live by the Word of God. Note 2 Tim. 2:15 above. The word “study” means to set your heart upon: be diligent, hurry, rush, and seek the *approval of God*. God’s approval is to be your concern. A believer is a fool if he does not seek the approval of God. To be disapproved is to be displeasing and unacceptable to God. How then can you secure the approval of God?

✚ By being a workman. The idea is that of a diligent worker who toils and labors to the point of exhaustion.

But note: your work is pinpointed and identified. You are to be a workman by studying the Word of God and rightly dividing it. The words “rightly divide” (ortho-tomounta) mean to cut straight. You are to cut straight to the truth; you are not to take crooked paths and side tracks to the truth. You are to study the truth and rightly divide it. Once you have studied and learned the Word of God, you are to *accurately teach* the Word of God. You are not to teach ...

✚ Your own ideas.

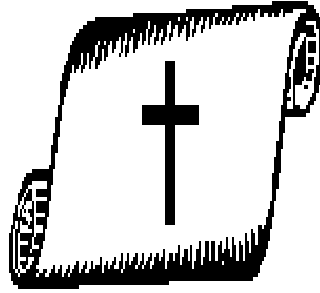
✚ The theories of other people.

✚ What you think.

✚ What other men think.

You are not to mishandle the Word of God: twist it to fit what you think or want it to say; add to or take away from it; over-emphasize or under-emphasize its teachings. Any person who mishandles God’s Word is not approved of God. This is the point of this verse: if you want God’s approval—if you want to be acceptable to God—you must study; rush and seek to be a true teacher of God’s

Word. You must be a *workman* who studies God's Word, a workman who studies diligently: *who correctly analyzes and accurately divides—rightly handles and skillfully teaches the Word of Truth* (Amplified New Testament). As a minister, if you study and obey the Scriptures daily, you will not be ashamed when you face the Lord Jesus Christ in the day of judgment.



CHAPTER 9

What Your Personal Life and Behavior as a Minister Must Be

How you take care of you body and mind, how you behave and conduct yourself, and how you handle financial matters are of critical importance to God. He cares deeply about how you live and behave among both the godly and ungodly of the world.

A. YOU AND YOUR BODY AND MIND

1. *You must present your body as a living sacrifice to God.*

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1-2)

Thought

God demands your body. God is not interested only in your spirit; He is vitally interested in your body. Your body is to be God’s—to be presented as a living sacrifice to God. What does a living sacrifice mean?

- a) A living sacrifice means a *constant, continuous sacrifice*, not just an occasional dedication of your body. You do not sacrifice your body to God today, and then take your body back into your own hands and do your own thing tomorrow. A *living sacrifice* means that you dedicate your body *to live for God and to keep on living for God*.
- b) A living sacrifice means a *sacrifice of your body wherever you are*. A particular place is not needed. The sacrifice of your body is a living sacrifice; it is to be made while your body is living right where it is. And the offering of a living sacrifice is to be made today—*right now* while your body is living.
- c) A living sacrifice means that your body *sacrifices its own desires and it lives for God*. Your body lives a holy, righteous, pure, clean, and moral life for God. Your body does not pollute, dirty, nor contaminate itself with the sins and corruptions of the world. Your body is sacrificed for God and dedicated to live as He commands.
- d) A living sacrifice means that your body *lives for God by serving God*. It means that your body sacrifices and gives up its own ambitions and desires, and it serves God while upon this earth. Your body gives itself to the work of proclaiming the love of God and of ministering to a world reeling in desperate needs. Your body sacrifices itself to serve God and Him alone. Your body is dedicated to God as a living sacrifice.

As a minister, you are to dedicate your body to God. Your body is to be a *living sacrifice* for God in the home, church, school, office, plant, restaurant, club, park, car, and plane. No matter where your body is, your body is to be sacrificed to God.

2. *You must know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.*

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20; cp. Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9).

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17).

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor. 6:16).

Thought

As a minister, your body and spirit belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Before you accepted Jesus Christ, you did what you wanted with your body: gave it over to such things as immorality, drunkenness, overeating, greed, and to a host of other things. But now, since you have accepted Jesus Christ and committed your life to Him, He owns your body and spirit. He bought and purchased your body upon the cross when He died for you. Therefore, you owe your body to God. Your body is now the temple for God's presence, for the indwelling of God's precious Holy Spirit. God's Spirit actually lives within your body. You must, therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit. (Also see 1.3., 3.4.8., 4.2., 6.B.3..)

3. *You must struggle to control your mind—even every thought—and think only positive thoughts.*

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

“For they that are after the flesh do mind [keep their minds on] the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5).

“We have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16).

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed [kept] on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

Thought

As a minister, you are to focus your thoughts upon the good things of life and upon God. You are to give your mind to *positive thinking*. In fact, you are to think only positive thoughts. You are never to keep an immoral, fleshly, worldly, selfish, sinful, or evil thought in your mind. You cannot help wrong thoughts flashing across your mind, but you must not harbor them, allow them to roost in your mind. Sinful and negative thoughts disrupt and destroy peace. For this reason, you are to struggle to conquer your mind and thoughts. You are to exert every cell of energy possible to captivate and control every thought. What we think is so important that God tells us what we are to think.

a) You are to captivate every thought and make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5):

- ✚ Cast down *every imagination*: thoughts that flash across your mind, that are uncontrolled, wild, evil, lustful, immoral, selfish, unjust, wrong, untrue, devilish, and set against God.
- ✚ Cast down *every high thing* that exalts itself against the knowledge of God: false ideas about God, false doctrine, false teaching, false reasoning; the human pride and arrogance, self-sufficiency and self-righteousness that set themselves up against God.

✚ Struggle to captivate *every thought* and make it obedient to Christ: a *phenomenal statement*—every thought controlled and subjected to Christ! This is the spiritual objective of the true Christian believer. God created man for fellowship and communion, and the believer knows it; therefore, the believer wars—struggles and fights—to captivate every thought and focus it upon God and His righteousness. As a minister, you must seek to walk in an unbroken fellowship and communion with God.

b) You are to think on these things (Phil. 4:8):

✚ “Whatsoever things are *true*”: real and genuine. Many things in the world seem to be true, but they are not; they are false and deceptive, an illusion and a counterfeit. You are to keep your mind upon things that are true.

✚ “Whatsoever things are *honest*”: honorable, worthy, revered, highly respected, and noble.

✚ “Whatsoever things are *just*”: right and righteous behavior. It has to do with right behavior toward man and God. You are to keep your thoughts upon your duty toward men and God—upon doing what is right toward both.

✚ “Whatsoever things are *pure*”: morally clean, spotless, stainless, chaste, undefiled, free from moral pollution, filth, dirt, and impurities. Your mind and thoughts are to be pure—every thought.

- ✚ “Whatever things are *lovely*”: pleasing, winsome, kind, gracious; things that stir love and kindness. Your thoughts are not to be thoughts of unkindness and meanness, grumbling and murmuring, criticism and reaction. Your thoughts are to be focused upon things that are lovely—that build people up, not tear them down.

- ✚ “Whatever things are of *good report*”: reputable, high-toned, worthy things; things of the highest quality. You are to think only upon worthy things, not to fill your mind with junk; you are not to listen to *bad reports*, no matter how juicy they may seem. Neither are you to fill your mind with junk, whether through rumor, radio, television, music, off-colored jokes, or some other source. Your thoughts are to be focused only upon worthy things—only upon that which is of *good report*.

- ✚ “If there be any virtue [excellence] and if there be any praise [in any thought], think on these things.” Positive thinking is your answer to peace as a Christian minister.

4. *You must discipline and subject your body to Christ lest you become a castaway.*

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27).

Thought

As a minister, you must control your body; you must not let your body control you. How? By simply not giving in to it—by denying the body whatever it craves. It is tough at first, but you can do it by simply not giving in even if beads of sweat pop out (Hebrews 12:4). You can control your body by refusing to give in no matter the pain—by doing exactly what the disciplined athlete does. And in a few days or weeks the most glorious thing happens: the body is conquered, brought under control. The athletes and consistent exercisers of the world know this. Therefore, you will never be excused for not disciplining your body.

You master your own body. The phrase “keep under” means to bruise, to beat back. You literally beat back your body and its cravings in order to bring it into subjection. The word *subjection* means to enslave, to lead about as a slave. Note why you must discipline and subject your body: lest you be a “castaway.”

The Greek word means reprobate, rejected, disqualified, unfit, and failing to stand the test. As a minister, you must not live a carnal, fleshly life. A carnal, fleshly life demonstrates and proves that you are not genuine. And Scripture says this: if your life is not genuine, you will be disqualified, put on the shelf, and cast away. You must, therefore, keep your body under control: discipline and subject it to Christ and His righteousness.

5. *You must exercise your body both spiritually and physically.*

**“Bodily exercise profiteth [a] little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”
(1 Tim. 4:8).**

Thought

As a minister of Christ, you must exercise your body both spiritually and physically. You are compared to an athlete.

- a) You are to exercise (gymnasia) yourself in godliness as much as an Olympic athlete exercises his body. How much energy, effort, time, and dedication does an Olympic athlete put into his training? His sport is his life—unequivocally so. So it is with you: godliness is to be your life. All of your energy, effort, time, and dedication are to be given over to godliness. You are to know no exercise but the exercise of godliness.

- c) Bodily exercise is profitable, but godliness is more profitable, far more profitable. You should exercise your body regularly; you should keep yourself physically fit. But the focus of your life is to be godliness. The reason is clear: godliness bears fruit—great fruit—both in this life and in the life to come. God promises to bless the godly person now while he walks upon this earth, and eternally when he receives the life to come.

- d) But know this: you must have a healthy and strong body—a body as healthy and strong as it can be—in order to be able to work long hours, in order to endure, last, and complete your day to day tasks. How much more work would get done for Christ if ministers would exercise their bodies? The truth is this: we could exercise our spirits to godliness much more if we exercised our bodies on a regular and consistent basis. A suggestion: begin an exercise program today if you are not physically fit—begin today and be consistent, pleasing the Lord.

B. YOU AND YOUR CONDUCT

1. *You must live a life of godly character.*

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop [minister], he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report [testimony, witness] of them which are without [the church; unbelievers]; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers [those who oppose the minister]” (Titus 1:6-9).

Thought

The office of *bishop* is probably the same office as elder or presbyter or minister in the New Testament. All three words refer to the same person, to the minister of the

gospel and of the church. What are the qualifications of the minister? Who should be preaching the gospel and filling the pulpits of the Lord's church? Who should be considering the ministry? What kind of person? The importance of these passages cannot be over stressed when it comes to the building and protection of God's church and people.

a) As a minister, you must meet some personal qualifications:

- ✚ Blameless: without reproach 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6
- ✚ Husband of only one wife 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6
- ✚ Vigilant: watchful, guarding
oneself and one's people 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7
- ✚ Sober 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8
- ✚ Good behavior 1 Tim. 3:2
- ✚ Given to hospitality 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8
- ✚ Able to teach 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9
- ✚ Not given to drunken-ness of
any sort 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7
- ✚ Not a striker: not violent but
gentle 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7
- ✚ Not greedy of money or
possessions 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7
- ✚ Patient: kind, enduring,
persevering 1 Tim. 3:3
- ✚ Not a brawler: not a fighter but
a peacemaker 1 Tim. 3:3

- ✚ Not covetous: not seeking worldly pleasures, possessions, power, or recognition 1 Tim. 3:3
- ✚ Not self-willed: not stubborn, arrogant, or overbearing Titus 1:7
- ✚ Not angry: not quick-tempered or hotheaded Titus 1:7
- ✚ Loves good men (the Greek means good things as well as good people) Titus 1:8
- ✚ Just: honest, upright, and fair Titus 1:8
- ✚ Holy: pure, clean, and moral Titus 1:8
- ✚ Temperate: self-controlled Titus 1:8
- ✚ Holds fast to the faithful Word of God Titus 1:9

b) As a minister, you must meet some family qualifications:

- ✚ Manage your own family well 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6
- ✚ Teach and lead your children to obey 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6
- ✚ Be the husband of one wife. 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6

c) As a minister, you must meet a spiritual qualification:

✚ Not be a new convert, but 1 Tim. 3:7
be spiritually mature

d) As a minister, you must meet a community qualification:

✚ Be a good testimony 1 Tim. 3:7
and witness

2. *You must live a life of separation, a life separate from the world.*

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:17-18, cp. 2 Cor. 6:14-16).

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15-16).

Thought

As a minister, you are to come out from among unbelievers and be separate (2 Cor. 6:14-18). What does this mean? Of course, it does *not* mean that you are to leave the cities, communities, and workplaces of the world. You are not to isolate yourself from unbelievers. It does not mean that you have nothing to do with unbelievers—never talking, sharing, or associating with them. Both believers and unbelievers are in the world, and they have to share the world together. What God means is at least two things.

a) God means that you differ from unbelievers, differ radically. Therefore ...

- ✚ You are not to be “unequally yoked” with unbelievers. You are not to be *yoked*, not to be intimately involved, in a relationship with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14).

- ✚ You are not to be in “fellowship” with unbelievers. You are not to share and participate in the worldly life and functions and events of unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14).

- ✚ You are not to be in “communion” with unbelievers. You are not to be closely bound in partnership with unbelievers. You are not to be so united with unbelievers that there has to be open and mutual sharing of person and possessions (2 Cor. 6:14).

✚ You are not to be attached nor in covenant with unbelievers. You must not follow the worthless leader of the unbelievers, Satan (2 Cor. 6:15).

✚ You are not to move about in the sphere, the realm, the life and position of the infidel, the person who has rejected Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 6:15).

✚ You are not to worship with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:16).

b) God means that you are not to touch the unclean thing (2 Cor. 6:17-18). You are no longer to live as the sinners of the world live. You are not to participate in the sins of unbelievers.

3. *You must be a man of God.*

“But thou, O man of God, flee these things [the love of money and of possessions]: and follow after

✚ **righteousness**

✚ **godliness**

✚ **faith**

✚ **love**

✚ **patience**

✚ **meeekness.**

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:11-12).

Thought

As a minister, you must be a *man of God*. This means three things:

a) You, the man of God, must flee the passion for wealth. You are to flee the love of money—run away from it. Note a shocking fact, shocking because so many people love money and the things it can buy:

✚ The man who loves money is not a *man of God*. The man of God is the person who flees the love of money. The man of God does not love the world nor seek after the things of the world. He flees from the love and passions of this world.

b) You, the man of God, must follow after the things of God. The word “follow” is strong. It means to run after; to run swiftly after; to hotly pursue; to seek eagerly and earnestly. It has the idea of aiming at and pursuing until something is gained; of never giving up until you have reached your goal. There are six things you, the man of God, are to pursue.

✚ *Righteousness*: to be right with God and to do right.

✚ *Godliness*: to seek to be like God; to walk as God would walk if He were on earth; to seek after the character of God.

✚ *Faith*: both to believe God and to be faithful to God.

- ✚ *Love*: to have a sacrificial and selfless love—a love so great that it loves the unworthy, undeserving, ungodly, sinners, and even enemies of this world.
- ✚ *Patience*: to endure, persevere, and be steadfast.
- ✚ *Meekness*: to be gentle, tender, humble, mild, and considerate, but strongly so.

c) You, the man of God, must fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life. This is the picture of an athletic contest. The word “fight” means to agonize, struggle, battle, contend, and fight for the prize. It is the idea of a *desperate effort and struggle*.

Note: the believer is in a desperate struggle for eternal life. Laying hold of the prize of eternal life is the struggle. Eternal life is the goal for which you, the man of God, are fighting.

Note an extremely significant point: what your profession as a minister is. When you commit your life to the ministry, you are professing...

- ✚ That you believe in eternal life—that eternal life is a reality.
- ✚ That you and all others who trust Christ shall live forever. You profess the reality of eternal life before “many witnesses”—all who know you and come in contact with you. The point is this: you, the man of God, must live up to your profession. You must do exactly what you profess: fight the good fight of faith and lay hold of eternal life.



CHAPTER 10

What Your Relationship With Others Must Be

Relationships are very sensitive within any society or body of people, no matter how small or large. The relationship you are to have with your family and with other ministers, and even with those who oppose and criticize you, are clearly spelled out by Scripture.

A. YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

1. *You must walk in a spirit of submission and love with your wife.*

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body . . . Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle,

or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephes. 5:22-23, 25-27).

Thought

As a minister, you above all others must walk in a spirit of submission and love with your wife.

First, your wife must walk in a spirit of submission. There are two reasons why the wife is to be submissive to her husband.

- a) To submit is God’s will. In fact, it is a commandment of God. There is to be no equivocation, no argument, not even a question about it: “Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands.”

God is God, and as God, He has the right to demand anything of us. But note the words “as to the Lord.” When we as believers do anything, we are to do it *as to the Lord*. Why? Because we love Him. The Lord has loved and given Himself for us, given Himself that He might save us. He loved us; therefore, we love Him. This is always the first reason we obey Him. We love Him; therefore, when He says to do something, we do it *as to Him*—to please Him.

Now, let us ask ourselves: What kind of spirit is the Christian wife to have as she obeys God?

- ✚ A spirit of slavery or love?
- ✚ A spirit of grudgery or love?
- ✚ A spirit of resentment or love?
- ✚ A spirit of reaction or love?

The answer is obvious: she acts out of love. She loves the Lord; therefore, to please Him she submits herself to the Lord. The point is this: God instructs wives to walk in a spirit of submission to their husbands. Therefore, Christian wives do not obey the Lord out of resentment and reaction because of the commandment. They obey the Lord out of love because they love both the Lord and their husbands. Therefore, your wife must focus and set her life upon pleasing both the Lord and you, her husband. If the Lord says do it, then she does it because she loves the Lord and wants to please Him above all else.

b) To submit is God's order for the family (Ephes. 5:22). There is to be a *partnership* and *order* within the family. This is basic for the family and society to exist. In fact, no organization, no matter what it is, can survive and exist without a spirit of partnership and order. Note three important facts.

✚ The husband is the head of the wife. The word "head" in Scripture refers to authority *not being*. Neither man nor woman is superior to the other in being. Men and women are equal in God's eyes. There is an essential partnership between men and women. Neither is independent of the other. Both are from the other, and the relationship that exists between them has come from God.

"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman [born of her]; but all things of God" (1 Cor. 11:11-12).

There is neither male nor female in God's eyes. He sees both men and women as one, each as significant as the other.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

When God talks about man being the head of the woman, He is not talking about ability or worth, competence or value, brilliance or advantage. God is talking about function and order within an organization. Every organization has to have a head for it to be operated in an efficient and orderly manner. There are no greater organizations than God's universe, His church, and His Christian family. Within God's order of things there is a partnership, but every partnership must have a head, and God has ordained that man is the head of the partnership.

✚ The great pattern for the wife to follow is Christ and the church. Christ is the head of the church. This simply means that Christ has authority over the church. So long as the church lives by this rule, the church experiences love and joy and peace—orderliness—and it is able to carry out its function and mission on earth to the fullest. So it is with the husband; he is the head of the family, the ultimate authority in the family.

✚ The wife is to be submissive to that authority just as the church is to be submissive to Christ. So long as she and the rest of the family live by this rule, the family experiences love, joy, and peace—

orderliness—and it fulfills its function and purpose on earth. This, of course, assumes that the husband is fulfilling his part in the family. As in any organization, each member must do his part for the organization to be orderly and accomplish its purpose.

- ✚ The husband is the savior of the body just as Christ is the Savior of the church. Christ is the great Protector and Comforter of the church. So the husband is to be the protector and comforter of the wife. By nature, that is, by the constitution and build of the body, the husband is stronger than the wife. Therefore, in God's order of things, he is to be the main protector and comforter of the wife. These two functions are two of the great benefits which the wife receives from a loving husband who is faithful to the Lord.

Second, you must love your wife. The love which you, the husband, are to have for your wife is the very love of God Himself (agape love). *Agape* love is a selfless and unselfish love, a giving and sacrificial love. It is the love of the mind and will as well as of the heart. It is not only a love of affection and feelings, it is a love of the *will and commitment*. It is a love that wills and commits itself to love a person. It is the love that works for the highest good of the person loved . . .

- ✚ That loves even if the person does not deserve to be loved.
- ✚ That loves even if the person is utterly unworthy of being loved.

Just imagine! What would happen in most marriages if the husband so loved his wife, loved her ...

- ✚ With a selfless and unselfish love?
- ✚ With a giving and sacrificial love?
- ✚ With a love of the will as well as of the heart?
- ✚ With a love of commitment as well as of affection?

One thing that would happen in most marriages would be this: the wife would melt in the husband's arms and willingly accept his authority as the head of the family.

Note that the standard of the husband's love is the love of Christ for the church. The love of Christ for the church can be described in one simple statement: Christ *gave Himself* for the church. Christ loved the church so much that He gave Himself—*sacrificed Himself totally*—gave all He was and had for it. This is the love the husband is to have for his wife.

The sacrificial love of the husband involves three things. Note that the very things said about Christ and the church are to be true of the husband and wife.

- a) The husband's love involves being *set apart and cleansed*. The word *sanctify* means to be set apart. When a young man asks a young lady to be his wife, he sets himself apart for her and for her alone. His word, his act, his promise of marriage also causes her to set herself apart. When he speaks the word and

makes the promise of marriage, he and she both are thereafter set apart and cleansed for each other.

A dirty bride or groom—a dirty, defiled marriage—is unthinkable. The one thing above all else that will keep the marriage sanctified and cleansed is the husband’s sacrificial love. If the husband will love his wife to the point that he gives himself sacrificially, his love will not only protect him, but it will go a long way in protecting the sanctity and purity of his wife.

b) The husband’s love involves having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Spots would mean the mistakes that tarnish one’s life and marriage, mistakes so serious that they are very difficult to wash off one’s body and out of one’s mind. They would include such things as ...

- mistreatment and abuse.
- loose and immoral behavior.
- withdrawal and avoidance.

Wrinkles would mean things that cause friction and rattle the nerves and that need to be ironed out. They would include such things as ...

- temper and reaction.
- broken promises and serious neglect.
- severe selfishness and rejection.

c) The husband’s love involves being holy and without blemish. The word “holy” (hagia) means to be separate and untouched by evil. The husband’s love—if it

is a real love—will stir him to be holy and unblemished and go a long way in stirring his wife to be holy and without blemish.

This point is striking—a real eye-opener. It shows just how dependent the marriage is upon the love of the husband—how much effect the husband’s love has upon the marriage. Few wives could reject such love; few wives would refuse to walk hand in hand with their husbands if they truly loved them with the love that is unselfish and sacrificial.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephes. 5:25).

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).

2. *You must be the husband of one wife.*

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2; cp. Titus 2:6. See The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible,[®] note—

□Matthew 5:31-32; note—□Matthew 19:1-12 for what Christ had to say about marriage and divorce.)

Thought

As a minister, you must be “the husband of one wife.” From the earliest times of church history, this qualification has been interpreted differently. Some have held . . .

- that the minister must have a wife; he must be married to be a minister.
- that the minister must never have more than one wife; he must never marry again, even if his wife died. This position holds that second marriages are completely forbidden.
- that the minister must not have more than one wife at a time. (Remember: polygamy was the common practice of society when the church was first born.)
- that a minister must live a life of strict morality; he “must be a loyal husband, preserving marriage in all its purity” (William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.87).

As a minister, you must go before the Lord and seek the meaning of this qualification for yourself. But you must be honest and open to hear the Lord and then beg of Him the courage and discipline to do what He says. This is an absolute essential for all who are believers, for nothing is any more traumatic than the loss of a spouse through death or separation and divorce. And if there is ever a time that we must reach out and minister to our brothers and sisters, it is when they lose their spouses.

The point is this: should you be allowed to serve as a minister if you have had more than one wife, either through death or divorce? The Pulpit Commentary has an excellent comment on this point:

“If we consider the general laxity in regard to marriage, and the facility of divorce, which prevailed among Jews and Romans at this time, it must have been a common thing for a man to have more than one woman living who had been his wife. And this [was] a distinct breach of the primeval law (Gen.ii.24), [and] would properly be a bar to any one being called to the ‘office of a bishop’. . . . It is utterly unsupported by any single passage in Scripture that a

second marriage should disqualify a man for the sacred ministry. As regards the opinion of the early Church, it was not at all uniform, and amongst those who held that this passage absolutely prohibits second marriages in the case of a [bishop], it was merely a part of the asceticism of the day” (Vol.21, p.51).

A.T. Robertson very simply says, “Of one wife [mias gunaikos]. One at a time, clearly” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol.4, p.572).

William Barclay says, “In its context here we can be quite certain that this means that the Christian leader must be a loyal husband, preserving marriage in all its purity” (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.87).

Thompson Chain Reference Bible, in listing its subjects, simply says “Polygamy Forbidden.”

Scripture and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself say:

“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6).

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:9).

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2).

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife” (Titus 1:6).

**“Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away”
(Deut. 17:17).**

3. *You must manage your own family well.*

“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot [wild living] or unruly” (Titus 1:6).

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephes. 6:4).

Thought

As a minister, you must meet one significant family qualification: you must rule your own household and rule it well. The home is a miniature of the church; the home is the proving ground for leadership in the church. The husband is the head of the home. This does not mean that he is the dictator, tyrant, or bully of the home. It means that he is the leader of the wife and children. He leads them all ...

- in the building of a loving, joyful, and peaceful home.
- in the fulfillment of their life’s calling and task upon earth.

It means that you are not bossed about or dominated by your wife; that you do not allow your children to disobey, rebel, or talk back to you or their mother; that you take the lead in controlling your home for Christ and His kingdom.

Note the word “gravity” (semnotes). It means dignity. The minister must rule his home with dignity, respect, and love. As the Amplified New Testament says: “With true dignity, commanding their respect in every way and keeping them respectful.”

As Scripture says, “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:5).

Note Titus 1:6 above. As a minister, you must have faithful children. By faithful is meant believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and remaining faithful to Him. Your children are to be above reproach; they are not to be “loose in morals and conduct or unruly and disorderly” (Amplified New Testament).

Note Ephes. 6:4 above. As a minister, you (and your wife) must not provoke your children to wrath. Four things will provoke a child.

- a) Failing to accept the fact that things do change will provoke a child. Time and generations do change. This does not mean that a child should be allowed to do everything that his generation does. But it does mean that parents need to be alert to the changes between generations. Allow the child to be a part of his own generation instead of trying to conform the child to the parent’s generation. The parent’s childhood generation does not exist any longer nor will it ever exist again.
- b) Over-controlling a child will also provoke a child to wrath. Over-control ranges all the way from stern restriction and discipline to child abuse. Disciplining and restricting a child *too much* will either stifle the growth of the child or stir him to react and rebel, causing the child to flee from the parent.

- c) Under-controlling a child can provoke a child. It should be noted that this is the most prevalent problem in an industrialized society. There is a tendency for those with plenty or with wealth to pamper, indulge, and give a child everything imaginable—well beyond what a child needs and what is really best for him. When you fail to train a child, he feels neglected and unwanted, and when he gets older, he is often angered.
- d) Living an inconsistent life before a child can provoke a child. A parent who tells a child one thing and then turns around and does the opposite thing himself is full of hypocrisy and false profession. Yet, how common! How many children are doing things because their parents do them. Seeing an inconsistent life in a parent can provoke children.

Note the exhortation of Scripture: you are to bring up your child in the ways of the Lord, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

- The word “nurture” (paideia) means “the whole training and education of children which [involves] . . . the cultivation of mind and morals . . . commands and admonitions . . . reproof and punishment . . . correcting mistakes and curbing the passions . . . the increase of virtue” (Thayers Greek-English Lexicon).
- The word “admonition” (nouthesia) means counsel, exhortation, correction.

Note: the parent is not to rear the child after his own notions of what is best for the child, but after the nurture and admonition *of the Lord*. The Lord’s Word is to be the guide for Christian parents in rearing their children.

B. YOU AND OTHER MINISTERS

1. *You must understand that you are one with all other ministers and that you are equal in God's eyes, that all ministers are coworkers together with God.*

“Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building” (1 Cor. 3:8-9. See The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible,[®] notes— 1 Cor. 3:5-9 for more discussion.)

Thought

As a minister, you and all other ministers are *as one*—as *equals*—in the eyes of God. The church and its believers are to see you as one, as equals before God.

- a) Both the sower and the edifier, both he who plants and he who waters, are *emphatically said to be one*. All ministers are called . . .

- by the same Lord.
- to the same office: the office of minister.
- to the same work: to serve God's church.
- to stand accountable before God and before God alone.

There is a *spiritual unity* between ministers. The work of the one who plants cannot be done without the work of the one who waters. Both are absolutely essential. You are not rivals, working against each other. You are planters and waterers, planting and watering lives for God. It is God who calls and places

you in the ministry, and He uses you as He wills. If the church and its believers exalt or pitch you against other ministers, they are going against God's purpose for His gospel and the church.

- b) You are personally responsible to God. You are to be rewarded for what you do, not for what another minister does. You must use your own gifts; you must not try to use someone else's gifts nor to be like someone else. God gave you special gifts for specific purposes, to accomplish specific tasks while you are upon earth. You must, therefore, diligently labor to use your gifts as God desires. In fact, you are to be rewarded for how well you use your gifts. Your task is not to try to be like another minister or to do as another minister does. Your task is to be who God called you to be and to do as God gifts you.

Note: you shall be judged for your labor, not for what men may term success.

“He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:22-23).

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever” (1 Peter 4:11).

- c) Ministers are coworkers, and you all work together with God. You work with God, carrying out His will and doing what He wants done. Your concern is not

what men think and want. Your mission is to serve right along by the side of God Himself.

“Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38).

“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together” (John 4:35-36).

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1).

2. You must leave judging other ministers up to God.

“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid” (1 Tim. 5:24-25).

“Who are thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand” (Romans 14:4).

Thought

As a minister, your task is to deal with people and their sins. In fact, you are always involved with people, dealing with their weaknesses and strengths, their sins and virtues. Because of this you are sometimes tempted to pass judgment upon people; you are tempted to look upon some as being weak and noncommittal and others as being strong and decisive. This is particularly true if you see or hear about weaknesses in other ministers. But this Scripture is an eyeopener. Judgment is to be left up to God, for only God knows the whole truth about a person. Only God knows . . .

- the genes, heritage, and childhood of a person that affect a person so much.
- every minute, hour, day, month, and year and every experience the person has lived.
- every trial and temptation the person has undergone.
- every thought, longing, and hope the person has had.

Only God knows all this and all the multitudes of ramifications of each of these. Therefore, only God can judge. But as stated, you are tempted to judge when you see one person commit open sin and another person do good works, in particular if the person is a minister. But you must not judge, for only God sees and knows everything about a person. Note how clearly Scripture states this fact.

- We do not clearly see the sins of people—not always. The sins of some people are clearly seen, and they make no attempt to hide them. These people shall suffer judgment; their sins definitely point to judgment. But some people are secret sinners; they hide their sins in their hearts and minds, and behind closed

doors and in the dark. Their sins and judgment will be exposed later—in the terrible day of judgment.

- Likewise, the good works of some people are clearly seen, but the good works of others are not seen.

The point is this: you have no way to tell what is in a person's heart and life, what he is doing and thinking every moment of every day. You cannot even know your spouse or children or parents that well—not well enough to judge them. Judgment has to be left up to God, not to men—not even to you as a minister. The charge is clear and straightforward: leave the judgment up to God.

Note how strong the exhortation of Romans 14:4 is:

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand” (Romans 14:4).

- You nor any other believer—minister or layman—has the right to judge the Lord's servant. The Lord alone has the right to judge His servant. You are not to play God by judging His servants. The servant belongs to Christ. Christ and Christ alone determines whether or not the servant stands or falls, is accepted or rejected.
- In fact, God shall hold His dear servant up. There is no question about the matter: the servant may slip and fall, but God will raise Him up. How do we know this? Because God says He will and God is able; God is able to make His servant stand.

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5).

“Now unto him that is able to keep you [all other ministers and believers] from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

- 3. You must receive and support travelling ministers: evangelists, Bible teachers, missionaries, and other preachers.*

“Whom [travelling ministers] if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for his [Christ’s] name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth” (3 John 6-8).

Thought

As a minister, you are to open your home and support travelling ministers. You are to have a strong testimony in the ministry of hospitality. You are to continue to receive and support travelling ministers. Note: it is said that this is exactly what God Himself would do. This is the godly way, the godly thing to do. That is, it is exactly what God would do; therefore, it is what you are to do. There are two strong reasons why.

- a) Travelling ministers should be received and supported because they go forth for Christ. They have dedicated their lives to serving Christ by reaching the lost and growing believers, and the church needs their ministry. In addition, in many cases they have made the commitment to travel abroad for Christ by faith, without receiving a regular income.
- b) Travelling ministers should be received and supported because you need to be a fellow-worker in the truth. There is no question: they are workers in the truth. Travelling evangelists, missionaries, prophets, and teachers alike are carrying the gospel of truth across the world. The only question is: Are you, the minister of the local church, going to be fellow-workers with them? John says that it is the very thing that God Himself would do. Therefore, you in the local church must labor with all those who walk in the truth of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. You must labor with all those chosen by God to carry forth the Word of truth, the Word of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“A bishop [minister] then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2).

“Use hospitality one to another without grudging” (1 Peter 4:9).

Continued . . .



CHAPTER 11

What Your Attitude Toward Suffering Must Be

Suffering is a universal experience: we all suffer and suffer much throughout life. As a minister of God—as a leader within society—you must help to ease the suffering of everyone. To do this, you must have both a healthy and a Biblical attitude toward suffering.

1. *You must trust God to deliver you through whatever suffering afflicts you, no matter its severity.*

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had

the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf” (2 Cor. 1:3-11).

Thought

Suffering has always posed a problem for man. It may be disease, accident, trial, temptation, abuse, or death. But no matter what the suffering is, every person who suffers has wondered, “Why me? Why do I have to suffer this affliction?” Suffering is the great discussion of this passage. Note seven points.

First, God is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3).

a) The word “mercies” (oiktirmon) means compassion, pity, and mercy. It means looking upon people in need and having compassion and mercy upon them.

□ Note that God is not the God of mercies but the *Father* of mercies. His very nature and behavior toward you is that of a Father, not of a God. He is your Father, a Father who is merciful and compassionate, and who showers His mercies and compassions upon you.

□ Note that the word *mercies* is plural. God does not show mercy just once nor just here and there. God showers His mercies upon you continuously (cp. Romans 12:1; Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12; Hebrews 10:28).

b) The word “comfort” (parakleseos) means to be by the side of another; to relieve and support; to give solace, consolation, and encouragement. But there is always an underlying meaning to the word. There is the idea of strength, of enablement, of

confidence. It consoles and relieves a person, but it strengthens him at the same time. It charges a person to go out and face the world. The word is used ten times in 2 Cor. 1:3-7.

- Note that the word *comfort* (parakleseos) is the same word that is used for the Holy Spirit (paraklete). The Holy Spirit is given the title *The Comforter* by Christ.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:15-18).

c) How do we know God is like this? How do we know that God is “the Father of mercies” and the “God of all comfort”? *Because of Jesus Christ*. God is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It was God ...

- who “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).
- who demonstrated “his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

A father could show no greater mercy than to give the life of his son to save others. This is exactly what God did: He gave Christ to die for His enemies, for those who were in rebellion against Him. God has had mercy upon you, and He continues to

have mercy upon you. He continues to pour out His mercy and comfort upon men. Why? Because of His nature: His very nature is that of a Father—a Father of mercies and a God of all comfort.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Ephes. 2:4-7).

“But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children” (Psalm 103:17).

“For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds” (Psalm 108:4).

“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not” (Lament. 3:22).

Second, God comforts you so that you might be a testimony to other sufferers (2 Cor. 1:4).

- a) The word “tribulation” (thlipsei) means to be weighed down exceedingly; to be pressed and crushed. It is the picture of a beast of burden being crushed beneath a load that is just too heavy. It is the picture of a person having a heavy weight placed on his breast and being pressed and crushed to the point that he feels he is going to die. Note the word is used four times in 2 Cor. 1:3-7.

b) Note the words “us” and “all tribulation.” Paul is *not only talking* about his own trials and sufferings but about yours as well. God comforts all believers. He does not have favorites; His mercies and comfort are for everyone, including you. And note: He comforts you in “*all*,” not in just a few of your trials and sufferings. You do not have to bear a single trial or moment of suffering by yourself. Your Father—the Sovereign Majesty of the universe who controls all—is not off in the distance someplace far removed from you. His Spirit, the precious Holy Spirit, is right here with you to comfort you in all your suffering.

c) God’s purpose in comforting you is to make you a testimony to others.

- God comforts you so that you can comfort others who are suffering.
- God carries you through trials so that you can carry others through trials.
- God strengthens you so that you can strengthen others.
- God helps you so that you can help others.
- God encourages you so that you can encourage others.

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God” (Isaiah 40:1).

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thes. 5:14).

Third, God matches your comfort to equal the sufferings (2 Cor. 1:5). Note that the sufferings being stressed are “the sufferings of Christ,” that is, the very kind of sufferings which Christ Himself bore. What kind of sufferings did Christ bear? Very simply, Christ bore every kind of suffering imaginable, even the suffering of death. He had to experience every situation, condition, and trial of man in order to become the

Perfect Sympathizer or Savior. For this reason, He experienced the most humiliating experiences possible. He experienced ...

- being born to an unwed mother (Matthew 1:18-19).
- being born in a stable, the worst of conditions (Luke 2:7).
- being born to poor parents (Luke 2:24).
- having his life threatened as a baby (Matthew 2:13f).
- being the cause of unimaginable sorrow (Matthew 2:16f).
- having to be moved and shifted as a baby (Matthew 2:13f).
- being reared in a despicable place, Nazareth (Luke 2:39).
- having His father die during His youth (Matthew 13:53-58).
- having to support His mother and brothers and sisters (Matthew 13:53-58).
- having no home, not even a place to lay His head (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58).
- being hated and opposed by religionists (Mark 14:1-2).
- being charged with insanity (Mark 3:21).
- being charged with demon-possession (Mark 3:22).
- being opposed by His own family (Mark 3:31-32).
- being rejected, hated, and opposed by listeners (Matthew 13:53-58; Luke 4:28-29).
- being betrayed by a close friend (Mark 14:10-11, 18).
- being left alone, rejected, and forsaken by all of His friends (Mark 14:50).
- being tried before the high court of the land on the charge of treason (John 18:33).
- being executed by crucifixion, the worst possible death (John 19:16f).

Note that each of these experiences reaches the depth of humiliation. Christ stooped to the lowest point of human experience in every condition in order to become the *Perfect Sympathizer* (Savior). He can now identify with and feel for any person's circumstances, young or old.

“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:16-18).

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted likeas we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16).

The point is this: no matter what your suffering is nor how terrible it may be, God showers you with the comfort of His Son Jesus Christ. He does not just give you some strength and comfort to bear the suffering; He gives you *all the strength and comfort* necessary to handle all the suffering. There are no trials too great, no pressures too heavy, that God cannot match them with the comfort of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has borne every trial and suffering for you.

“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not” (Luke 7:13).

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18).

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Fourth, God uses your suffering to stir up other believers (2 Cor. 1:6-7). A person who suffers often becomes self-centered and begins to feel sorry for himself. He sometimes begins to feel self-pity and apathy and to want special attention. He may even become bitter. You must never let this happen to you. This is what these two verses are all about. Note that both the *affliction* and the *comfort* are for the same purposes. God uses both suffering and comfort in a believer to stir four things in other believers.

- a) God uses suffering to stir consolation or comfort in others who suffer (see first point above, 2 Cor. 1:3).

- b) God uses suffering to stir salvation. A person cannot trust God today and not trust Him tomorrow. You cannot bless God when things are going well and curse God when things go bad. You have given your life to God; therefore, you must trust Him no matter the circumstance. You must continue with God throughout life ...
 - through the good times as well as the bad,
 - through suffering as well as health,
 - through rejection as well as acceptance,
 - through persecution as well as honor.

The point is this: when other believers see you being comforted through some suffering, they are stirred to continue in the faith. They are stirred to continue on in the way of salvation no matter what suffering confronts them in the future.

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13)

**“If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together”
(Romans 8:17)**

- c) God uses suffering to stir endurance. Very simply, when you suffer and allow God to comfort you, others are encouraged to endure through their sufferings
- d) God uses suffering to stir sharing among believers. Believers who suffer are not to become self-centered, bitter, discouraged, apathetic, nor are they to begin complaining. They are to allow God to comfort them. This should be the hope and expectation of you and of every other believer. God expects you to suffer with the right attitude, to allow Him to share His comfort with you. Then you are to share the comfort of God with other believers.

Note this: as a minister, other believers should be able to expect you to bear up under suffering. They should be able to expect you to know the comfort of God so that you can share His comfort.

The point is this: How can you share the comfort of God unless you have suffered and experienced the comfort of God?

- God expects you to bear suffering and to receive His comfort.
- Other believers expect you to bear suffering and to receive God’s comfort.

Why? Because you and other believers are to be comforting and ministering and helping each other. But how can you comfort each other unless you have experienced the comfort of God through suffering?

God uses your suffering to stir sharing with others. You and all other believers are to be busy in sharing God’s comfort with each other. This is to be the hope and expectation that you are to have in each other.

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:1-2).

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

Fifth, God uses suffering to teach you to trust Him more and more (2 Cor. 1:8-10). God allows great suffering. He allowed Paul, probably the greatest missionary of all time, to experience terrible suffering time and again. (See The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible[®], notes—[□]2 Cor. 1:8-10 for more discussion.) What was the suffering that is referred to in these three verses? We do not know. There is no record of it anywhere in Scripture. At first reading, it seems to be referring to the mob violence in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41). However, this is unlikely, for Paul apparently escaped the particular trouble mentioned in the account of Acts.

The point to see is that God allowed Paul to suffer some terrible trouble. And note the intensity of the trouble: “we were pressed [weighed down, crushed by a very heavy weight]” ...

- out of measure.
- above strength.
- we despaired even for our life.
- we had the sentence of death in ourselves (sensed he was going to die).

Why does God allow His dear servant to go through such suffering, especially when he is such a great servant, a servant who labors so faithfully for God? There are two primary reasons.

- a) Note that God is called the “God which raises the dead.” The one thing that man must learn is that he cannot save himself; he cannot raise himself up from the dead. Only God can save man and raise him up and give him eternal life. Suffering teaches a man that he is helpless to save himself. If he wishes to be saved, he must trust God. Therefore, suffering teaches you that you are not self-sufficient. You must have the presence and help of God if you wish to conquer the sufferings of this world—the sufferings that eventually end in the suffering of death.
- b) God allows suffering to teach a daily trust for deliverance. Note: Paul says that God continued to deliver him through the trials of life and that he continued to trust God to deliver him. The point is this: you must trust God daily, trust Him to deliver you from daily sufferings.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2 Cor. 1:10).

“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever” (2 Tim. 4:18).

“And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:15).

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Peter 2:9).

“Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 1:8).

Sixth, Paul suffered greatly (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

- a) Paul’s life was threatened by a huge, angry mob led by Demetrius, the silversmith (Acts 19:23-40).
- b) Paul knew the trouble that awaited him in Asia. “Trials which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews . . . in every city . . . bonds and afflictions await me” (Acts 20:18-27).
- c) Paul says Priscilla and Aquila . . . risked their lives for him (Romans 16:3-4).
- d) Paul says Andronicus and Junia . . . were his fellow prisoners (Romans 16:7).
- e) Paul expresses the great victory experienced through terrifying trials (1 Cor. 4:9-13).
- f) Paul fought with beasts at Ephesus (1 Cor. 15:32).
- g) Paul says he was crushed by some fearful burden which made him despair of life itself. He told himself it was the sentence of death (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

- h) Paul expresses an extremely anxious mood while the memory of his days at Ephesus was still vivid (2 Cor. 4:8-12; 2 Cor. 6:4-11; cp. Acts 20:18-19).
- i) Paul lists his terrifying trials. Clement of Rome says that Paul “was seven times in bonds,” which seems to agree with Paul’s description (2 Cor. 11:23-27).
- j) Paul, at some point while a prisoner in Rome, experienced some sorrow so great that it threatened to crush him into a frightening despair: he had feared lest “sorrow upon sorrow” befall him (Phil. 2:27).

Seventh, God uses suffering to teach prayer and thanksgiving (2 Cor. 1:11). This is a great lesson on suffering and prayer: the prayers of believers “*help*” us. Paul clearly says that the prayers of others helped him. Prayer causes God to move in your behalf and to deliver you through your suffering. And when you are strengthened and delivered, everyone praises God. Intercessory prayer, prayer for others, works. God hears and answers prayer, and He hears and answers your prayers for others. This is the reason Scripture stresses intercessory prayer.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints” (Romans 15:30-31).

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephes. 6:18).

“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation [deliverance from trials and suffering] through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19).

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

2. *You must conquer your sufferings—your thorn in the flesh—for Christ’s sake.*

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Thought

You are God’s messenger, very dear to Him, and you are His minister, chosen by Him to proclaim the unsearchable riches of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Why then are you afflicted with a thorn—some permanent infirmity—in your body? Perhaps Paul’s experience will help you in answering the questions that arise in your mind.

Paul had experienced the spiritual power of Christ. God had given Paul deep and intimate spiritual experiences. There was the danger that he might begin to think too

highly of himself; therefore, God gave Paul a “thorn in the flesh.” Note three significant points.

First, Paul needed a “thorn” to keep him ever mindful that he was no better than other men (2 Cor. 12:7). He was totally dependent upon God despite the indescribable spiritual experiences. What was his “thorn in the flesh”?

There are many guesses as to what the “thorn” was:

- some spiritual suffering such as constant attacks by Satan or opposition by men, or occasional evangelistic failure in order to keep Paul humble and on his face before God seeking supernatural strength.
- some physical suffering such as a recurring fever (for example, malaria), or epilepsy, or poor eyesight.

Just what the thorn was is not known. The best guess seems to be some physical ailment, for suffering is what this passage is all about (cp. 2 Cor. 11:16-12:10). The words flesh, strength, weakness, and infirmities are used; and, although these same words could be used to describe spiritual sufferings, the context does not weigh toward spiritual suffering (cp. also 2 Cor. 10:10).

The clearest description of the thorn is probably eye trouble (cp. 2 Cor. 10:10; Galatians 4:13-15; Galatians 6:11). Paul had been stricken blind for three days at his conversion, and he had been badly beaten and stoned several times (2 Cor. 11:24-27). A serious injury to his eyes, or for that matter to any other part of his body, could have occurred at any of these tragedies.

Second, Paul wanted deliverance and relief; he wanted God to remove the thorn (2 Cor. 12:8). Why?

Because ...

- it pricked and bothered him.
- it distracted him from his labor.
- it made him appear personally weak and sickly.

Note that Paul prayed three times for God to remove the thorn. Jesus Christ had also prayed three times for the suffering of the cross to be removed (cp. Matthew 26:36-46).

Third, there were three reasons why God refused to remove the thorn from Paul's flesh (2 Cor. 12:9). Note these carefully and apply them to your own life and suffering.

- a) God wanted to guard against Paul's being puffed up (see the first point of this note).
- b) God wanted to reveal His power in Paul. The weaker the vessel, the more God is glorified when the vessel really serves Christ.

Note God's answer to Paul:

- "My grace is sufficient for thee": the presence, love, favor, and blessings of God are sufficient to help you walk through any suffering. The word "sufficient" (arkei) means the power or strength to withstand any danger. God's grace within you can carry you through anything. In Paul's case, it was physical suffering. In your case it may be either physical or spiritual attacks; but no matter: God's grace is sufficient to see you through whatever the thorn is.

- “My strength is made perfect in weakness”: the weaker the believer, the more God can demonstrate His strength. If you are self-sufficient, you do not need God; but if you are weak, you need God: the help, provision, and sufficiency of God.
- “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Note the point of this statement: infirmities or weaknesses are purposeful. You suffer for a reason: that the power of Christ may be demonstrated and clearly seen in your life. The word “rest” (episkenosei) means to fix a tent upon. The idea is that the power of Christ rests upon the suffering believer just as the Shekinah glory dwelt in the holy place of the tabernacle. What a glorious thought! The strength of Christ fixes itself upon you and dwells within you—filling you with the Shekinah glory of God—when you suffer.

c) God wanted to teach Paul to live “for Christ’s sake.” When Paul suffered some infirmity or weakness, it gave Christ the chance to infuse power into Paul and to overcome the weakness for Paul. The point is this: your infirmity gives Christ an opportunity to prove Himself. Therefore, you are to do what Paul did: take pleasure ...

- “in infirmities”: a general term meaning all kinds of sufferings and weaknesses, whether moral or physical. The power of Christ can overcome any weakness or temptation for you.
- “in reproaches”: whether ridicule, insult, slander, rumor, or whatever.
- “in necessities”: hardships, needs, deprivations, hunger, thirst, lack of shelter or clothing, or any other necessity.
- “in persecutions”: verbal or physical attack, abuse, or injury.

- “in distresses”: tight situations, perplexities, disturbances, anxious moments, inescapable problems and difficulties.

When you are weak, you are strongest. How? By the power of Christ. And the power of Christ is much stronger than all the combined forces of mankind.

As the minister of Christ, your great need is to acknowledge your weakness before the Lord. When you do, the Lord will pour His strength into your mind and heart. The Lord will empower you to overcome and conquer all infirmities and weaknesses. (Cp. 2.5., 10.C., Chap. 11.)

“But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

“For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Ephes. 3:16).

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephes. 3:20).

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

“Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire,

thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isaiah 43:1-2).

3. *You must triumph over all suffering—all the trials and temptations—that attack you.*

(See Chapter IV, points 1-4, “What Your Resources As A Minister Are,” for discussion.)



CHAPTER 12

What Your Death and Reward as a Minister Will Be

The terrible and devastating grip of death confronts us all. Your loved ones die and eventually you, too, will face death. As a minister of Christ, what will your death be like? And what reward will you receive as a minister?

1. *You will be carried safely into heaven, into God's heavenly kingdom.*

“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me [transfer, take me] unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever” (2 Tim. 4:18).

Thought

When you or your loved one face death, God will transfer you from this world into the next world. It is a picture of time—of unbroken time. God will *immediately transfer* you from time and place you into eternity. In one moment of time you will be living in this world, conscious and aware, but within the same moment—in a split second—you will be transported into God's heavenly kingdom. That one moment of time will happen quicker than the blinking of an eye (11/100 of a second).

Just imagine! There will be no loss of consciousness, no experience or awareness of death. One moment you will be a citizen of this world, and within the same split moment you will stand before the Lord as a citizen of heaven itself (2 Cor. 5:6-8). It is

the beautiful picture of the believer never having to taste or experience death. (See The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible,[®] note—□ Col. 3:1-4; note—□ Hebrews 2:9; cp. 2 Cor. 5:5-8.)

2. *You will receive eternal life.*

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11-12).

Thought

God has given you eternal life in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As a minister of God, the one thing you want is to live, to live both abundantly and eternally. You want a full life while you are upon this earth, and you do not want to die. But note: to live forever in a corruptible world such as ours would not necessarily be a good thing. This is a world of evil, corruption, and death. Therefore, what you have now is not *real life*, not the fullest and best of lives. It is not what life was meant to be. The life that God gives is the fullest and the best life possible. God's life is perfect, perfect in both quality and eternity. God's life is eternal life, a life that overflows with abundance and continues on and on, never ending. This is the life for which man craves: this is the life you were meant to live.

Now, what is life? “Life” is one of the great words of Scripture. The word “life” (zoe) and the verb “to live” or “to have life” (zen) have a depth of meaning.

First, life is the energy, the force, the power of being and of existing. But what is the source of life? What is the energy and power to be and to exist? The source is God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The energy and power of life exists within God. There is no life apart from God. The basic source of all life is found in God and in God alone. Note exactly what Scripture says:

“Jesus saith unto him, I am . . . the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26).

Second, life is the opposite of perishing. It is deliverance from condemnation and death. It is the stopping or cessation of deterioration, decay, and corruption.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:28).

Third, life is eternal (aionios). It is forever. It is the very life of God Himself (John 17:3). However, eternal life does not refer just to duration. Living forever would be a

curse for some persons. The idea of eternal life is also quality, a certain kind of life, a life that consistently knows the fullness of life, a life that overflows with love, joy, peace, power, purpose, meaning, significance, and responsibility.

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Fourth, life is satisfaction.

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

Fifth, life is found only in God. This is mentioned in the first point above. God is the source and author of life, and it is God who has appointed Jesus Christ to bring life to man. Jesus Christ gives the very life of God Himself to believers.

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26).

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. . . . And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:27, 40).

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:28).

Sixth, life has now been revealed. It has been unveiled and is clearly seen in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ shows man what life is.

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:4-5).

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26).

“(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)” (1 John 1:2).

Note that God gives us life through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Life only comes to a man by believing in Jesus Christ. A man outside Jesus Christ only exists. He merely has an animalistic existence. Real life is found only in God. This is to be expected and it is logically true, for God is the Creator of life. As the Creator of life, He alone knows what life really is and what it is supposed to be (John 3:36; John 5:24; John 6:47). This is the reason He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ into the world: to show you what life is. When you look at Jesus Christ you see exactly what life is, exactly what it involves: existence, yes, but an existence of . . . (cp. Galatians 5:22-23):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> love | <input type="checkbox"/> goodness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> joy | <input type="checkbox"/> faith |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peace | <input type="checkbox"/> meekness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> long suffering | <input type="checkbox"/> temperance or
control |

□ gentleness

(Just think through each of the above for a moment to gain the full impact of the life that Christ gives.)

3. *You will receive a new body, a transformed body, a glorious incorruptible body.*

“For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working hereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

“[This is] the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in corruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

Thought

As a minister, you are to be focused upon the return of Christ. You are to be looking for the Lord’s return—constantly looking—looking every day of your life. The word “look” (apekdechometha) means to yearn, to eagerly look and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus to take you to heaven.

You are also to focus upon the glorious body you are to receive when Christ returns. Right now your body is vile, that is, lowly and humiliating. The human body is lowly and humiliating ...

- because it has its origin out of the earth: it is nothing more than earthly chemicals or human flesh.
- because it is subject to sin, corruption, selfishness, evil, and destruction.
- because it is so weak: it is sickly and subject to disease, injury and maiming. It ages and deteriorates.
- because it is corruptible and dying, aging and mortal, offering no hope of ever lasting beyond a few short years—no hope whatsoever.

However, note the wonderful declaration: the Lord Jesus Christ will change your body and fashion it just like His glorious body. The word “fashion” (summorphon) points out a most wonderful thing. The word means the permanent, constant, and unchangeable being of a person. Your body shall be fashioned just like the glorious body of Christ. Imagine! To have a body that is permanent, constant, and unchanging. You will receive a spiritual body.

“There is a natural body [somapsuchikon] and there is a spiritual body [soma pneumatikon]” (1 Cor. 15:44).

“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:21).

We shall be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29).

“We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

How is this possible? By the power of God, the very power which is able to subdue all things to Christ. The power of God that created the world . . .

- is sovereign over the world.

- is able to control the world.
- is able to subdue the world.
- is able to recreate the world.
- is able to transform your body and the body of all believers.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:10-13).

4. *You will receive the crown of righteousness.*

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

Thought

This is an unbelievable reward—a crown of righteousness. Imagine! There is a crown of righteousness—a crown that you can receive, a crown that will make you acceptable to God. Even as a minister, you can never live before God unless you are crowned with righteousness—completely covered with righteousness and made perfect. Why? Because God is perfect and only perfection can live in the presence of

God. Therefore, the only way you or anyone else can ever become acceptable to God is by receiving the crown of righteousness from God. You are to receive the crown of righteousness for one reason and for one reason only: because you have given your life ...

- to be a soldier for Christ and His warfare.
- to be an athlete for Christ and His course (race and life).
- to be a steward (a manager) for Christ and His faith.

Think about it: a crown of righteousness that makes you *perfect* before God—*righteous and perfect* so that you can live before God forever and ever. You will be enabled to worship and serve God in perfection—never falling and never coming up short, never grieving and never hurting Him again. What a day of rejoicing that will be! What a glorious contrast with the weaknesses and failures we face today. What a contrast with the fading and deteriorating crowns and trophies given by this world. Note this: the crown of righteousness will be given by the Lord Himself, by Him who is the righteous and perfect Judge, the only Judge who knows the truth about all men. He knows the heart of every man, and He has seen every man every day and hour of his life. In fact, the Lord has seen every act and heard every word every person has ever done or spoken. He knows all. The Lord knew all about Paul ...

- that he had been a good soldier for Christ.
- that he had been a good athlete for Christ.
- that he had been a good steward (manager) for Christ.

The Lord is righteous and just; therefore, you can be assured that the Lord will give you the crown of righteousness in that glorious day of redemption.

5. *You will receive the crown of life.*

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12).

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

Thought

You are to receive a great reward for enduring the temptations and trials of this life. Note in James 1:12 above: if you endure temptations and trials in this life, then two great rewards will be given you.

First, you will be “blessed.” This refers to this life, to the here and now. The word *blessed* means inward and spiritual joy and satisfaction; an inner assurance and confidence that carries you through all the trials and temptations of life no matter the pain, sorrow, loss, or grief. Simply stated, you will be secure in this life. You will know that God is looking after and caring for you; that He is going to deliver you from all the corruption and evil of this life including death, giving you life eternal. Second, you shall receive the crown of life in the next world. What is the crown of life? In the Greek this is what is called “the gentive of apposition”; that is, *life itself* is the crown (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol.6, p.17). If you endure the temptations of life, you shall be crowned with life itself, eternal life—life that will go on and on, never ending. The eternal life that will be given to you will

shine more brightly than all the earthly crowns that have ever been worn by the rulers of this world.

Just imagine the actual moment when Christ will crown you with the crown of life.

Being crowned with the crown of life ...

- will fill you with unbroken joy and rejoicing.
- will bestow upon you honor and dignity.
- will give you a deep and perfect sense of victory and triumph.
- will conform you to the image of eternal royalty.

6. *You will receive the crown of incorruption.*

“And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Cor. 9:25).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Thought

As the minister of Christ, you are running in a race to obtain an *incorruptible crown*. The runners in an athletic contest run to obtain a passing fame and a corruptible crown or trophy. The athletes in Paul’s day ran for a crown or wreath of olive or pine leaves. Their fame and crown were the same as with our athletes today: they both passed ever so quickly. However, the crown and fame of the genuine Christian runner will never

pass away. His crown and fame are incorruptible. He shall live and be rewarded with an eternal fame and with the most real and valued crowns imaginable.

7. *You will receive the crown of rejoicing or soul-winning.*

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (1 Thes. 2:19-20).

Thought

Paul clearly says that the Thessalonian believers were his hope and joy and *crown of rejoicing*. When? In the day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. In that day Paul and believers will all stand in His presence.

- What a hope! The return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- What a joy! Joining the Lord Jesus Christ with all the believers whom we have known, reached, and grown in Christ down here on earth.
- What a crown! To offer to Christ all the dear people we have *had a part* in reaching and growing for the Lord.

Note the word “crown” (stephanos). It is the victor’s crown, the crown worn by the athlete after he has won the contest. The picture is that you are in a contest, a spiritual struggle, against Satan for the souls of men. Therefore, you must strain and struggle and fight for the souls of men. A crown awaits you, a crown that you will miss unless you have souls to present to Christ.

All of us as ministers of Christ need to apply this to ourselves and be very honest about the matter: How many souls have I as a minister won to Christ? In that day, how many souls will I have to present to Him?

- Ten souls?
- Twenty souls?
- Fifty souls?
- One hundred souls?
- Thousands of souls?

The crown of rejoicing awaits the minister who will be able to present souls to the Lord in that day. Ask God to touch your heart and help you to win souls for Him. He will if you will only ask in sincerity.

**“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”
(Matthew 4:19).**

“He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41).

“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45).

“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

8. *You will receive the crown of glory.*

“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4).

Thought

Your reward will be glorious. It is to be a crown of glory that never fades away. Note two things.

First, Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd and He is going to appear, that is, return to earth. The idea is that nothing will stop His return; He is going to appear and reward His ministers.

Second, the reward for ministers is glorious: it is to be a crown of glory. What does this mean? It means that the faithful minister shall share in the glory of heaven and be crowned with a very special portion of glory. By crown is meant rule and reign, the assignment of heavenly service for Christ. (See point 10 below for a list of all rewards.)

“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:23).

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

“Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11).

9. *You will receive the perfection of all things.*

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea . . . and God shall wipe

away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:1, 4).

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [behavior] and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:10-13).

Thought

All things are to be remade and perfected: both the universe and believers—all the believers who have ever lived in the universe. There is to be a new creation, a remaking of the heavens and the earth. The heavens (heavenly bodies in outer space) and the earth that you know are going to pass away. God clearly says in His Holy Word that He is going to recreate all things anew, recreate a new heaven and a new earth. Note three significant facts in the above Scripture.

- a) All the heavens above—the sun, moon, stars, and planets—are going to be destroyed and remade. God is going to make a new heaven. Think what this will mean.
 - There will be no more stars or solar systems that are burned out.

All of the planets and worlds above and beyond will be remade, created anew and made alive. Think how glorious and beautiful the heavens look now when you look up on a starry night. But imagine what they will be like when God recreates them in all the glory and magnificence of a perfect universe. All things within the universe will be alive and reflect the glory and splendor of God Himself. The universe will be perfect, a place where nothing burns out or wears down or wastes away or dies. Think about the light and brilliance and splendor and glory of all the heavenly bodies when God recreates the heavens. Think what it will mean to have a universe full of *living planets and stars and solar systems*. We cannot imagine the glory and beauty. It is beyond our finite minds. But note the significant point: the Scripture declares emphatically that the heavens are to be remade and recreated into a new heavens.

b) The earth is going to pass away. There is going to be a new earth. The present earth is defective; it is cursed. The earth suffers under all kinds of natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, destructive storms, floods, scorching heat, deserts, famines, diseases, and death. But the day is coming when God is going to remake the earth. God is going to create a new earth. Think what this will mean.

- No more disasters or destruction
- No more thorns or thistles or unfertile and unproductive soil
- No more hunger or thirst
- No more disease, decay, erosion, or death.

The new earth will flourish and be fruitful, bearing all the good that can be imagined. Think how beautiful, green, lush, productive, and fruitful it will be. Think how peaceful, serene, and comfortable it will be. Think of the security and

provision, the abundance and overflowing of every good and perfect gift—the fulness of life that will be possible upon the earth. The earth will be new, perfected by God in every conceivable way.

Note the statement, “there was no more sea” (Rev. 21:1). This can mean one of two things. The sea will be eliminated, done away with, and the new earth will have no sea. Or it can mean the same thing that is meant with the heavens and the earth. The heavens and the earth and the sea are to pass away and be made anew and recreated. The sea that causes devastation and destruction will be naturally destroyed right along with the earth and the heavens; but when they are recreated, the sea, being part of the earth, will be part of the new earth, part of the new creation. A perfected earth is beyond our comprehension. But it is exactly what Scripture declares is going to happen. God is going to create a new earth as well as a new heaven.

**“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”
(Matthew 24:35).**

“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end” (Psalm 102:25-27).

“And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, as a falling fig from the fig tree” (Isaiah 34:4).

“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my

salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished” (Isaiah 51:6).

“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17).

“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain” (Isaiah 66:22).

- c) Life will be perfected. This means that your body will be perfected; so will the environment and earth. Life will be totally different from what it is now. The very life and utopia for which you have longed will be a living reality. All the sufferings and evil of life and all the bad and negative experiences of your life will be gone. Scripture explains the change in the most beautiful and striking way: it declares that “God shall wipe away all tears from their [believers’] eyes.”

10. *You will receive an eternal inheritance, be made an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ.*

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:16-17).

“That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible,

and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Thought

Jesus Christ makes you an heir of God. Scripture actually says that you are “joint heirs” with Christ. This is an astounding truth and promise. You shall inherit all that Christ is and has. You shall be given the glorious privilege of sharing all things with the Son of God Himself.

However, note this: to be a joint-heir with Christ does not mean that you are an equal heir in the sense that you will receive an equal amount of the inheritance with Christ. Rather, it means that you are a fellow-heir with Christ; that is, you will share in the inheritance of Christ; you will share Christ’s inheritance with Him.

Being a fellow-heir with Christ means at least three glorious things: it means that you shall *share* in the *nature*, in the *position*, and in the *responsibility* of Christ. The following chart shows this with a quick glance.

FELLOW HEIRS BY NATURE

Christ is the Son of God, the very being and energy of life and perfection. Therefore, we share in the inheritance of His nature. We receive ...

- the adoption as children of God (Galatians 4:4-7; 1 John 3:1).
- the sinless nature of being blameless (Phil. 2:15).
- eternal life (John 1:4; John 10:10; John 17:2-3; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 6:19).

- ☐ an enduring substance (Hebrews 10:34).
- ☐ a glorious body (Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:42-44).
- ☐ eternal glory and honor and peace (Romans 2:10).
- ☐ eternal rest and peace (Hebrews 4:9; Rev. 14:13).
- ☐ an incorruptible body (1 Cor. 9:25).
- ☐ a righteous being (2 Tim. 4:8).

FELLOW HEIRS BY POSITION

Christ is the exalted Lord, the Sovereign Majesty of the universe, the Lord of lords and King of kings. Therefore, we share in the inheritance of His position. We receive ...

- ☐ the position of exalted beings (Rev. 7:9-12).
- ☐ a citizenship in the Kingdom of God (James 2:5; Matthew 25:34).
- ☐ enormous treasures in heaven (Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33).
- ☐ unsearchable riches (Ephes. 3:8).
- ☐ the right to surround the throne of God (Rev. 7:9-13; Rev. 20:4).
- ☐ the position of a king (Rev. 1:5; Rev. 5:10).
- ☐ the position of a priest (Rev. 1:5; Rev. 5:10; Rev. 20:6).
- ☐ the position of glory (1 Peter 5:4).

FELLOW HEIRS BY RESPONSIBILITY

Christ is the Sovereign Majesty of the Universe, the One who is ordained to rule and oversee all. Therefore, we share in the inheritance of His responsibility. We receive ...

- ❑ the rulership over many things (Matthew 25:23).
- ❑ the right to rule and hold authority (Luke 12:42-44; Luke 22:28-29).
- ❑ eternal responsibility and joy (Matthew 25:21, 23).
- ❑ rule and authority over cities (Luke 19:17, 19).
- ❑ thrones and the privilege of reigning forever (Rev. 20:4; Rev. 22:5).

The above Scriptures will give some idea of what Scripture teaches when it speaks of the believer being a fellow-heir with Christ. There are an innumerable number of Scriptures that could be added to these. As Paul declares:

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:33-36).

Note how our inheritance is described in 1 Peter 1:4. It is most descriptive, an astounding picture of the new heavens and earth that are coming and of our life in God’s new and eternal world. “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4).

- a) Your inheritance is “incorruptible” (aphtharton). The word means that it cannot perish; it does not age, deteriorate, or die; it does not have the seed of corruption

within it. Matthew Henry points out that everything on earth changes from better to worse, but not our inheritance. It is perfect and incorruptible. It never changes, and it shall never cease to be the most perfect inheritance and gift imaginable (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Vol.6, p.1005).

- b) Your inheritance is “undefiled” (amianton). The word means that it cannot be polluted or defiled, dirtied or infected. It means that your inheritance will be without any flaw or defect; it will be perfectly free from sickness, disease, infection, accident, pollution, dirt—from any defilement whatsoever. There will never be any pain, suffering, or tears over what happens to you or over the damage or loss of some possession.

- c) Your inheritance *does not fade away* (amaranton). It will last forever and ever. The splendor and beauty of it all—of life and of all the positions and possessions which God shall give you—shall never fade or diminish whatsoever. Nothing, not even your energy and body, shall wear out or waste away.

- d) Your inheritance is in heaven; it is reserved there for you. It is actually being held there by God for you. God is simply waiting for you to finish your task here on earth and to come to Him. Then He will give you your inheritance. As a minister of God, you have ...
 - received the mercy of God
 - been born again
 - trusted the resurrection of Jesus Christ to cover your resurrection (1 Peter 1:3).

Therefore, you are to receive the eternal inheritance of God. God has willed the treasures of heaven to you. God counts you as a joint-heir with His very own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. What a glorious hope and privilege—all through our Lord Jesus Christ!

“Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:24).

Amen and Amen!