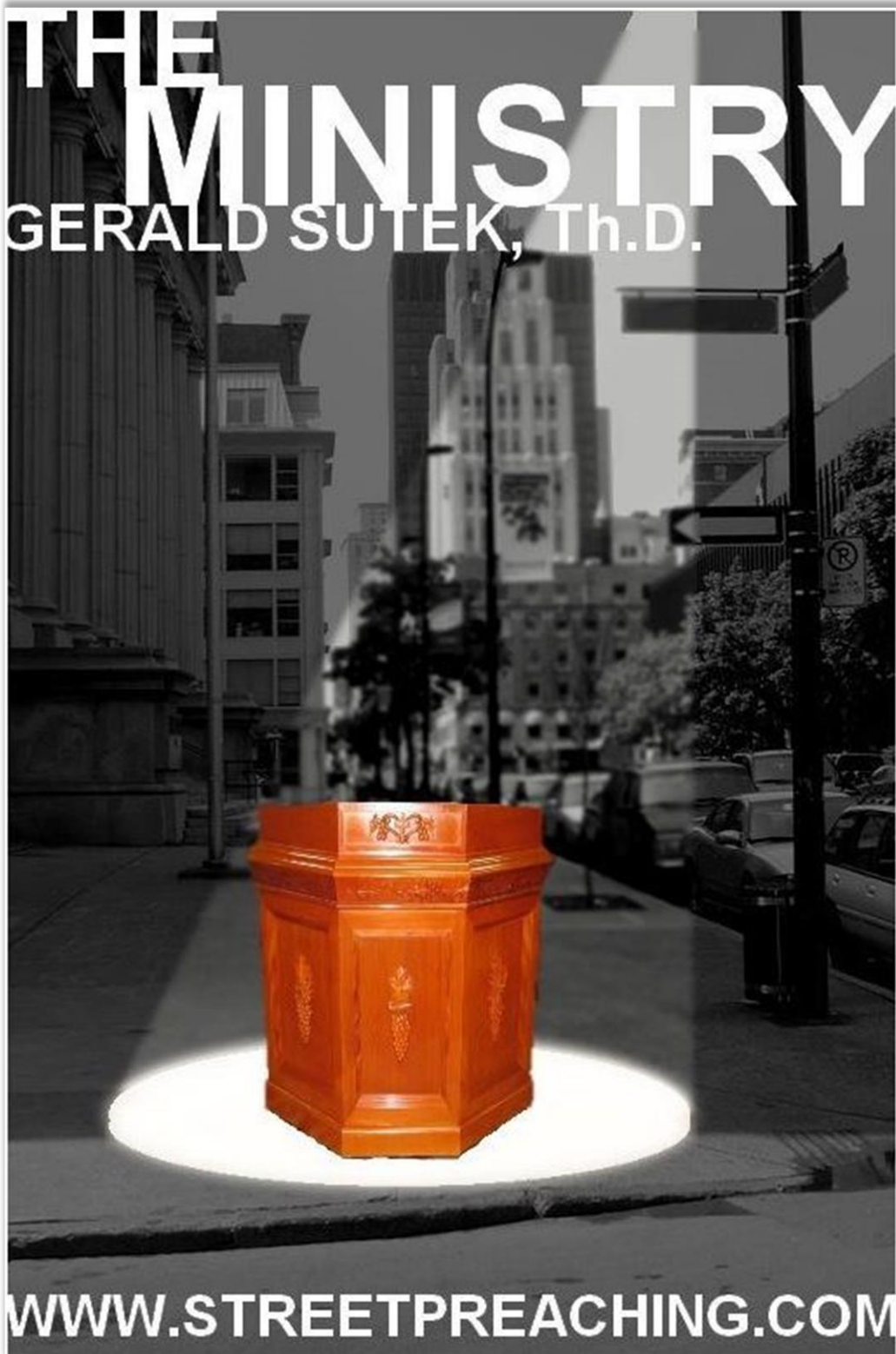


THE MINISTRY

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THE MINISTRY

by Gerald Sutek, Th.D, Ph.D

Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to **the ministry** which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

INTRODUCTION

There are twelve verses in the King James Bible which specifically use the phrase, “**the ministry**.” Two of these verses are found in the Old Testament. Numbers 4:47 speaks of the *burden* of **the ministry** in reference to the ministry of the priests. Certainly theirs was a burden in their continual supply of appropriate sacrifices and maintenance of a currency of relationship between a Holy God and His errant people. Since this relationship is maintained in the New Testament by the sealing of the Holy Spirit, the burden of **the ministry** becomes a *necessity* and an *urgency* to reconcile the Lord with His enemies through the gospel. *2 Cor. 5:18* And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us **the ministry** of reconciliation; *1Cor. 9:16* 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!

In Hosea, the Lord speaks of His ministry of supplying His people with the message of His will for their lives through the many-faceted ministries of the prophets. *Hos. 12:9* And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast. *Hos. 12:10* I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by **the ministry** of the prophets. Truly, the prophets were called upon to employ many strange ways and means whereby they could command the attention of God’s people for the purpose of **the ministry**. Many set a good example to the ministers of today when, without hesitation, they made spectacles of themselves (Isa. 20:2,3), stifled their personal emotions (Ezek. 24:16-25), suffered repeated disappointment (Jer. 42,43), made life’s most important decisions in consideration of **the ministry** without thought of personal happiness (Hos. 1:2,3 and Jer. 16:2), kept under their bodies to the point of loathing from the world (Dan. 1:8), hazarded their freedom and lives (1Kings 17:1-5) and in many other areas deprived themselves for the sake of the ministry. Though today the office of prophet may be absent, their duty, example, design and purpose needs to be evidenced to a world which is distracted from the message of the Lord.

In our opening text, Paul admonishes Archippus concerning **the ministry**. If I can make much of the specific wording of the preserved Word of God in the King James Bible, and I believe that I can, note carefully that Paul says that Archippus received **the ministry** “*in the Lord*.” Paul could have used the word, “*of*” or “*from*” but the wise translators preserved it as “*in*.” If you are “*in the Lord*” in the sense of

2 Cor. 5:17 and have “*received him*” in the sense of Jn. 1:12, then **the ministry** awaits your reception. “It is a truth that stands out with startling distinctness on the pages of the New Testament that God has no sons who are not servants.” –Ward

In other words, if you are in Christ you are in the ministry. The only question that remains is to what degree you will fulfill your ministry. I cannot emphasize the importance of this concept of **the ministry**. It is out of sync with the teaching and thinking of mainstream fundamentalism. If a Christian man or woman can ever bring the course of their vessel to line up with this doctrine they will realize the full meaning of the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ when He said, “...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” John 10:10. A careful reading of Acts 8:1-4 will exemplify this Biblical truth.

“In this theater of man's life, it is reserved only for God and angels to be lookers-on.”-Pythagoras

In my early Christian life I served in a fine unit of spiritual military headed by a great general. I quickly found service there and filled many gaps in our hedge. However, all of the brass in this unit received their training and commissions from institutions where a common Biblical error was taught without question. This being, that if you dare to enter the field of preaching without a call from God you are likely to cause a great deal of damage. The standard line was, “If you can be happy doing anything besides preaching then you are not called of God.” This unbiblical theology gendered two great evils. First, those who “**felt** the call” were instantly given a commission and treated as officers while those who did not “**feel** the call” remained non-commissioned; thus producing somewhat of a caste system, the roots of which seek nutrition from Calvinism. Secondly, it gently excused those who, in their sincerity, examined themselves and though they may have had the desire, lacked initial courage, example, and challenge to pursue an officer status for fear that they might add to the category of “mama-called and papa-sent” hypocrites already flooding the ministry.

If you are saved, **the ministry** awaits your embracement; and the blessings, provisions, fruit, rewards and longevity of your ministry will be paid in proportion to your faith and zeal.

Certainly, there are different fields of service within **the ministry** just as there are in the army. Within the army there is work for all to do. There is work that suits the ladies; there is work for the simple man. There is a place for the brave at heart and there is opportunity for the timid to serve. The work of **the ministry** among the saints requires a great variety of gifts and services; *Eph. 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, **for the work of the ministry**, for the edifying of the body of Christ:* as opposed to

the simpler ministry of reconciliation, *2 Cor. 5: 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us **the ministry of reconciliation***; This particular work of the ministry offers employment for all who are in Christ, both men and women. The variety of services both challenges the talented and welcomes the faithful beginner. A wise man once said, "Successful is the man who, after he finds a job, looks for work." Christian, you have a job; now you must look for work.

As a young Christian, I heard Dr. John R. Rice preach that God took volunteers. I immediately signed on. I began basic training by studying the manual, as well as field training with a buddy. I was invited to accompany a veteran on door-to-door witnessing. I was to be his prayer warrior as he ministered the Word of God to the enemies of our Lord. Soon I was the veteran and had my own prayer warrior.

I was assigned to a platoon on the front lines. These brave ministers drew blood with their sword (Jer. 48:10) as they publicly preached the message of the gospel. I never dreamed I could be that brave but with the undertow of righteous camaraderie, combined with the tender draw of the Holy Spirit, by the end of the day I had become addicted to this exhilarating form of the ministry of reconciliation.

A specialty position within **the ministry** of the saints opened in front of me and I stepped through this open door and took a Sunday School class. A slight advancement to department supervisor gave me the responsibility of offering open doors to other gifted teachers. As I gave more of myself, **the ministry** began to unfold before me. I yearned to minister from the pulpit, besides going on the street. I looked for work in that capacity and found myself ministering several times a week in the early morning devotion, as well as preaching in the evening services at the rescue mission associated with my church. Whatever I yielded to the Lord He took, (Amos 7:15) and with the taking, He gave back double in blessings and a desire for more.

Soon my zeal threatened to outrun my ability. I found myself in need of a larger and longer supply line with which to maintain my offensive movement in **the ministry**. Bible college served this need. Too often though, Bible college knowledge becomes so weighty and inanimate as to become a drag on the offensive, but the academic skills I obtained only served to fuel the forward movement of my ministry. At the beginning of the final year I had numbered the days to graduation with a great longing to put to use these acquired skills to hasten the drive of my ministry. My time in Bible college was also filled with sought-out chances to hone my ministry abilities in the public ministry as well as in the pulpit and classroom teaching.

In taking heed to fulfill my ministry, I developed a talent in music ministry with the accordion. I also followed Spirit-filled leadership in writing things helpful to **the ministry** of others. I have held the office of pastor, evangelist, and teacher, all in the work of **the ministry**.

But these developments came as a result of my taking heed, through necessity to fulfill my ministry in the Lord.

The root of **the ministry** both in word and deed is to minister. Any dictionary will define this word to mean, "**MIN'ISTER**, v.t. [L. ministro.] To give; to afford; to supply. **MIN'ISTER**, v.i. To attend and serve; to perform service in any office, sacred or secular." Shortly summarized, these examples state, "To minister means to meet the need at present." **The ministry** is the performance of this verb whether that be material or spiritual. Since the greater need in our world and in our day is of a spiritual supply, it stands to reason that the only agents who can supply that need are those who have access to the warehouse. Simply put, if the Lord has done something for you or supplied you with something spiritual, it is your responsibility to minister that to those who are in need. The recipient of spiritual substance has no option; he must minister. To do otherwise is to default on payment due and will bring upon one the fearful prospect of accountability before the bar of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Consider the words of an ancient, but worthy, commentator, Matthew Henry. "Ministers have a dispensation of the gospel, or stewardship (Lu. 16:2), committed to them. Note, Christ's willing servants shall not fail of a recompence, and that proportioned to their fidelity, zeal, and diligence; and his slothful and unwilling servants shall all be called to an account. Taking His name, and professing to do His business, will make men accountable at His bar. And how sad an account have slothful servants to give!"

"The measure of a man is not the number of his servants, but the number of people he serves." –Moody

The Word of God defines a minister as the following: *Psa. 103:21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, **that do his pleasure.*** A fuller definition is found to include faithfulness, *Eph. 6:21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and **faithful** minister in the Lord,...* Paul claimed he was put into the ministry because the Lord had counted him **faithful.** (1Tim. 1:12)

Adolph Hitler was a preacher, but he did not minister the Lord's pleasure. Herod was a preacher, yet he did not do the Lord's pleasure. We have plenty of preachers...what we need are **faithful** ministers.

"It is not the possession of extraordinary gifts that makes extraordinary usefulness, but the dedication of what we have to the service of God." –Robertson

CHAPTER ONE

THE MONARCH OF THE MINISTRY

Act 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

If He is Lord of all, then He is Lord of the ministry. He is Lord of *your* ministry. He is the one we account to. He is the one we please or displease. *Gal. 1:10 ¶ 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.* If He is Lord of our ministry we must not forget that He is to be the manager of our ministry. How could we ever hope for better management? Do we dare to presume that we could manage on our own the affairs of our ministry?

It may be argued whether Moses was wise in heeding his father-in-law's counsel in dividing his wisdom and rule and appointing seventy men to help. The Lord accommodated his decision, whether wise or not, and gave the seventy men wisdom, but did He take it from Moses? Would Moses have certainly worn away as his father in law had predicted, or was the Lord well able to manage the ministry of Moses? There was neither complaint from Moses nor proposal from the Lord until Jethro made suggestion and then there were both discontent and complaint from Moses (Num.11). I see that Moses made influence for the Lord in the life of Jethro but at the time of Jethro's advice to Moses, was he heathen or a very recent convert? Did Moses do right in giving the management of his ministry over to such a person? Was the outcome of this decision better either for Moses or his subjects? Did Moses truly enjoy his semi-retirement or did his ministry, though it be busy, simply serve as a full cup. I have known ministers who have had ministries so vast and intricate as to keep employed several, but they did not endure under the great strain, but rather reveled in their great opportunities. Such men seem to put off the opportunities to reduce their ministerial load as long as possible and in the end write their autobiography as one quite content.

There are many in the world that advertise their skill and invite you to employ them in the management of your ministry. My email junk mail is peppered with them. But is not the Lord superior to them all? Did He not write the manual for the ministry? *2 Cor. 9: 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:*

WHAT THE LORD HIMSELF EXPECTS

If you will be a minister of the Lord He expects you to do His pleasure, "...*ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.*" (Ps. 103:21) His pleasure is in obedience, 1 Sam. 15:22. This makes the ministry rather simple; just do what He tells you to do. Just go where He tells you to go and just say what he tells you to say. He told Ezekiel, "...*I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the*

Lord GOD.” (Ezek. 2:4) Do you have a copy of what the Lord God hath said? Do you have vocal chords which the Lord hath made? (Ex. 4:11) Can you read? Then welcome to the ministry.

A child has a simple life unless he chooses to disobey his parent. Often, a parent need not offer any explanation but simply a, “Just do what you’re told.” Life for a child only gets complicated when he does not do what he is told.

WHAT PLEASES HIM

In this we have a perfect example: Jesus. *Mt. 3: 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* So, if we do what Jesus did then we will be pleasing as well. Again, this makes the ministry simple. Jesus obeyed His Father. (John 5:17-21) He magnified the Father so that all men might marvel. (John 5:20) His obedience was even to the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:8) This also pleased the Father. (Isa. 53:10)

Paul took his cue here, in that he did not even count his life dear unto himself. Paul was willing to, and did, make the ultimate sacrifice in order that he might magnify the Father. If we can attain to this level of love and obedience, then any sacrifice below this is reasonable. (Rom. 12:1)

The Lord could but smile at the words of the young Samuel, “Speak Lord, thy servant heareth.” Did not the Lord use Isaiah mightily after he answered, “Here am I; send me.”? But many Christians *sing* these words to the great displeasure of the Lord because with their lips they do honor Him, but their hearts are far from Him.

WHAT ANGERS HIM

Certainly, the longsuffering of the Lord was challenged when Moses avoided the ministry with his petty excuses. (Ex. 4) Just do what you are told. Please allow me a personal illustration here. You will see the value of personal illustrations later in this book.

I have been involved with choral music since I was ten years old. At the time of this illustration I had had much experience in choral music. I had sung in many choirs, ensembles, trios, and duets but I had never done any solo work. I was in a large choir in a large church. The director of the choir asked me to sing solo for a Sunday school class. That did not sound too bad on the surface, so I agree before I found out that the class had an attendance of over 400. I was scared to death. I fasted, I prayed, I practiced, I memorized, I fasted some more...etc. Sunday came and between uncomfortable gulps of saliva and gasps of breath, the class and I endured to the end. As I exited, my director complimented me and asked me to sing again the next week. My countenance fell, I explained to him what I had suffered in this preparation and he apologized and gave me liberty to inform him when I might be ready. The very next day I ran to catch a bus; the pavement was wet from a light shower, my feet went up and

my head went down --vocal chords first-- on the sharp edge of an attaché case I was carrying. My full weight increased the Karate chop to my Adam's apple. I recovered myself with great effort but my voice was as gone as an email lost in cyberspace. Argue of coincidence if you please, but I knew what this was all about. For three weeks I had no voice, and for that again I had little voice. In repentance I told the Lord if He would give me back my voice that I would speak, shout, sing, preach, or testify for Him anytime, any place and under any conditions He chose. It wasn't long that the Lord repaired my voice to the tune of double strength and double volume. If you doubt this just ask my street audience for the past 39 years.

No parent wants excuses; they want immediate obedience. Nothing angers a good parent more than useless excuses. Just do what you are told.

Saul angered the Lord when, out of fear he made compromise. It cost him his popular vote, his relationship with the Lord, his kingdom and his ministry (1 Sam. 15). Just do what you are told, when you are told, and in the manner that you are told.

The Lord had blessed King David beyond his imagination or worth, (2 Sam. 12:8) as He also does with us (1 Cor. 2:9). However, David was not happy. Discontentment is never satisfied; it eats like a spiritual leech until the host is pale, weak, and lifeless. The Bible says that the Lord was displeased (2 Sam. 11:27) with what David had done. Discontentment was the root of this great evil, and study here will yield very profitable ministering in the discovery of the full bloom and fruit of this wild vine. Dissatisfaction in any flavor will make the ministry distasteful; thus we have ample warning on this subject. (Phil. 4:11, 1Tim. 6:1-8, Heb. 13:5) When I was a young boy there was an advertisement on TV for Carnation evaporated milk. The slogan ran, "Milk from contented cows." The slogan appealingly invited the consumer to the product. Should not the minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ offer the sincere milk of the Word from a contented minister?

"O Father, may it never be said of us that having come to an open door, we closed it; having come to a lighted candle, we quenched it; having heard the voice of a neighbor begging bread, we made denial, speaking of our own case." -McKenzie

Since we have been given such an awesome responsibility, then, as a faithful witness, the Lord can rightly expect of us the same simple, yet high rank; since we have been given a **trust** as concerning the propagation of the gospel, (*1Thess. 2:4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in **trust** with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*) then it would be safe to say that the Lord would be quite angry with his servants who neglect such glorious representation and awesome responsibility.

WHAT WILL CALL FOR A “WELL DONE” FROM HIM

The text where the Lord introduces this commendation (Mt. 25:21) emphasizes just one attribute; faithfulness. The servant in this parable may have had many faults and shortcomings, but his lord rewarded him with the medal of “Well done” for his faithfulness. The Lord makes much of this character trait; it seems this is that quality which pleases Him most. Throughout these writings you will find many admonitions to faithfulness. It seems that faithfulness is a greatly lacking part of people worldwide in these last days. Even the Lord laments, *Pr. 20:6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?*

To say that the Lord is a most complex person would be an eternal understatement, but when you examine what He requires from his creation, and certainly for His servants, His demands are of the most basic nature. You may not be talented, wise, intelligent, strong, healthy, inventive, skillful, charming, or even ambulatory, but anyone can be faithful. And for this alone comes the Divine award and invitation, *Mt. 25:21 ...Well done, thou 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.*

CHAPTER TWO THE MAN OF THE MINISTRY

Eze 22:30 And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

When the task of the ministry is needed the Lord looks for a man Ezek. 22: 30 “*And I sought for a man among them,*”. The assignment is given secondarily, because if a man can be found, the nature of the assignment makes little difference “*that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it.*”. But how painfully often is the truth of this last phrase to be the case “*...but I found none.*” Look at the spiritual conditions existing in Ezekiel’s day, when it was said the Lord could find no man.

The ministry is a manly art. All the preachers in the Bible were men; but not all the men of the Bible were preachers. All the preachers of the Bible were men **first**. There is a serious lack of preachers in our land today because there is a serious lack of men. Gladys Aylward, missionary to China, gave a testimony which will help on this subject. “I wasn’t God’s first choice for what I’ve done in China. I don’t know who it was. It must have been some well-educated man. I don’t know what happened. Perhaps he died. Perhaps he wasn’t willing and God looked down and saw Gladys Aylward. And God said, ‘Well, she’s willing.’” If you are a saved man who is hesitant, reluctant or just simply not willing to exercise your manhood for the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, just remember, there is a good woman standing by, and the Lord is not above using her to replace you.

The rod of manliness will also measure the spiritual condition of any nation. The preacher we all should study and follow here is the **man** Christ Jesus. Rid your mind of the movie image of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hollywood uses a French dictionary when they attempt to define manhood, so do not trust what you see. “[F]aith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10:17)

With the absence of men, and consequently the absence of preachers, comes the deterioration of the fabric of any society. Observe what lie ahead for Israel in Isaiah’s day when he prophesied the existence of no mighty man, nor man of war, no judge, or prophet, no prudent or ancient men, no captain of fifty, and no honorable man, no manly counselor, no cunning artificer, and no eloquent orator. He said when that takes place, children will run things, babes will make national decisions and women shall rule. The Lord says, “In this evil case the people are oppressed and Jerusalem is ruined.”

If you are looking for a way to make use of your manhood, don’t run for political office, don’t join the Peace Core, don’t argue for Green Peace or civil rights; embrace the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. The ministry will produce, demand and use all of the manhood you may ever be able to muster, and you will be fulfilled thereby in your

gender. It doesn't take a man to sin; any wimp can sin. It takes a man to live righteously and serve the Lord.

If you are a saved man, you were saved for a specific purpose. Paul said this in Acts 26:16, "...**for this purpose**" and that purpose is to minister. I believe the Lord chose His words carefully here in 2 Cor. 5:17, "[I]f any **man** be in Christ,"; the text further reveals this man as having a "ministry of reconciliation" and as having received a commitment of "the word of reconciliation." This man is crowned an "ambassador for Christ" and God, through this man beseeches His enemies to "be... reconciled to God." This is the universal calling, commissioning, and crowning of all men in Christ.

In the testimony of Paul's conversion in Acts 9, notice that Paul asked the Lord two questions, and only two questions. In fact, those are the only questions Paul ever asked the Lord during his entire ministry; a ministry filled with many difficult happenings and things hard to understand. Paul asked in verse 5, "Who art thou Lord?" The Lord most kindly and fully revealed himself to the serious inquirer. The Lord is always pleased to fully reveal himself to any serious inquirer. Paul, having been satisfied with this identification then asks in verse 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The first question is salvation; the second is service. This is the perfect way for us to come into the ministry, without a pre-designed life, without qualifications, without any further need for clarification. If you ever truly find out who He really is--the Creator, Alpha, Omega, Saviour, Redeemer, Judge, Commissioner, Director, Protector, Provider, Co-Labourer, Wisdom-giver, Sanctifier, Joy, Empowerer, and Rewarder,-- then there is no need for any further question. And if there seems to be a need for further questions, then you really don't fully know who He is. Life can be very simple if you make Him a two-question God.

If you would like a quick test of your manhood in Christ Jesus, just ask to be caught away in the spirit and pre-incarnated into the man named Abijah, recorded in 2 Chron. 13. This great king of Judah took the high ground with his formidable army of four hundred thousand chosen men and took the occasion to publicly preach to his enemy Jereboam, and his army of eight hundred thousand chosen men. Can you add? That is one million, two hundred thousand men. Man, is it ever time to preach...and he did. He had spent time in his study, for he knew his history, current events, God's laws, and personalities involved. Abijah rehearsed these in the ears of his men and his enemies, he gave a brief invitation in verse 12 and in that invitation told Jerboam where all the major exits were located from which they could quickly vacate the parade grounds. God honoured this spiritual manliness and gave them a victory that was thought impossible. Abijah was a man and made the most of a once in a lifetime ministerial opportunity. Certainly, I cannot know that I would play the man in a similar situation but I like to lick my lips as I dream of it.

To my knowledge only Moses preached to more people at any single gathering. The size of the crowd does not make or break a man, but rather reveals the man. Jesus was moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes (Mt. 9:36). A man might examine himself by asking the question, "What happens inside me when I see the multitudes? Am I moved with compassion? Would I prefer to identify myself as a peculiar person belonging to Jesus Christ by preaching here, or do I desire to belong to that multitude?"

Jeremiah reenlisted upon sight of his enemies, that is, the enemies of the Lord, as they defamed him, evilly reported him, and watched for his halting, in hopes of prevailing against him to put a swift end to his ministry. Oh, ever make me this kind of man. Amen! Ezekiel was preaching to a multitude of his enemies when one dropped dead in the middle of his sermon (Ezek. 11:13). After a brief prayer he took a deep breath and said, "As I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted...". Would you care to try that frock on for size, Fonzie? If you're not sure you would fit into that manly garment then take the Joab challenge to play the man for God until you can be a man...it won't take long.

Bringing this challenge closer to our era, John Pollock wrote in his excellent biography of George Whitefield, the story of Whitefield renting a booth in which to preach at a fair. Not far distant was a booth, which dared men to try their bare fists against professional bruisers for prize money. The bruisers decided to have some fun with George and came and began to shake the flimsy table upon which he preached. Whitefield, not being a naturally burly-type preacher, was a bit shaken, along with the table. But George's wife stood bravely beneath him tugging on his robe and urging him, "Play the man for God, George: play the man for God."He did.....

Bringing this challenge still closer to center stage, may I enter from the wings and tell my story? In the heart of Portland, Oregon is one city block given to a public park named Pioneer Square. This is a gathering place for the general public but at lunch the yuppies use it for brown-bagging and in the evening the lovers smooch while street people await an open bench. I, and a pastor of a local Portland church, read in the news that there was to be a rock concert in Pioneer Square but also that the laws would demand that it conclude at ten PM. There were an estimated five thousand enemies of the Lord gathered at 9:30 PM. While other Christians passed tracts, I looked for the right location for a street meeting. At one end of the park there was a high water fountain flanked by stairs leading to another street level where one could delight in specialty coffee shops and deli's. With some effort but without danger, I climbed nearly to the top of this fountain and positioned myself 50 feet above the main body of the enemy. There was only one way up and my back was against solid concrete. At the stroke of ten PM the M.C. said goodnight, the lights went out, the audience fell silent and I opened with, "**THE BIBLE**

SAYS...” I preached full steam and unhindered for a full twenty minutes until the crowd finally dispersed. His Spirit testified to my spirit that I had played the man.

Over the entrance of the Lord’s worldwide headquarters for evangelism and ministry hangs a massive banner that states;

HELP WANTED
MINISTERS OF ALL TYPES
TOOLS PROVIDED
AMPLE STARTING PAY
REWARDING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES
OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD RETIREMENT
INQUIRE WITHIN
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

The banner is never removed, for there are always openings for those who desire to serve the Lord. The demand is ever present but the supply is always short. When General Douglas MacArthur headed the occupation of Japan following the Second World War, he called on the mission boards of America to send two thousand missionaries immediately to Japan. That nation could have been influenced for the gospel at that vulnerable time. The boards informed him there were not that many who were willing to go. What is the consequence of this lack of ministers? *Rom. 10: 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

THE AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY IF YOU REFUSE THE DUTY

1 Cor. 9: 16 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! Paul said in the next verse that a dispensation of the gospel was committed unto him. There is a duty that the Lord, in his master plan, has assigned to you. The servant whom the Lord specially equipped to accomplish that duty can best perform this particular duty. We know not all the duties assigned to us, nor can we foresee how we may succeed in them. We must only display a willing readiness of heart to obey to the best of our ability and wait upon the opportunity. In and of ourselves, we are completely without capability to accomplish even the most trivial of assignments. (John 15:5) But, we must do all things through Christ (Phil. 4:13) and in this way we cannot fail.

To disobey the calling to the ministry is to incur the discipline of the Master. To disobey is to hear the “woe” from the lips of the Master. To disobey is to deny the ministry of the Lord through you, to those in need. To disobey is to neglect your watch post (Ezek. 3:18). To disobey is to stand before the Lord with the guilt of the blood of the needy upon your hands. To disobey is to miss the fulfillment of the

abundant life and to die without the testimony of the apostle Paul. *2 Tim. 4: 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

Jonah ran from the ministry and God ran after him but only for a while; and notice where the Lord found him when Jonah surrendered. His attitude did not change and in chapter four of Jonah the Lord allowed him to quit the ministry. Woe is unto Jonah at his judgment. Don't count on the Lord running after you.

THE AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY IF YOU ACCEPT THE DUTY

You represent the Lord Jesus Christ. As His ambassador, (2 Cor. 5:20) the communications you make in His name will be the first impressions these subjects will have of their King. If you let some warp, it will only remain for their pursuit within His Word to straighten that imperfection. This is a hard thing. What impeccable conduct must accompany an ambassador of the King of Kings. More will be said on this in the chapter on the manner of the ministry.

To accept the duty is but to acknowledge the fact that you have, upon salvation, relinquished all rights over your own body. *1 Cor. 6: 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Cor. 7: 23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.* You no longer can do your pleasure, except it be His also. You are His minister, His servant, His ambassador, His personal representative, and you must please Him.

Whether actual or fiction, the following preacher's story will serve to illustrate the above paragraph.

A gentleman was sitting quietly alone in the club car of a traveling train. He was perfectly content to enjoy the passing scenery until another passed by and noticed his amusement. This second man asked,

"Sir would you enjoy a game of cards?"

To which the first replied, "Oh yes, very much indeed." They sat across from each other at the table and agreed upon the game and the rules. The cards were dealt and the second man picked his cards up and began to sort them and make his judgments, when he observed that the first man's cards remained face down upon the table.

"Um, I thought you said you would enjoy a game?" said the second man.

"Oh yes, I truly would, except that I have no hands," said the first man. Terribly embarrassed, the second man exclaimed,

"I am truly sorry, for I did not know...I offer my sincere apology and trust you were not insulted at my offer." The first man offered a further explanation as he held up his hands,

"I do honestly want to play cards, as I was a professional gambler before I became a child of God, but now that I am saved my body belongs to my Lord and Master Jesus Christ. These are His hands, and I can no longer do my own pleasure with them."

SPEAKING THE WORDS OF THE LORD

When an ambassador speaks, he has no liberty to insert his own views or opinions. He cannot even make recommendations for the negotiations. He can only speak as a representative for his Superior. *“2 Cor. 2:17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the **word of God**: but as of sincerity, but as of God, **in the sight of God speak we in Christ**. 1 Thess. 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the **word of God which ye heard of us**, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the **word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”*

The O.T. prophets were forever prefacing their preaching with, *“THUS SAITH THE LORD...”* The world is much cankered by, “Well, I think...,” “My guess would be...,” “The majority opinion is...”. The world is very much in need of more, *“THUS SAITH THE LORD...”* Read in Job 32 the Lord’s response to Elihu’s **opinion**. The Lord doesn’t give it the value of His response. The man of the ministry has no right to his opinion; he speaks the Word of God.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MUSTS OF THE MINISTRY

2Ch 6:41 Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.

SALVATION REQUIRED

Any occupation (Lk. 19:13) of great importance would certainly require very lofty qualifications. The ministry is no exception but though the requirements be lofty indeed, they are simple. Before a man even has a name to put to the beginning of an application for this occupation, he must be born again. As far as the ministry is concerned he does not exist until his name is first recorded in the Lamb's book of life.

This seems so basic as to come under the umbrella of, "Who doesn't know that." Yet, within two hundred years of this writing, this critical qualification was generally thought to be not the most important thing. It was accepted in all circles that if a man had the academic qualifications he would be fit for the ministry. Such thinking was that the main job of the clergy was to bring people up to the higher ideas of the Lord, rather than to consider the necessity of redemption by faith in the Word of God. George Whitefield and John Wesley both objected to this but it was long before men thought in line with the Biblical qualifications for the ministry (Isa. 55:7-9).

Sincerity, morality, intellect, talent, ability, amiability, personality, organization, community standing, trustworthiness, generosity, selflessness, and Bible knowledge are all very nice qualities, and the Lord wishes all of His servants to attain to these and more like them. But, they are not on the list of qualifications for the ministry. The list that would include some of these found in 1 Timothy is a list to qualify a bishop and/or deacon, not simply a minister. Not all ministers serve as bishops. This is not to be misconstrued to mean the minister who does not serve in this office can be lax on these, but simply to say that any man is qualified to minister if he is saved. *2 Chron. 6:41...let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation...*

FAITHFULNESS REQUIRED

When a man looks for a job in today's job market, he examines the fringe benefits as much as he studies the salary. Some jobs come with a week's paid vacation from the first day you begin. Consider the character of a man looking for a job and making consideration how many paid days off he will get. There seems to be some fundamental error in that.

This error is not simply racial, or societal or even national-- it is not even generational. This error is natural, human, carnal and unregenerate. This error was personified in the name given to Rueben... "*unstable as water.*" This character blemish ought to be the first victory sought by any Christian and more certainly by a minister

of the Lord. Even the Lord laments concerning the scarcity of the simple virtue of faithfulness. *Pro. 20: 6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?*

*1Cor. 4: 2 Moreover it is **required** in stewards, that a man be found **faithful**.* . A steward is a man employed in great families to manage the domestic concerns, superintend the other servants, collect the rents or income and keep the accounts. A stewardship is a high position of servitude and demands meticulous accountability. A minister is said by the Lord to be a steward (Tit. 1:7) of the mysteries of God (1Cor. 4:1) and of the manifold grace of God. (1Pet. 4:10). Allow, for a moment, the last two sentences to be absorbed by your gray matter. This should cause any sincere saint to tremble. The Lord of glory gives the charge of His mysteries and His manifold grace into our care. This is not to be perceived as saying that if we are not faithful in our stewardship that His grace and His mysteries go lacking, but rather that these mysteries and this manifold grace can only be distributed by those who have license for such distribution; the stewards of God. The Master comes to His stewards and rightfully queries, *“Is the seed yet in the barn?”* (Hag. 2:19)

Faithfulness is fundamental, simple, basic, and foundational, yet if it is lacking in a minister it matters little what other qualities he might lend to his Master. Musical talent is wonderful, yet useless if that servant is not faithful. Preaching and teaching ability is enjoyed by all the saints unless it be unavailable because of unfaithfulness.

Strange but true; unfaithfulness is noticed quickly by one and all, while faithfulness often goes unobserved. It is like a clean face as opposed to a smudge on the nose. One is the way it is supposed to be, and the other is an obvious flaw.

Which comes first; the ministry or faithfulness? Paul quickly answers, *1Tim. 1: 12 ¶ And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me **faithful**, putting me into the **ministry**;*

I had a zealous but unfaithful Bible student who was sporadic in his church attendance. I asked him, “If you were given the opportunity to minister during a Wednesday night service, would you show up.” His countenance immediately lightened and he, in feigned humility, asked if I thought he was ready for that. I ignored the assumed humbleness and repeated the question. He assured me that he, would indeed be there; ready, willing, and able. I then posed the same question but replaced the midweek service with the adult SS class. He was thrilled at the prospect and gave me full assurance. “So,” I said, “You will be present in these services--as long as you are the minister, is that correct?” He hung his head in sad realization of his own unfaithfulness.

Some zealots will quickly size up the crown given to faithful martyrs as they read Foxes Book of Martyrs. What they must realize is that no one ever had the opportunity to die for Christ who was not first living for Him. In many areas of the ministry it takes more basic

character to live faithfully in His service, with all of the possible trials, than it does to suddenly play the man before the ax comes down; especially when there is no other option. Prove your loyalty to your Saviour by way of your faithfulness in His ministry and when it comes time to give your life for Him, it will only be a crowning act. (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MIND OF THE MINISTRY

*Acts 20: 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of **mind**, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:*

What a great honour to be counted faithful and put into the ministry. We are all occupants confined to this planet for the duration of our temporal life. Some of the last words of our kind Master ring in our ears and remind us to “*Occupy till I come.*” Some of the definitions for the word occupy are as follows: to take possession, to keep in possession, to take up, to cover or fill, to employ, to use, to busy one's self, to follow, to expend. All of these are applicable shades of meaning which color our Master's gracious command.

Some choose to occupy in the business realm. There may be nothing sinful about this (*in all labour there is profit*) except possibly in their motive. Some will fill their precious years in the political arena and spend their time affecting the social aspect of existence on earth. Since morality and spirituality can never be legislated, and knowing that man can never successfully govern man, this seems of little value (Eccl. 5:8). Don't legislate; propagate. Some will busy themselves in vain pursuits: sports, amusement, leisure, and unprofitable education. Some will employ their tiny reserve of energy in an attempt to preserve the limited energies of this dying planet; to preserve Mother Nature, whose seeming failures and abuses are actually still within the tender care of Father God (Ps. 104).

The ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the most honorable occupation any creature could ever attain while on this planet. If you are saved then the ministry is waiting for you to give yourself to it. The Lord serves it up on a silver platter but he will not force-feed. You choose whether to be a Jonah, Demas, Rueben, Abijah, Judas, or Daniel. There are several factors that will decide this.

PREPARING YOUR HEART FOR THE MINISTRY?

“Indeed, it is willing service only that is capable of reward from God. It is not the bare doing of any duty, but the doing of it heartily (that is, willingly and cheerfully) that God has promised to reward. Leave the heart out of our duties, and God abhors them: they are but the carcasses, without the life and spirit, of religion.” Matthew Henry

Your heart simply **MUST** be in the ministry. As in so many things spiritual, the heart is the key to all fulfillment. In salvation it is the heart that determines the matter. In sanctification, the heart must lead the way, and in service, it can only be accomplished by a heart decision.

2Kin. 10: 15 And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him,

and said to him, Is thine **heart** right, as my **heart** is with thy **heart**? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot. Notice here that Jehu was zealous for the service he was to render unto the Lord. In seeking a partner he wanted one with no less heart for the task than he himself had. When assured by Jehonadab's affirmative answer, Jehu gave him his hand. Surely we can type this with the service offered us by the good Lord. Why should He offer us His hand in this duty until He is assured that our hearts beat as one?

Preparing your heart for the ministry is done through a conscious studying of the Bible on the subject of the ministry. A serious Christian will come to the conclusion that, not only is it his duty to embrace the ministry, but that his occupation in the ministry will repay him with the most abundant life possible (John 10:10).

Ezra, although he was born a priest, could have chosen to take up his occupation in a great many ways other than the service of the Lord. Ezra chose to prepare his heart by seeking the law of the Lord, (and he did it) so Israel profited by his occupation. We also benefit from Ezra's choice of occupation. *Ezra 7:10,11 For Ezra had **prepared his heart** to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.*

Rehoboam, Ezra's antithesis, wasted the ministry of the Lord through his father and grandfather. He divided and destroyed much of God's kingdom. He did irreparable damage to the spirituality of the people of Israel. He squandered his own precious occupation and left a distasteful name and legacy (Pr. 10:7) . *2Chr. 12: 14 And he did evil, because he **prepared not his heart** to seek the LORD.*

1Sam. 22:1-2 is easy preaching. In type, David (as the Lord Jesus Christ) redeems men indebted to an ungodly kingdom. He replaces their distress and discontent with godly leadership. They repay him with service and loyalty. In 2 Sam. 15 David is on his way into exile, due to the wicked designs of Absalom (the antichrist) and David needs a vote of confidence. These men who were satisfied with the godly reign of their redeemer-- therefore their hearts could not be stolen by the wicked one-- found an opportunity to give voice to the greatest loyalty oath in the Bible. *2Sam. 15: 15 And the king's servants said unto the king, **Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.***

READY

Notice that after declaring themselves servants to the king, they said they were **ready**. This is written in the present tense. They did not have to fast and pray for a sign, they needed not to consult their wives, check the plans of their teenagers, calculate how long until their retirement, call the loan officer and tabulate the second mortgage, or even think about what they might be getting themselves into. **THEY WERE READY! THEY WERE READY!**

TO DO WHATSOEVER

Their faith in David and their faithfulness to him through the years had allowed them to write David a blank check on their lives. They did not ask him anything concerning the future, which, by the way, did not look too promising. They made no qualifications for him. They did not hesitate to give all that they had along with all whom they represented. This commitment far surpasses the sad report of the disciples as they deserted their Redeemer in His darkest hour.

Such an unreserved vow can serve for us as an examination of our hearts in regard to the situations we find ourselves enmeshed in in life. What reason could we offer to excuse ourselves to the Person who has given himself, even to the death of the cross, that He might gather us from the unhappy kingdom of darkness unto His righteous one? Is it that we are not ready? Has life in this world so entangled (Gal. 5:1) us that we cannot be so easily loosed (Mk. 11:2)? Have we given loyalties to others rather than our first love, (Rev. 2:4) and so we must consult their pleasure in the matter? Is our hesitation, or maybe reluctance, caused by doubts planted by the study of ideas ungodly and unbiblical?

If we could not give such a loyalty promise, is it possible that we are walking by sight and not by faith? Do we require of the One who only has the highest value in mind for our lives, that He show us the plan, before we dare trust Him? Are our own strategies so important that we must be called into the general staff counsel as equal with the Trinity?

If a man considering the ministry pales in the light of this examination, he need only to confess his foolishness (1Jn. 1:9) and restructure his priorities so that he can seek first the kingdom of God. He needs to realign the corruptions of his life, and untangle himself, so that he can, with all immediacy, come before his Commander and without hesitation of heart be able to offer Him this sacrifice of loyalty.

What should be the mind of the minister of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in order that he might continue faithful to the end? (2Tim. 4:6,7) Paul answered that question both by word and example. *Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*

After a man accepts his ministry, nothing is more important in life. *Mr 10:29,30 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.* You now live and direct your affairs with the ministry utmost in your minds. All decisions are made as to how they will affect the ministry. *2Co. 6:3-10 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 labours, in watchings, in fastings; 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 armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, 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 alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

2 Samuel 15:15

Signed _____

Could you sign this now?

DO YOU HAVE THE AUTHORITY?

*2Co 10:8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our **authority**, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:*

Many of the men representing the Lord in the Old Testament prefaced their messages with, “*Thus saith the Lord God*”, or an equivalent. They spoke boldly and without hesitation because they were assured of the authority to do their assignment. They were very commanding to observe. Not one made either correction or apology. Even when challenged by other authorities they did not waver. No one could have convinced them that they might have misinterpreted the intentions of God, or that they had lost something in the transfer from God’s mouth to their ear. From some source they had confidently received, not only the mind and general ideas of the Lord, but the very Words of God.

It is not just important; it is imperative that the minister of God has the mind that he is armed to the teeth with the very Words of God. To be given an assignment so important as to involve matters not only of life and death but of eternal life and eternal death, yet to be deprived of the proper authority to carry it out, breeds only frustration and promises failure.

Two great warriors of WWII absolutely insisted, at the jeopardy of their positions, that they have under their personal control all power and authority. Both Eisenhower and MacArthur learned the painful lesson of history that dual authority or divided authority equals confusion and great damage and loss. If worldly leaders realize this, why are there doubts and questions on this fact when it comes to the most important issues of both this world and the next?

You must believe that you have God's Word, or there will be no authority. If you do not have the absolute authority of the Word of God, then whatever you speak, whatever counsel you give, whatsoever sin you may condemn, whatever evil you attempt to thwart will be subject to question and debate. Your words, however eloquent, will be cast aside into the caldron of religious rhetoric, and eventually you will become frustrated in your vain attempt to perform an impossible task, with no power to accomplish it.

Jesus, the Word of God incarnate, was heard for one main reason and that was because he spoke with authority, and not as the scribes. Read the following references: John 7:46, Mark 1:22, Matthew 7:28,29.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE MANNER OF THE MINISTRY

*Act 20:18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what **manner** I have been with you at all seasons,*

If you can master the above chapter, and if your mind and heart truly do rule over your body, then you should have no problem implementing the **manner** of the ministry.

Paul led some of these men from Ephesus, mentioned above, to the Lord. He then ministered together with them for at least three years (Acts 20:31). When you dwell and minister with someone for that length of time you know his **manner**. You are either disturbed by his inconsistencies and hypocrisies or you are encouraged and inspired by his faithfulness of heart. Paul was not hesitant to hold up his **manner** for purposes of scrutiny before these close co-labourers in the ministry. Paul told the Corinthians, “*Be ye followers of me.*” He told the saints at Philippi, “*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, **do**: and the God of peace shall be with you. Phil. 4: 9.*” Paul had a **manner** to his ministry, which served as a solid backdrop to propel his words. His mind was that he was chief of sinners. His **manner** was, “Follow me.” When these two things are found together, they serve as a good balance. Every Christian occupies some kind of pulpit and preaches some kind of sermon every day.

We have learned the importance of protecting your ministry against actual attack and embittered accusation. The **manner** of the minister is as important to maintain, for if the man be a castaway, so will be his ministry. I heard a great piece of wisdom years ago that will serve well here. “Live in such a **manner** that if someone accuses you of something, no one will believe it.” A minister must realize that those who are offended by his ministry will accuse him of falsities. The wisdom of the quote above may serve as insurance against such times.

If you fail in your manner, you do not lose your salvation, but rather your testimony, which serves as the voltage for your message for the Lord. If people reject the Lord because of whom He is, that is one thing. It is an altogether different and evil event if folks reject the Lord because you fail in your **manner**. Notice carefully the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. *John 15: 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and **men** gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* He says that if you fail to abide in Him that **men** will cast you forth to be burnt. The Lord does not throw you into hell, but men will throw you onto the trash heap. Paul said essentially the same thing in 1 Co. 9:27. Your service for

the Lord would be rendered all in vain if your ministry could be legitimately cast aside because of your poor character or behavior.

“The world looks at ministers out of the pulpit to know what they mean when in it.” –Cecil

SELF-SACRIFICE FOR THE SAKE OF THE MINISTRY

“Self denial...of even your desires for sake of the ministry...Paul set the example...He denied himself for their sakes, that he might insinuate into their affections, and gain their souls. In short, *he became all things to all men, that he might by all means (all lawful means) gain some.* He would not sin against God to save the soul of his neighbour, but he would very cheerfully and readily deny himself. The rights of God he could not give up, but he might resign his own, and he very often did so for the good of others.” M. Henry

Another point of self-sacrifice is to enjoy, or learn to enjoy, the hospitality of good men. *Titus 1: 8* “*But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men,*” I cannot call this a sacrifice at all, for my family has always been able to enjoy being hospitable to good men. It is a pleasure.

Without controversy, the strongest witnesses in Bible history are those who faithfully uphold their **manner**. Job, Daniel, Samuel and Paul all speak with a volume heard by all the world and spanning millenniums, saying, “Our lives have been lived in a glass bowl; here we are; we are open for your minute examination.” *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, Ps. 139:23,24*

CHAPTER SIX

THE MESSAGE OF THE MINISTRY

*Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks,
repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

All of the Lord's ministers are messenger boys. There are as many different messages as there are messengers. Abel preached, "Your veggies just won't cut it with God." Enoch said, "Stand by, the Lord is coming with ten thousands of His saints; in about 7,000 years." Noah delivered a message entitled, "You better get into the Ark", and the sequel a year later, "You better get outta the ark". Abraham gave a stirring message on trusting God with the title, "Gaaaawwwwwlllee, look at all them stars." Angels preached, "Get outta Sodom; NOW!" Joseph brought a sermon on "Come on down to Egypt." Moses delivered a discourse on, "Let my people go (out of Egypt)." And another later on about, "Whatever you do, don't go back to Egypt." And so it went throughout the Bible.

If you could sum up all the **messages** from God to man in the Old Testament and capsulize them into one brief **message** it might be, *Hosea 13: 4 Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.* If you did the same from the New Testament, a good choice might be our beginning text for this chapter, Acts 20:21. So, what is the **message** of the ministry? The **message** of the ministry is one that will cause the hearts of the audience to turn to the Lord, to cause them to trust in the Lord, to create an appetite for things concerning the Lord and to motivate them to make the Lord the preeminence of their lives.

Within the parameters of the paragraph above, there is sufficient liberty for specific **messages** for appropriate occasions. Jesus' **message** to those gathered for the Sermon on the Mount was quite different than His scathing denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. His stinging words to unbelieving disciples, "*O fools and slow of heart to believe...*" was necessary for the occasion but His tender, comforting words to Mary to trust Him for the resurrection of her brother Lazarus were well chosen. Paul's **message** to the Corinthians was nearly opposite to his commendations to the church at Philippi. Paul's strong rebuke against idolatry in Acts 19 caused a great stir, but when he ministered to the thinkers in Athens, which city was wholly given to idolatry, he reasoned with their educated and intellectual minds. No one can know what prevailing circumstances may have dictated these attitudes in his preaching, but the point of this study is that Paul was skilled enough, and instantaneous enough to apply the **message** to the audience, without compromising the overall **message** from God to man to repent and trust Him as Saviour.

MODES OF THE MINISTRY

If you have the privilege of knowing in advance what manner of people your audience will consist of and what the situation will be, or why they have assembled to hear you, it would be all wise to give this knowledge great and wise consideration and to prepare your **message** in accord with this light. If you do not have this privilege, remember that the Lord knows who the audience will be and what they need to hear, and He is probably more than willing to direct you accordingly. There is also the great command of our Lord to trust Him for instant **messages** without prior preparation. (Matt. 10:19) Woe is unto the slothful minister who squanders precious preparation time, thus abusing this verse (2 Tim. 2:15).

I have preached to two hundred females, all of who would fit the Proverbs 7 description perfectly. I have preached on Sunday morning to a church of five hundred. I have preached to three hundred inmates (for the most part black men) in a medium security prison in South Carolina. I have held devotions with fifteen residents under twenty years of age, in a mentally handicapped home. I have given a Bible study to outdoorsmen and a devotion to teenaged Christian girls in a home for girls. I have preached on Fat Tuesday at Mardi Gras in the heart of New Orleans and have preached to lovers on a quiet pier projecting into Puget Sound in Washington State. I ministered to first graders in an A.C.E. school in Slovakia and then flew home to give the **message** of God to a sodomite rally in Tallahassee, Florida. The **message** to each of these was not the same, yet the **message** to each of these was the same.

Ask the Lord and then ask yourself, "What do these souls need to hear?" "What is the best **message** for them at this time?" You can rest certain in the fact that the Lord wants the best-fitting **message** for this group of souls, even more than you do. He has no desire to jest with you as you grapple and grovel and sweat over the proper **message** at the proper time. Just relax and trust Him and make yourself open to His **message** for His creation, which is designed for each setting where He allows you to minister.

THE METHODS OF THE MINISTRY

*1Ti. 4:6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the **words** of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.*

WORDS! WORDS! WORDS! The ministry is words and words are the ministry. This being true, it would greatly profit the minister of the Lord to expand his vocabulary of words in general, but more especially of the Words of God. A minister needs to have a very friendly and familiar relationship with words. This will enable him to understand what he reads, and he must read. He must read the Bible as well as other books. Words are the main tool of the minister. The more skill he develops in the employment of words, the more effective

he will be in the ministry. His right hand should cleave to the Bible, (2Sam. 23:10) and his left hand should fit very familiarly to a good dictionary. I have often encouraged a Christian, young in the faith, to read his Bible and wherever a word occurs that he does not fully understand, he should be faithful to look it up in a good dictionary. If he does this regularly, he will furnish himself with a very good, personal Bible education.

The verses in the New Testament that relate to the proper choice of words are many. They would make a very profitable private study. Paul, Peter, John, and Jude all gave warning in regard to words. Paul said good words and fair speeches could be used to deceive hearts (Rom. 16:18). He made, I believe, a distinction between “*words of wisdom*” and the “*wisdom of words*” and said that he chose not to preach using the latter (1Cor. 2:1). Paul warned about enticing words (1Cor. 2:4 and Col. 2:4), vain words (Eph. 5:6), flattering words (1 Th. 2:5), strifes of words (1Tim. 6:4), and words to no profit (2 Tim. 2:14). On the positive side, Paul encouraged young Timothy to use wholesome words in his ministry (1 Tim. 6:3). He ordered his protégée to hold fast to sound words (2 Tim. 1:13). Peter advised us against feigned words and great swelling words (2 Pet. 2:3,18). John taught to beware of malicious words (3 Jn. 1:10). Jude finally admonishes us to remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 1:16).

MEMORIZATION

If we are admonished so by the apostle Jude, let us take heed by committing to memory as many of the words of God and our Lord Jesus Christ as time and gray matter will allow. YOU WILL NEVER REGRET TIME SPENT IN MEMORIZATION. You cannot memorize too much of the Word of God. Your reserve of scripture memorized will serve better than any computer Bible program on the market. The reason for this is that you will do the composition of your messages in your head and then run it through your computer. The computer only knows what someone has told it. A computer, though quite a valuable tool in the ministry, is not capable of composing a message from God to his creation. A computer cannot properly choose the words that would affect the heart. With this in mind, a faithful minister will get his direction from the Lord and proceed to compile the message in his own head and heart. *Pro. 16: 9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.* At this very moment as I compose this message on the ministry, my head is throwing up verses, parts of verses, scriptural principles, ideas, Bible words, phrases, and expressions, that for so many years have been part of the fabric of my thinking processes. Some I purposely committed to memory through the years, and more have been woven in through faithful Bible reading, studying and ministering. This availability of ministerial tools is absolutely invaluable. Any minister should utilize a regular Bible memorization program and maintain it all his life. AMEN!

K.I.S.S.

KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID

My greatest admiration and appreciation in the ability to minister has been bestowed upon those ministers who were brilliant in their ability to make things simpler, and simpler, and yet simpler. I have made simplicity my goal since I learned to appreciate it. It is more difficult than an inexperienced minister can imagine. Look past the context of the following verse and see the practicality. *1Cor. 14:9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue **words easy to be understood**, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.* A young preacher may glance at John 3:16 and say, "How could it be any simpler?" He will look at the limited description of heaven in Rev. 21 and think, "Once I have read the passage and affirmed the truth of it, what more can I say?" Yet, it is amazing what a few years of study and thought on these verses will do to allow you to expand on them, without adding to them and break them down in such a way that the audience enjoys the sincere milk of the Word of God. Knowing that milk is a whole food, nearly everyone can be nourished for a great while on little else. Even when the Christian grows to desire meat, it still must be masticated and chemically broken down many times in order that the body might gain nutrition. K.I.S.S. Keep it simple, stupid.

An inexperienced preacher would be wise in choosing the simplest of texts and practicing to make them as crystal clear as possible. Never make excuses for the simplicity of the text the Lord has laid upon your heart. An old preacher's story is told of a pastor who preached John 3:16 for weeks and weeks and weeks. Finally, the deacon board approached and asked him why he doesn't go on to something else. His reply was courageous and revealing. He said, "When you understand John 3:16 and start living accordingly, I will go on to something else." This is profound.

NEVER APOLOGIZE!

The pulpit or the street corner is not the proper place for apology. This severely weakens the message. You NEVER read of any of the Lord's messengers apologizing while ministering. I am not saying to flaunt yourself or have a careless attitude towards your weaknesses or errors but find another time, other than in your message, to humble yourself. I heard a young preacher mention several times through his message, "I know I'm young, but..." I watched the response of the audience. They were not impressed with his humility but instead were frustrated at the constant reminder in the midst of some rather good preaching. I gave him some gentle advice. I told him that if he would quit reminding us that he was "young, but..." that his preaching was good enough we might some time in the future forget how young he was. There is definitely a place and time for proper apology, but it is not in the pulpit, while ministering.

ACT LIKE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING!

Except for the constant critic who will never be satisfied, people, especially Christian people, tend to give a sincere minister the benefit of the doubt. Unless you tell them or show them otherwise, the person wanting to be ministered to will be appreciative of any ministry that is true to the Word of God and will be gracious when it comes to age, inexperience, and simple mistakes. At the same time, if the minister is trying to be something he is not, and never will be, or if he is overly presumptuous and has little skill to produce anything, he might be better off to contain his ministry to the streets where, truly, no one cares.

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR CONFIDENCE

Confidence comes naturally with experience, but woe unto the minister who fails to properly prepare and leans back on his experience. Preparation also bears the fruit of confidence. **Study** to show yourself approved unto God *Pr 16:1 ¶ The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.* The preparation of the heart is accomplished through various means. Remember earlier we discussed that the Lord already knows the congregation and their problems and the setting and situations involved. Then you can at least understand something about how Daniel could believe the Lord for the knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar's private dream. **Prayer** should set the stage for your ministry both in your heart as well as those to be ministered unto. Be sensitive to the scriptures and also to thoughts and ideas that come to you during the process of preparation. Ideas, illustrations, applications, points and sub-points are all around you.

OPENMINDEDNESS

I enjoy using elaborate illustrations and lessons for children as well as adults especially during the Sunday school hour. Original ideas seem to be the most difficult part of this complicated ministry. In my preparation, I make myself open to all mental stimulations regardless of how simple or absurd they may be. You can always edit out the ones you later determine simply will not minister effectively. I pray and ask the Lord what He would have me do this week in SS, then look around and listen and pay attention in my Bible reading, extra Biblical reading, surroundings, conversations and such like. If the Lord can make an infinite variety of snowflakes, leaves, skin cells, etc., He certainly must have SS ideas to last for my lifetime.

One idea came to me immediately following my prayer for inspiration. A car passed while I was walking; this is normally no stimulation, but since everything is a possibility, I thought about driving. I began to relate it to the Christian life. Nearly everyone enjoys driving; men, ladies, TEENS, and children love to fantasize about it. I had a vision of the SS class, someone holding a steering wheel and pretending to drive while I tested them with stop signs and turns to see if they would respond correctly and give the right signals at the right time. I thought of issuing those who passed the test a

Christian life driver license. This may sound silly but the congregation loves this sort of thing with audience participation and the memory of this effective ministry will last a lifetime. Remember, K.I.S.S or you can easily get over your head with costumes, cost, and complications.

Music is another valuable tool for preparing the heart. It may not be recommended for use during study time; for many it is more of a distraction. It better serves as a preparation just before the delivery of the message. Someone wise once said, "Music soothes the savage beast." A fine song service and appropriate special music always animates me for preaching, whether it be to receive it or to produce it. Consider the following text. *2Ki 3:15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.* If it was good enough for Elisha, it is good enough for me. AMEN?

There is a caution to be observed here. The spirit of both the music and the musician should be under constant observance. It is obvious that Satan uses the medium of music to convey his message to the heart, the same as the Lord does. This being true, music can provide a crack in the armor of the minister into which Satan may gain entrance. Since he is so subtle, this may easily occur before the minister realizes it. Music can be a wonderful tool but it can be most dangerous and even ruinous.

I was scheduled to preach the evening service at an inner-city rescue mission a few years ago. I arrived a half-hour before the service to mingle with the men, but they were in the auditorium, tripping-out on hard beat, stripper music with some spiritual words. I observed their *worship service* to be totally absorbing in nature. With the music, their minds and hearts were as much on drugs as anything they could buy on the corner. Clearly, the words were not all that important; their spirits were having fellowship with unclean spirits by way of the music. Five minutes before the service was to begin, the man in charge abruptly cut the music and pointed to me. After 35 years experience in every situation of ministry, I was impotent to minister. The Holy Spirit was not present; I was defiled, and the men were mad because their trip was so suddenly quit. I went through the motions but without affect.

THOROUGHLY FURNISHED

Good equipment and tools are well appreciated by any skilled laborer. A pianist treasures a fine piano as much as a carpenter values a quality table saw. Quality tools make any task a pleasure. The minister is no exception to this rule, and he should prize and cherish the superb instruments the Lord has provided for his assistance in the various tasks of the ministry.

In the high-tech, computer world we live in, nearly all have available to them powerful Bible programs which, at the touch of a

finger, provide full-color Bible images, maps, latest archaeological findings, histories, concordances, copy-and-paste options, Bible dictionaries, cross references, auto spelling, grammar corrections and comparative Bibles in various languages. These are, without question, valuable tools, some of which are being used to help write this book. The better the tools and the more ability the minister has to utilize them, the better and easier the task of ministering should be. But, please remember the convicting verse which tells us, *Lu 12:48 ...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

It should also be realized that, although the skilled carpenter enjoys employing quality tools for a better and easier job, skilled carpenters in days before quality tools, with their skill, were well able to produce the most intricate and impressive winding staircases only by the use of hand-tools. A talented pianist can make an out of tune piano to be enjoyed. A good cook can produce the tastiest bread with meager means, while using a pottery pan in a wood-burning oven with no thermostat. The Lord, in giving us His preserved Word, gave us all the finest tools any minister would ever need through time, to minister quality messages when mixed with prayer, the Holy Spirit, and human sweat. *2 Tim. 3:16,17 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.* Some of the greatest sermons were preached long before Quick Verse was ever thought of. Many a soul was saved through the preaching of the Word before Strong's Concordance was ever printed on paper. The test of the quality of any minister to prepare a message and to minister will be met by the challenge of having only a Bible, or part of a Bible, or even the memory of verses of the Bible, alone in a room furnished similar to Elisha's (2 Kings 4:10 with 2Tim. 4:13). Can he minister?

A young Christian packing his bag for a journey said to a friend, "I have nearly finished packing. All I have to put in are a guidebook, a lamp, a mirror, a microscope, a telescope, a volume of fine poetry, a few biographies, a package of old letters, a book of songs, a sword, a hammer, and a set of tools." "But you cannot put all that into your bag," objected the friend. "Oh, yes," said the Christian. "Here it is." And he placed his Bible in the corner of the suitcase and closed the lid. -Anonymous

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE MECHANICS OF THE MINISTRY
FEEDING THE FLOCK

1Pe 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you,

The number one job of a minister is to **feed** those you minister to. So let us think for a moment about a good meal and draw a parallel with a good sermon.

A good meal has an appetizer; this is food or drink served before the meal for purpose of stimulating the appetite. Allow me to make your mouth water by describing some appetizers. Soup, salad, little shrimp, nachos, bread sticks, fried cheese; hmmm. I have even had a wonderful appetizer in Spain; it consisted of dates wrapped in bacon. Sometimes you fall in love with the appetizer and would like to just keep eating more and not have the main course.

Congregational music and special music can serve as the appetizer in ministering along with the introduction to the sermon. The introduction usually follows the last congregational song or maybe a special music selection and, together with the reading of the text, should be designed to get the minds of your audience focused upon the subject at hand. A good minister will spend profitable time on the introduction as a way to create a good appetite for the main course.

The main course of a good meal nearly always is balanced with meat, potatoes, a second, usually green vegetables, sauces, butter, herbs, spices and bread. The Word of God is paralleled with both bread and meat (Heb. 5:12-14, Ps. 104:15). Any caring chef designs the main course to be attractive, nutritious, tasty and satisfying. Anyone finishing a good meal should have a comfortable feeling of fulfillment.

The main body of a message should be designed to accomplish the same as the main course of a good meal. The meat of the Word of God is for those who are of full age, but it is supplemented with tasty veggies and plenty of bread. A balanced main body of a message will provide nutrition and fulfillment for any who are hungry, regardless of the sophistication or simplicity of their spiritual digestive system. No one sits and eats only meat; potatoes alone is a dull meal; thus, each point of a good message should be supported by sub-points, supporting scriptures either read or referred to, illustrations and applications.

At the end of a well-planned meal I always enjoy hearing the phrase, "Keep your fork." This means desert is on the way. A good meal is not complete without desert and coffee/tea. A tasty, light desert sets off a good meal just perfectly.

The final application and conclusion of a message is for the purpose of finalizing the ministry on this occasion. It is not supposed to be a rehash of the main body, for some will not desire a second helping and would not be comfortable with a long review. If the minister has been diligent to keep the spiritual meal desirable, then

the conclusion will pleasantly top off the whole experience with a lasting affect upon the senses of the audience. "Theological preaching is deservedly unpopular if all it does is settle a lot of problems people never heard of, and asks a lot of questions nobody ever asks."- McCracken

The above parallel is standard course, at least in the western hemisphere. It reflects planning, design, preparation, labor and a desire to please and fulfill. This is what a good minister should strive to accomplish. Of course, this is all based upon ideal conditions. There will be many other times when grabbing a sandwich, chips and a soda must suffice due to unusual circumstances.

FROM EAR TO HEART

A prospective bride may be told, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach" but the minister should realize that the way to a man's heart is through his ear *Romans 10: 17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* Now, the Bible tells us plainly that the individual has control of his heart, (Pr. 23:19, Heb. 3:12, Joel 2:12,13) so there will be no force feeding; however, if the message is not aimed at, and does not appeal to the heart, then there is hardly a chance the heart will ever be affected. In order to accomplish this, there must be a combination of a right heart motive on the part of the minister, as well as the proper choice of material in the message. The message alone may not achieve this goal. Let me illustrate.

The story is told of a violinist who was employed to play classical music for patients in a mental health facility. The affect was wonderful. The patients loved it, and those who normally were irritable and difficult to deal with were calmed and quieted by this ministry. Time passed, the violinist died, and the administration wanted to continue this affective therapy. They hired an equally talented person but the effect was just the opposite. The patients seemed, one and all, to be disturbed by what used to be a time of relaxation and enjoyment. In investigating, the authorities found the new violinist to be, himself, a sufferer from his own mental distresses. His disturbed spirit was being conveyed to the hearers via the music. Along with this truth, a warning can be posted by observing the frustrations and disturbances of the general populace of disturbed youth today and their addiction to disturbing music played by disturbed musicians.

Reaching the heart can be accomplished, if the preaching is done with simplicity, commonality, and association. Simplicity; remember K.I.S.S.? When simplicity is achieved it reaches the heart, regardless of the height of the intellect. By commonality, "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man...*" (1Cor. 10:13) the message should be delivered in such a spirit that would convince all men of sin, rather than the effect that would cause one to think he

is being singled out. The Holy Spirit will bring conviction to individual hearts in His own way and time. By association means that the one ministering knows from his own personal experience what affects the heart. You have heard messages and felt the impact and you have heard others that did not hit the target. You have experienced sin, backsliding, wrong choices, bad moods, conviction, rebellion, and such like, so minister with the spirit of association; that is, “*I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*” (1Cor. 9:22)

IN SEASON, OUT OF SEASON

2Ti 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

The ministry provides many different opportunities, some *in season*, and some *out of season*. A wise man once said, “A minister ought to be able preach, pray, or die, in a moment’s notice.” There will be *out of season* times when, like Jeremiah, Amos, Paul, and Jesus, you will see the multitudes and be moved with compassion to minister. There will be other times when your ability in the ministry may grant you opportunity, either by invitation or other, to minister with planning. For this writing we will refer to this as, *in season* preaching. Both are necessary, and for both a minister is to be “*instant.*”

A good minister will be able to offer profitable ministering within a limitation of five minutes. A good minister will be able to provide spiritual meals for a series of meetings lasting days, weeks, or even longer. As a pastor, he will be called upon to feed the same people nutritious meals over an extended time; years or perhaps decades. For these occasions he will need to have a deep sermon barrel from which to draw.

STUDY YOUR OWN HEART

There are some considerations that must be made in the preparation of *in season* preaching. The length of time, if known, is one major factor, but beyond this, the preparation must reflect upon other factors. Study your own heart. The context of Mt. 12:34 which says, “[O]ut of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” is truly a negative context, but, if the principle is true then it would be true in the positive as well. That is, if your heart is right with the Lord, then your mouth will minister right things. For example, *Pro. 8: 6 Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things* (Read also Pro. 23:16). David, when he got his heart right with the Lord, according to Ps. 51, said that he was ready to speak good things, vs. 13-14. Why? Because his heart was full of the good things of the Lord and he was *then*, verse 13, *ready to minister*, verse 14. Study of your own heart should be the main foundation for building your message. Ask yourself, “What has affected me lately, in regards to the relationship between me and the Lord, or between this body of people and the Lord, or between the current situation in the world and

the Lord, or between this community and the Lord, or concerning current fashions or trends and their relationship with the Lord.” These factors, prayerfully considered, may direct your messages, or color them, or illustrate them. Study your own heart.

STUDY YOUR CONGREGATION

Ask the Lord, “What do these people need at this time? Are they suffering and need comfort from the Lord? Are they discouraged and need exhortation? Are they rebellious and need rebuke? Are they ignorant and need righteous instruction? Are they proud and need humbling? Are they frivolous and need preaching on faithfulness and commitment?” Study the ones to be ministered unto. “To love to preach is one thing; to love those to whom we preach, quite another.”
Cecil

SERMON IDEAS

A young, eager minister will assume that his head is so full of sermon ideas that it may never be exhausted; he will soon learn otherwise! Along with the above considerations, a minister must still put together the appropriate scripture with the idea or theme. He’ll find the most profitable direction of ministering even within these considerations. Ideas, seed thoughts, themes-- call them what you wish but a minister cannot have ready access to too many of these.

Sometimes the scripture comes first and the ideas, thoughts, etc. will gather around that scripture and be supported by various sub-points and ideas.

Sometimes the idea comes first and the appropriate scripture follows secondarily, in support of the main objective.

For several decades I have been gathering sermon seeds as I read and study my Bible. Sometimes it is a phrase, often a question, maybe a common word, and frequently an obscure word. If it strikes me, “Hey, that’ll preach”, I write it on some extra pages of my Bible. Whenever I am in need of an idea or sermon seed I review these notes with all the above considerations, and much of the time I am blessed with success.

COMMENTARIES???

A young country boy went off to seminary and was introduced to the “blessings” of commentaries. He was so thrilled, he sent a set home for enjoyment by his simple, but Godly, country mama. He could hardly wait for Christmas break to hear of the many blessings she had received. Upon inquiry as to what Mama thought of those commentaries, she responded, “Well, I guess they are alright, but the Bible sure does shed a lot of light on them.” This is exactly the way commentaries should be treated. They are books of reference to be consulted for color on the subject; or information on the traditions and history of the times. They can help, a little, with ideas for messages or illustrations but they are **NOT** to be consulted **FIRST**,

and they are not to be taken as unquestioned authority; especially when they question or alter the Word of God. Study your text and supporting texts. Think over your material. If possible write your outline and even pencil in your illustrations. Get your head thoroughly full of your message; **THEN** you might want to consult with a commentary.

VARIETIES OF MESSAGES

SERMON TYPES

There are seven basic varieties of sermons. Each one has its pluses and minuses, so these should be carefully considered in your time of preparation. We will study each type of sermon in depth.

1 Personal Testimony

This sermon is almost always in order. This is the simplest form of a sermon and the one chosen to be listed here first mainly because, for a young man, beginning his ministry, of all the different types of sermons, it is the one with which he will be most familiar. A Personal Testimony sermon should move fast over many years and yet not exclude interesting and pertinent material. It may include a brief genealogy if that is applicable. A Personal Testimony sermon should establish the fact that the person ministering was, indeed, a sinner; however, it should neither stress the details of that era nor shine any glory on that sin. That portion of such a sermon should be spoken of as shameful, painful, unproductive, and vain, exactly as the Bible deals with the subject. Another caution would be to take care that you and your life do not outshine the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ. Make your audience remember the God of your salvation rather than the person of your salvation. Also, it should be clear that although the plan of salvation in the New Testament era is the same for all, God gives to all a personal experience, unique in its own self.

A Personal Testimony sermon is a prime opportunity to utilize the simple outline, which runs parallel to the Roman's Road plan of salvation, and therefore it requires but a simple knowledge of the scriptures. This type of sermon was preached only minutes after salvation by the woman at the well in John 4, as well as the blind man in John 9. Yet, it is not at all limited to the novice in the ministry. Paul, the greatest brain and the most educated man in the New Testament, preached this style of message on three separate occasions during his ministry. A Personal Testimony sermon should end in a most victorious, content, happy, and productive present. Any unsaved listener should have an irresistible desire to be saved and any saved listener should easily be able to identify with the basics of your testimony and be urgent to give the Lord all the glory for what He did for both them and you.

2 Topical

A Topical sermon deals with a subject, such as angels, dogs, or the heart. It does not have to be limited to Biblical subjects; it could be television, styles, or current events, as long as these secular subjects can be made to pertain and relate to Bible issues and spiritual thoughts. During preparation, care should be taken not to choose a subject so broad as to fail to be able to expound on it sufficiently within the time frame.

This type of sermon is good because it can be made very interesting and instructive. It can be unprofitable if proper application fails to be made. A Topical sermon is useful if a certain subject begs to be dealt with from the pulpit or in the community. An example might be drawn from Paul's sermon to the Athenians in Acts 17. He dealt with their intellect, their philosophy, their vanity and their idolatry, and yet did not fail to cause all these to pale in the light of the truth of the Word of God and the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3 **Historical**

Drawing spiritual parallels from events in history, both Biblical and secular, can be most profitable. The crossing of the Red Sea, the fall of the wall at Jericho, Joseph's revelation to his brethren, events that occur in the book of Judges, the various kings of Judah or Israel being taken into captivity, and Nehemiah leading Israel back out of captivity-- all these could be preached as this type of sermon. Some choices in secular history might include, the Great Depression, the exodus of the Pilgrims and settlement in the new world, the Great War, D-Day, the liberation of the Philippines from Japan. Extreme caution is called for in this type of message as to not let it become simply a history lesson; profitable application **must** be made to the spiritual side and it must be made as personal as possible.

4 **Biographical**

The resource of Biographical examples, both good and bad, either from the Bible or secular history is endless. It is very easy, with little time spent in thought, to find a **person**, either hated or blessed of the Lord, as the object of study on any subject, doctrine, sin, mistake, benevolence, judgment, failure or success. Everyone loves a good biography, especially if bountiful applications are made and plentiful parallels are drawn. This type of message does require much study and thought, yet it is both instructive and profitable.

God made us individuals and gave us each a unique personality and these can all serve as types and examples. The study of Biblical types is a great wealth. Joseph, Moses, David, and a host of others are all types of Christ in one or many areas of their life and personality. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Absalom are all types of Antichrist or Satan. The student should be aware that all types will break down somewhere along the study because of the fact that all are

unique. Of course, any type of Christ cannot be pursued past their sin or failure, for there was none of these in Christ.

I have several sermons on Joseph from the latter chapters of Genesis which I dearly love to minister. These show that Joseph was sold by his brethren, that he suffered at the hands of heathen, that he was exalted to the second position in the kingdom, that he was used of the Lord to be the salvation of his brethren, that he, in the fullness of times, revealed himself to his brethren with both grace and forgiveness, that he sent them on a mission to proclaim his glory and that his bones were not left in Egypt (Egypt being a type of the world). These are just a very few ideas that could be elaborated on and easily applied for the great benefit of the hearers. Care must be used to be faithful to end the type-preaching by pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ and not the figure of vanity, no matter how great.

Non-biblical figures of history can be used, but many brethren will not be gracious in allowing this. It seems that, in the eyes of some, Biblical figures, regardless of their vanity, somehow stand taller than vain men of non-Biblical status. I have sermons on several figures of recent history. I use General Douglas MacArthur and his brilliant military and diplomatic performance during WWII to show his being a type of Christ in his daring courage, his strategy and finally his total victory. I also have a message using the subject of Jonathan Wainwright, who took over for MacArthur in the Philippine Islands and negotiated the surrender of the U.S. forces there, this being one of the darkest days in U.S. military history. Both of these sermons have been used of the Lord to **minister**.

5 Textual

A Textual message is defined as taking a particular verse in scripture, taking it apart either phrase by phrase or doctrine by doctrine, or even word by word, and ministering accordingly. These messages can make the scripture crystal clear, and maybe even painfully clear. If ministered correctly, they are well remembered and comparatively easy to prepare and present. I remember a message of this category from 37 years ago, on the text of Galatians 2:20. The skilled minister's objective was to have his audience to both fully understand and memorize his text. He was successful. I know and cherish it to this day.

Depending on the choice of text, and considering your opportunity for both study and delivery, you could contain the verse to one message or further dissect it to minister a series of valuable messages. Textual and truthful preaching can be a most piercing experience to the audience, while at the same time, freeing the minister from the responsibility of conviction. The minister may and should always point often to the fact that, "This is what the verse says." or, "Don't blame me, I didn't say this, God did." A Scotch woman said to her minister, "I love to hear you preach. You get so many things out of your text that aren't really there."

Some examples of simple Textual messages would be Romans 12:1, John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Romans 7:18; better yet, find your own. A good minister should be able to preach all day or all week on any of the texts above.

6 Doctrinal

A Doctrinal message is usually given with consideration of circumstances or persons present in the audience. This style of message is best done by a pastor and possibly in a series along with other doctrines. For instance, a pastor may use the Sunday P.M. service to preach Doctrinal messages for several months in order to establish the church and young Christians, and to accomplish unity and give direction (Eph. 4:3-6). The Apostle Paul used this method to preach to young Christians for these purposes and did well with it.

Doctrinal messages are not a good choice for unsaved people. They also must be carefully attended to greatly, to keep them from becoming boring to the audience. Only an experienced minister will take heed to keep doctrinal messages alive and flowing and to be careful to minister to the unsaved that may be present.

Evangelists and guest ministers should generally avoid Doctrinal messages unless the Holy Spirit or the pastor says otherwise.

7 Expository

All the various types of sermons have their place, time, and value, but taking all into mind, Expository ministering ranks the highest in both profitability as well as audience appeal. This is true for several good reasons. Expository preaching teaches Bible. There is a great gulf between preaching what the Bible says and preaching Bible. Many Bible colleges are guilty in this area. Their classes begin with a syllabus of a book of the Bible. The teacher and class work together from that and there is nothing particularly wrong with this, except, like I said, it is a great gulf away from teaching verse-by-verse Bible preaching. In like manner, there are many ministers who preach Bible topics and subjects and doctrines and figures; then there are ministers who minister and preach the BIBLE, verse by verse, to their congregations. Expository messages are verse-by-verse Bible preaching.

By all means, pastors should learn to develop this type of preaching. Expository preaching minimizes the minister's personal philosophy and puts the Bible constantly before the eyes of the audience. Expository preaching will eventually cover every area of doctrine, every sin, every situation of life, every personal relationship problem, while at the same time teaches the dispensational history and biography of the Bible. Expository preaching requires much study in order to keep its value but this is offset by the fact that the minister does not have to spend time looking for a subject or text.

It is often amazing to the minister how often the Lord will use this style to minister to the exact needs of those in attendance on

occasions of the natural evolution of the subsequent text, not to mention the amazement of the audience to the same.

There is only a slight difference between Expository and Textual, the difference being that Expository is generally used in terms of continual or series preaching, whereas Textual may refer to a single opportunity. A pastor is wise to continually use the Expository style for regular services such as Sunday mornings or nights or mid-week services. He may occasionally salt his continual ministering with another style, as the Lord leads. Some pastors use Expository throughout all their services, continually going through the same portion of the Bible for all services. Skillful Expository preaching ministers well for all the above mentioned times.

THE MECHANICS OF THE MESSAGE

prayer

So, after preparing your own heart, considering your audience, selecting your text, idea, and type of sermon, WHERE DO YOU BEGIN? Spend some quality time in prayer and humble yourself before the Monarch and Manager of your ministry. Simply ask Him what message He would be pleased for you to deliver on this occasion. Rely upon the promise, *Jms. 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* Give yourself some time to sincerely listen for an answer. I have NEVER found this to fail when mixed with patience.

RANDOM THOUGHT

Take a blank piece of paper or open a new document on your computer and write down all random thoughts and random texts that come to mind on the subject. Be not alarmed if this occupies 3-4 pages. Just THINK on the subject, read all the texts involved, ask questions of the subject and texts, travel back in time, custom, and tradition to the place or circumstance, and let your mind and heart have a free wheeling tour of all. Do not consider a thought too trivial to jot down. Do not take for granted any matter too obvious to be forgotten. Do not rely upon your memory; write down everything. This is not the time to edit; that will come later. Read over your material several times and write more random notes, thoughts and texts. Read over your texts again. **THINK, THINK, THINK, THINK!** Your mind will never be as clear in front of your audience, as it is in the quiet of your study.

ILLUSTRATIONS

If illustrations are well thought out, and if they apply well with the point, there should be as many as your time will allow. Two and three per point would make a message tasty, like sauces, spices and dressings make a meal absolutely delicious. The more you read and the longer you live, the more illustrations you will have for your ready use. There is no better illustration of anything than a personal experience illustration. If you are at least twenty-five years of age there is hardly any subject you cannot illustrate with something from

your own life, if you give it enough thought. “The weakest among us has a gift, however seemingly trivial, which is peculiar to him, and which worthily used, will be a gift to his race forever.” –Ruskin You have either experienced it yourself, or you know someone who has. It is good exercise to practice illustrating general things that will be used regularly in the future. Practice on Embarrassment, Importance, Confidence; the list of the works of the flesh in Gal. 5. The list of the fruits of the spirit is in the same chapter.

EAT SUFFICIENT HONEY

One wise preacher said, “Self confidence leads to poor preparation and poor preparation leads to poor preaching.” I agree but would quickly add, “No self confidence leads to no preaching.” There is an excellent study in the book of Proverbs on this subject. I will provide you with the verses and you should spend profitable time digging for this treasure. In Pr. 25:27, the Bible likens honey, among other things, to man’s glory and warns us not to eat too much of it. This also warns us against failing to give God the glory. But with further study, you will discover that Pr. 24:13 commands us to eat honey and tells us that it is good for one. So what are we to conclude? Man’s glory is a very dangerous thing to deal with, and only the wise will be successful in this dealing. Certainly, without some confidence in one’s own self there would be no attempt ever to minister. *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil. 4:13)* But there is further help to be found in Pr. 25:16 where it tells us to eat what we need, and no more, lest we become sick, or sickening. I like honey and I like the feeling of confidence in the ministry, but I don’t like to fill a whole cup with honey and suck on it all day long. Neither do I bask in my intellect, education, experience, and skill, to the exclusion of the One who supplied me with all of that. If I did, I would puke!

OUTLINE

As you read your material over and over, some major points will surface and become obvious; these may become your main points. While you study these, the various notes and sub-texts will begin to fall in line under these major points. While organizing these notes, more ideas, texts, illustrations, applications and thoughts will emerge; write them down; this is still not time to edit. Most messages will fall into categories of from 3-5 major points with appropriate sub-points and sub-texts. As you prepare, remembrances of messages you have heard will come to mind, or books you have read, or experiences you have either had or heard about; write them down under the appropriate point or sub-point. By now, the outline should have consumed all of the random notes, thoughts and texts. By now, you are thinking you may have a lifetime of messages available; be not deceived, it is still not time to begin to edit. I had a student in this subject once, who, after finishing his first message, (which had the

capability to consume forty minutes but lasted only twenty) was asked what he learned from his first experience. His reply was, "I learned that two pages of notes do not last as long as you think."

Develop your own way to make your notes speak to you. By this I mean, in order to utilize the proper dynamics you will want to be able to simply glance at your notes and have your mind sufficiently jogged as to the next point, sub-point, illustration and such like.

Some like to highlight in red or yellow the major points. Some will underline important points. Maybe the use of capital letters, or completely blocked-in words would work for you. It doesn't make the least difference to anyone but you, but practice and make sure it works for you. Above all, make sure you can well read your own notes. Nothing is clumsier in the pulpit than a minister struggling to figure out what **he** wrote.

TIME TO EDIT

Thoughts will arise in your heart, such as, "Since all four pages are filled with material my audience cannot live without, and it must have all been given to me by inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, why do I have to edit anything?" It is time to edit. First, consider the length of material you think you have and exercise in your mind giving to the audience that material. Visualize actually preaching this and your audience's response. Some ministers actually practice preaching the message but I do not really suggest this. Erase anything that seems superfluous. Cut to the heart, if necessary, to create what you feel will be easily digestible to your audience. By now, you should be reasonably confident that you are getting a handle on your material.

Read the final outline and THINK. Fill in your illustrations under the proper point or sub-point and begin to form a conclusion. What is it you are hoping to say in all that material? What one thought or point or simple message do you wish to leave your audience with at the finish of your message? What impression will they walk away with? Who has been the main figure pointed to in this message? What do you hope to accomplish when this ministerial opportunity is past?

"Preach not because you have to say something, but because you have something to say." -Richard Whately

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR EXPERIENCE

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is considered to be "The Prince of Preachers." C.H. Spurgeon testified that he learned to preach by doing. Certainly this is true in nearly all areas of life. The familiar adage is that you can read the best book on how to swim, but you won't learn until you jump in the water. This book on **THE MINISTRY** is written for the purpose of helping in all areas of ministry, but there is no substitute for experience. Jump into the

street, the jails, the nursing homes, the teen Bible clubs, the rescue missions, and take EVERY SINGLE opportunity to **MINISTER**.

AFRAID?

I wrote a book several years ago entitled, "I AM NOT ASHAMED." There is an entire chapter written on the subject of a minister dealing with fear. Read it if you have access to it, but allow me to boil that chapter down to fit the remainder of this paragraph. Fear of anything but God is a sin. Prayerfully consider this along with the next two verses. *1John 1: 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

1Co 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

ALLITERATION

This is a fancy word to describe a technique in sermon preparation. It is defined as the use of the same beginning letter employed for all of the major points, and can include even the sub-points. This technique should be engaged in with advanced preparation skills. The chapter headings and some sub-headings of this book will serve as example. There is beauty in this and some value. Alliteration dresses up a sermon. Think of alliteration as being the top hat, bowtie, gloves and spats on an ordinary work clothes sermon. Alliteration is certainly not vital to the effect of the message, but it can serve well in making it easy for the hearer to remember. It can also serve a good portion of pride to the minister if he does not guard himself. I use alliteration when it comes with ease and sometimes naturally, but if I have to spend more time on making the message alliterated, instead of practical, I drop it. A good thesaurus is all one needs to put this technique to work, but the choice of obscure words for the purpose solely of accomplishing alliteration is not to be preferred over practicality.

DELIVERY AND DYNAMICS

All the preparation is in vain if the delivery fails. There is a certain "dramatic quality" that must accompany the delivery if it is to penetrate the video facade that this present generation is fixed to. Yes, I believe the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are well able to affect the heart with the finest ministering; however, they are successfully kept from their purpose as long as the distractions of this present evil world maintain their wall of protection around the heart. Jesus said, "*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*" (Mt. 11:15) This implies there were those present who did not have "*ears to hear.*" Certainly, they had the outer appendage on the side of their head. Surely, their ears could enjoy the song of birds. But, when it came to hearing the message of God relative to their times, for some reason they could not hear. I am not supposing that we could be better ministers than the Lord Jesus Christ, but if it is possible to break down that wicked wall which keeps their hearts from responding to

the wondrous message of the grace of God, then we should make every attempt.

This dramatic or dynamic affect necessitates a getting out of your self. This is more difficult for some than for others. This does not mean that you are to be a hypocrite; by all means, be real, but at least you can be real and at the same time increase your animation. It is a well-known fact that there were past generations that had an audio mentality and could maintain attention simply by listening to words being spoken. Many “great” ministers of the past simply read their entire sermons, and some had amazingly great affect upon the audience. Don’t try this; you will, nearly without a doubt, fall flat on your face. We do not live in an audio generation, but rather a super video one. Some in your audience watched the universe explode and saw a super airliner fly through a tornado with all the special affects last week, and you think you are going to keep them alive with your sullen personality? You will need all the help you can get!

APPEARANCE...A GOOD MORALE BUILDER

Neatness counts. First impressions last a long time and are nearly impossible to erase. Take a hot shower, shave, and put on the best clothes that you own. Get a haircut, smile, but be yourself; God desires to use YOU, not your favorite preacher. Not only will your appearance affect your audience, it will affect you. It will give you some of that *sufficient honey* mentioned a couple pages ago. In reading very many war and military books, one of the things that stood out to me was the value of a shower, shave, and clean clothes to boost morale in weary soldiers. If it has this much importance on dirty soldiers in combat, what would it do for a preacher of the gospel?

Contrary to what you may think, your neat and best appearance will not attract attention to yourself. It will simply be what is expected by the audience, sort of like a pure white shirt with one tiny spot of ink. The white shirt is not the attraction but rather the distortion. Any failure on your part to present your best in appearance will distract from your purpose and will be long remembered.

VOICE

Isaiah 58: 1 ¶ Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

Your voice should command the attention of the audience without “yelling.” This may take some practice. Before amplification, actors on a stage in a great hall had to speak so they could be heard in the back of the balcony. Sometimes they had to say tender things, i.e., “I love you”, yet they must had to be heard clearly. The affective minister must practice to develop a voice as described in the verse above, “*like a trumpet.*” A trumpet, though it be played tenderly, will succeed in penetrating through all distraction and arresting the attention of those within range.

Getting and keeping control of your audience is a worthy goal. You may get it by simply yelling, but if you gain it this way you will soon lose it. I have heard soft-spoken preachers who wrapped me in their control, and I have been in the presence of people that, as they opened their mouths, I was ready to fall asleep. Controlling your audience by voice has something to do with personality, something to do with the content of the message, and something to do with sincerity of heart; but something can be developed with practice. Of course, hacking, whining and monotone are all no-nos. You can practice speaking clearly by preaching on the street. If you exaggerate your consonants, it helps a great deal in your clarity. This can be overdone, but nearly all people are slack on pronouncing the consonants.

Bad habits are hard to break, so start right. Preaching partial phrases and dropping your voice as you finish a sentence is a very bad habit. Avoid speaking with your back to the audience if possible. If you are moving back to the pulpit after preaching close to the audience, time it so that this is during a valuable silent period and move quickly.

Unless other mediums of communication are used, such as drawing, or marker board, your voice is your only instrument with which to minister. Various volumes, inflections, and dynamics should be used. Your voice should have the quality of solemnity, as well as light-heartedness. A natural chuckle is a plus. Silence is a very valuable tool, but it takes genuine skill to use it properly. Practice with your voice, and slowly build a point with your audience; hold it for a time, and then drive home the point. Listening to you yourself only on an audio recording is profitable. Critique yourself sharply.

EYE CONTACT **VITALLY IMPORTANT**

Mt 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of maintaining eye contact with your audience. If the light of the body is the eye, then, generally speaking, when you don't have their eyes, the lights are off. There may be many exceptions to this rule; there will be those who will compliment you by taking notes, and there will be many distractions where the attention may survive, but this rule would be good for you to file in your memory. The other side of that is that if your eyes are buried in your notes, or scrutinizing the fly on the ceiling, then your light is off. Don't fall in the habit of preaching to one side of your audience to the neglect of others. Your eyes should meet each hearer many times.

Don't be dismayed if, when you glance at the clock, your hearers glance at their watches; you have lost them. Light attracts all eyes and when there is no light, the eyes naturally close and the body naturally begins to shut down.

Movement also attracts the eye. Very few ministers have ever been able to hold the ears, much less the hearts, of their hearers while they were speaking in a monotone and remaining stationary. This can be overdone also, and there is a danger of turning the pulpit into a theater, but far more ministers err on the side of lack of movement than those who overdo this tool. When you preach on, “*Jesus stooped down*”, you stoop down; your arms are outstretched when the cross is preached; when Joab throws the darts into Absalom, your audience is watching your drama of that, and they will never forget it. When you are making a loud point your arms are big, and outstretched, or your fist is tight, strong and demanding, and your audience is sitting all the way back in their chairs with heads back. When you are imploring, or tender, or contrite, or comforting, your voice is low, you are leaning far over the pulpit, or you are close to your audience with arms stretched out and your hands inviting communion of thought and heart.

HUMOR ?

Humor is a delicate instrument for a minister. There is very little example of it in the Bible. There have been more sober generations when humor was only in place in the tavern, and certainly had no place in the pulpit. It might speak ill of our generation to note that the most humorous evangelists are often among the most popular. I think the word “sparingly” is in order when you combine humor and the ministry. Humor may serve well in cutting the ice with an unfamiliar congregation, but this too can fly back in your face. Remember, first impressions last a long time. Humor is best served when it comes naturally, rather than simply the telling of a joke. When genuine humor is involved in an illustration, the good minister will use it for all of its value. It is not a compliment for your audience to busy themselves with writing down your jokes.

TIMING IS IMPORTANT

If you want to preach and have people come back to be ministered to again, you should either be brief or **very good**. Be not deceived, you are probably not **that good**. It is better to leave them wanting more. If you are given a time limit, **KEEP IT!**

YOU ARE THE LEADER

Think of your relationship with the audience as you being the leader and them being the followers. This should be of utmost importance both in your preparations, as well as your delivery. If you are interested, they are too; if you are moved by the message, you can expect that they will show movement also; if you are excited, look for them to be excited; if you are bored, restless to go home, or distracted, they will follow you. They have come in hope of finding some help and leadership in their spiritual lives; **PROVIDE IT FOR THEM**. You should treat your audience with great respect; they are an all-

volunteer audience. If you don't supply their need, they will get nothing from the time and effort they have spent.

Never make your audience feel uneasy, but if the Holy Spirit does this; fine. Never embarrass your audience or make them ashamed because of your harangue. Never ask your audience questions of which they are not absolutely certain what the answer is. I have heard preachers do this, and as I sat in the audience, having as much experience in the ministry as the preacher, I could not feel confident as to what he was expecting. He was demanding that a verbal answer come from his audience and they were uncomfortable in not knowing what he wanted them to say. This is a major no-no. If your audience is restless, get finished. If they are attentive, drive hard.

Your message should be well seasoned with Bible references. Some of these you may quote, some you may refer only to the reference and still others you will feel significant enough to have your audience turn to them and read them. When you quote a verse, do it in such a manner that makes it stand out from your flow of preaching. Quote it deliberately; don't just run over top of it. When you mention a reference, make it clear, and give them a moment's pause to mentally acknowledge it. If you have them turn to a reference that you want them to read, tell them or ask them to turn to the book of _____, chapter ____, but do not give them the verse. In this manner you maintain control, and keep them functioning as a unit. They will enjoy this unity. Give them time to turn, listen to the most wonderful sound of Bible pages rustling in an auditorium, and when all are in one accord in one place, then repeat the book, chapter, and then give the verse. Make sure you are there ahead of them so that you can lead them in the reading.

Learn to be tolerant of children in your audience. Almost anytime is a long time to sit, especially when you have no idea what is going on. They are not the least bit interested, and often the parents are no help.

INVITATION AND ALTAR CALLS

If your ministering has been pleasing in the sight of God, then you can expect some fruit for your labor. Sometimes God allows you to enjoy the vision of this fruit and other times He wants you to trust him to keep in reserve until you see it at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If you are a visiting preacher in another man's church it is always wise to turn the invitation over to the pastor. He knows his people, their conditions, what they need and how to respond to them.

If he wants you to handle the invitation, make it crystal clear what you are asking your audience to do. Confusion at this vital point is fatal. Don't help or hinder the Holy Spirit; just get out of the way and let Him do his work; you just act as an usher or attendant to Him. Be sensitive to His work--neither cut it short, nor extend it unnecessarily.

If it falls to you to choose the counselors, be selective of those who can do effective heart surgery with their sword.

It has been argued that there is no precedent for an invitation, as we know it, in the Bible. This is a silly argument. If you read many passages closely enough, you can find the equivalent. The latter verses of Acts 7 certainly are inviting, the hearers just chose not to respond with repentance. Philip paved the way for the Ethiopian eunuch and he responded righteously. Paul extended an open hand to the Athenians in Acts 17, and had three distinct responses. According to this, I have preached to Athenians many times.

CHAPTER EIGHT THE MOODS OF THE MINISTRY

TIMES TO CHERISH...TIMES TO HIDE

2 Ti. 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Jeremiah lamented at the ill response of the people he was given to minister to. He longed for a place in the wilderness where he could leave the people and go where there were no people and just lodge there. There will be times right in the middle of a message that you will come to a full appreciation of Jeremiah's despair (Jer. 9:2). Jeremiah became so discouraged that he really did quit (Jer. 20) but only for a brief moment. These times will come in your ministry; try to do better than Jeremiah and never quit.

Yet again, there were exuberant ministerial moments during the ministry of Moses (Ex. 35-36), Ezra (Ez. 3), Nehemiah (Neh. 12), Solomon (1Kng. 8), Josiah (2Kng. 23), Peter (Acts4), and Paul (1Th. 1). So also, you will experience a bit of heaven come down to earth. You won't want these moments to end, and when they do, you will cherish them for life. When you have your audience in the palm of your hand, so to speak, make the most of it. Drive your point home and enjoy the heart to heart ministry. When times are cold and lonely in the pulpit, move on quickly and pray for change. The Jeremiah times seem to make the sweet times sweeter.

THE MOTIVATIONS OF THE MINISTRY THE PLEASURES OF THE MINISTRY

*Ps 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are **pleasures** for evermore.*

"Those must preach willingly who would be accepted of God in this duty. They must make their business a **pleasure**, and not esteem it a drudgery." M. Henry

As a young Christian, because of circumstances of life, I would not afford myself the **pleasures** of the ministry. In fact, much of the ministry, in my view, stood as a mighty, fearful, and awesome citadel upon an unassailable mount. It was something to be admired, but too nearly royal to even dream of attaining. The sheer cliffs of fear caused me to both shiver at the prospect of attempt, and worship those who had gained the victory. The high walls of my own, seemingly unchangeable, circumstances of life kept me as a prisoner, on the outside. The dreadful towers of my inability, education, and questionable talent turned me pale. Frustration struggled against covetousness, (1 Cor. 12:31) for, for all the impossibilities involved, I wanted that prize (1 Tim. 3:1).

To me, the ministry has always been a **pleasure**, even though, because of the ministry, there have come many painful difficulties and problems. I cannot imagine life affording nearly the pleasure and

satisfaction in any other avenue of occupation, as it does in the ministry.

I have been successful through the years, in finding little **pleasures** within the ministry, which sustain me. These I consider to be very personal; that is, they probably will not do for anyone else what they have done for me. I will gladly tell here some of these **pleasures**, and anyone is free to incorporate them into their own ministries, but the better would be for each minister to find their own personal **pleasures** in the ministry, and not to fear the mocking of critics. Scoff as some will, these simple **pleasures** have served me well and I feel certain they have played an important roll in averting the “drudgery”, and possibly even the curtailing of my ministry.

I have learned to enjoy the warmth of confrontation. The challenge of knowing you are on the side of victory, while yet thick in the battle is a **pleasure** to me. To look square in the eyes of a mocker, an opposer of that which is good, one that, with his contradiction crucified our Lord Jesus Christ, and would now crucify you, and be able to smile at him, to wish he would defect to the side of righteousness, yet to be determined still, if they refuse, is a **pleasure**. This simple **pleasure** satisfies the rebellion of my natural man that is still with me, in that it is a redirection of that rebellion which naturally would be away from the Lord. This natural rebellion is redirected into the very path of righteousness and victory. If you judge this **pleasure** foolishness, then my foolish **pleasure** shall continue to serve me well as it did many a heroic martyr.

Admittedly, this confrontation once towered before me as an overwhelming peak looking down in disdain upon my fear. But, once this shadow of a peak was crested, the gentle slopes of triumph became a **pleasure** indeed.

Even the confrontations within the brethren are a **pleasure** to me. I do not stir conflict, nor cause strife among the brethren; yea, I do not have to; it comes with the job. The variances of issue concerning the preservation of God’s Word, engagement in publick ministry, indebtedness, and living by faith, keep me comfortably warm within the fellowship of the brethren. This is my **pleasure**; you must find your own.

Somewhere along the ministerial road, I was introduced to a simple little gospel tract that, when folded appeared to be a folded \$20 bill. This caught my fancy, and after some improvement to the message of the tract, I claimed it for my **pleasure**. The Lord said that His Word would not return void, (Isa. 55:11) and so by faith I cast this bread upon many waters. The very design of this subtle method of evangelism necessitates that it be distributed by stealth and thereby without measurable fruit in this lifetime. This ministry has served as a great **pleasure** for many years, and, by faith, I believe I shall see the return in eternity. I now live under a European economy so I now enjoy the **pleasure** of a similar Euro tract.

The simple **pleasure** of the peace that comes with having done what is right, even amidst the complications of disagreements and misunderstandings, serves to sustain. I once read a battle account of soldiers facing imminent, mortal danger. The captain was in hopes that the soldiers would be motivated to charge on their own moral energy. The sergeant told the captain that those men would not perform such a charge unless commanded. This does not have to be true in spiritual warfare. We have a captain who has indeed commanded us, but we can be animated by many **pleasures** of His service e.g., the **pleasure** of His company, personal sacrifice, and wise leadership (1 Sam. 22:1-2), the **pleasure** of assured victory (1 Cor. 15:57), and the **pleasure** of a sure reward for our **pleasurable** service (2 Tim. 4:8). I serve Him not simply because I am commanded to, but because it is a **pleasure**.

The bummers of the ministry

*Jer. 43: 1-4 And it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to them, even all these words, Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, **Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt** to sojourn there: But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon. So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and **all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah.***

To be sure, the service of the Lord has its “K.P.” assignments, its burial details, its unbearable drill instructors, its barely endurable fatigue, its near impossible weight of duty, its monotony of routine, its frustrations of unfinished battles, its failures during inspections, its mistakes in parade, its disappointments of rival promotions, and its disheartening at unappreciated success. To be sure, any secular occupation contains as much. But I agree with the Psalmist, Ps 84:10 *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

CHAPTER NINE

THE MOVEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY

Num. 33:9-13 And they removed from Marah, and came unto Elim: and in Elim were twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they pitched there. And they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red sea. And they removed from the Red sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin. And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in Dophkah. And they departed from Dophkah, and encamped in Alush.

The world accepts as perfectly normal the sudden, expensive, inconvenient, and sometimes seemingly unnecessary movements in military life. The military can uproot whole families, or even separate families, move all their household goods and vehicles and relocate them on the other side of the world into facilities sometimes less accommodating than they enjoyed before, and within a short period move them again, or ship them back to the original location, and it is “normal military life.” Others remain faithful at their post in Washington, DC or Fort Benning, GA. for thirty years. Why then, should we balk at the all-wise movements directed by the Monarch of the ministry?

I have served as a Sunday School teacher, Assistant Pastor, Evangelist, Pastor, Sunday School teacher, (again) Pastor, (again) Missionary, Evangelist (again), Pastor, (again) Evangelist, (again) Missionary, (again) and Assistant Pastor, and SS teacher (again). So, what does that mean; that I am flighty, that I can't hold a job, and that my manager is not competent? No, it means that the Monarch of the ministry has used me and counted me worthy and pliable enough to be used in many different ministries and in many areas of His globe.

If a man will relocate and disrupt his family for a job or promotion, for the military, or in pursuit of a high humanitarian or ecological goal in the Peace Corp. or Green Peace, then why not does he not display a willingness to follow the changing scene of needs of the ministry?

Philip was conducting a very successful revival in Samaria, when the Lord moved him to the desert to witness to an Ethiopian. When he obeyed and finished that task, he was suddenly sent forward to another ministry. That “strange” management of Philip's ministry resulted in a whole nation turning to the ways of the Lord and remaining so for nearly two millenniums. Let Him direct your steps.

The Lord looked for a man to make up the hedge in Tallahassee, Fl. in the late 70's in His war against the uprising of the Sodomites. I was honored to command that effort. He wanted a voice to prove and promote His chosen method of world-wide evangelism (found in Acts 20:20) among churches and Bible colleges in the whole of the USA. I said, “Here am I Lord send me.” The Lord transferred me from that

“successful” ministry and placed me into the heart of a foreign nation that had been spiritually raped by Calvinism, to offer proper evangelism and correct doctrinal teaching, maybe for the last time, and my witness was rejected. He then moved my household back to the “successful” ministry mentioned before and blessed it more abundantly. My papers then stated that my family and I were to be reassigned overseas, once again, to help bring His message of salvation by grace to a nation which had been racked by Communism and many generations of oppression by the Orthodox church.

Other faithful ministers accept an assignment to a small local church or a difficult mission field and remain there till they go home to Heaven.

“It is high time that the ideal of success should be replaced by the ideal of service.” –Einstein

“When a man turns to God desiring to serve Him, God directs his attention to the world and its need.” –Brunner

Service is the rent we pay for the space we occupy.

ANYBODY CAN GO UP; CAN YOU GO DOWN?

The world says, “Go up, up, up”, “Get all you can and keep all you get.” The world looks narrowly upon anyone who makes a sacrifice or goes “backward” in his career. If you are a servant, what difference should rank, place of assignment, or job description make to you; unless you want to be “chief servant”. Isn’t this what James and John requested of Jesus?

At the beginning of WWII, Dwight Eisenhower had been in the army 29 years. He had been a leader in academics in the army’s finest schools. He had served with the praise and honor of all of his superiors. He was thought by his peers to be one of the smartest men in the army. He did not own an automobile, because he could not afford one on the salary of a major. Six years later in 1945 he was a five star general. What does this teach us? In the great service of our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, we should be at least as loyal and faithful as a servant in the army of the world. And one more thing this teaches us. Rank comes rapidly in combat duty. If you are looking for rank, ask to be assigned to combat duty; no good soldier wants just a desk job.

We are all victimized by the natural mindset to go forward and upward ONLY! But this is not always what the Lord directs in the ministry. Sometimes the Lord directs that a man stay in the office of pastor for a long period while the church enjoy phenomenal growth. There is nothing necessarily wrong with this and the world quickly gives a thumbs-up to this. But, what if a man in that situation is directed by the Lord to leave that “success” and start a rescue mission

to the drunk Indians in Gallup, N.M.? Is this too much for the Lord to ask in these Laodicean times? The movements of the ministry may call for this kind of abandon from the servant of the Lord. In the whole consideration of “the ministry” it is very healthy to check your own heart on this speculative scenario.

At the end of Paul’s life, having been the most “successful” N.T. missionaries, he said, while preaching Christ to King Agrippa, governor Festus, and company, “*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)*” The attitude of Paul was that he was to minister to the small as well as the great. He did not hold that he deserved ONLY to go onward and upward leaving behind the small insignificant tasks of the ministry to those less prominent.

FRUIT OR NO FRUIT; THAT IS THE QUESTION

Eze. 2:5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

There is a dangerous **attitude** that has been taught, and has been largely received by this present generation; namely, that a faithful witness and servant **will produce visible and tangible fruit**. To explain this further, this **attitude** follows along the lines of the “Positive Thinking” craze of our times where if only you adopt this **attitude** and allow it to direct your actions, your tangible fruit **WILL** appear. This is perilously close to the charismatic **attitude** of “Name it and claim it.” This **attitude** encourages its followers to measure their “success” using the same measuring rod as the world does and genders both competition and frustration when one person, possibly due to their more aggressive and ostentatious personality, obtains more fruit than his less talented colleague. None of this is of the Lord. It has been illustrated several times in the paragraphs above that this **attitude** is not the way the Lord manages the ministry of the faithful.

A good method by which to examine yourself is simply to search your own heart and judge what your **attitude** would be if the Lord gave you a ministry that, due to circumstances, economics, religious deception, dispensation, politics, or other, had little or no prospect of producing fruit during the administration of your ministry. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Nahum, and others are famous for their faithfulness under such state of affairs.

DANGEROUS DIRECTION

Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, **Take heed to the ministry** which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

This verse puts great importance upon the watchful care of our attitudes toward our ministry. The ministry will be more than adequately maintained by the Lord; however, through our lackadaisical attitude, or slothful watch-care, or the neglect of our

manner, or through the sliding of our attitude toward the worldly ways, our ministry is always subject to decline toward apostasy.

No ministry is exempt from this. You can, through careful maintenance, delay this process. You can, so to speak, ward off the wolves, but it must be a constant maintenance; never neglected, slacked or forgotten. The following very aptly warns every ministry of the de-evolution constantly tugging at it towards this process of decline.

A MAN God has chosen to begin every ministry with a man. He could have written his message with a daily arrangement of clouds, or a nightly use of stars. He could have stationed angels in strategic locations with magnificent forms and voices that would have astounded earth's population to fearful belief; but He chose to use a man. Think of any ministry and trace it to its origin and you will find a man. In this pioneer stage, the ministry reflects the man and the man, the ministry. This is a healthy, Biblically secure stage and the ministry is always blessed in proportion to the faithfulness and truthfulness of the man. Just keep in mind the text above in Col. 4:17.

A MOVEMENT As the man of God gathers around him good fellowlabourers, (Phil. 4:3) as did many good Bible ministers, there forms a movement, which is very good and healthy as long as the man is following the Lord. *1 Cor. 11: 1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.* I have been privileged to be part of some great passionate movements that followed after the God-blessed ministry of a good man of God. In fact, it is difficult for a young Christian to sustain a momentum in the ministry simply from his own energy and without the fellowship and encouragement of his fellowlabourers found within a passionate movement. At this stage you are still on solid Biblical ground.

A MACHINE When, in any ministry, the maintenance begins to slack of spiritual affection, direction, protection, and provision, the spiritual senses of this aging ministry have become dull. As in the Laodicean church they left their first love, their eyes needed medication in order they might continue to see both their own miserable condition and look again toward the Manager of their ministry. Their ears had dulled so they could not hear the Spirit of the Lord. Their dependence upon their own provision, and the love of their own "riches" cause them to be ignorant of the fact that they are spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

How could such a godly movement so quickly degenerate into such an ungodly machine? And how could this happen without the man and his fellowlabourers taking notice? This is a very subtle process; so subtle as to deceive all except the most meticulous maintainers. The movement gains success, the fellowlabourers gain recognition, the

movement wins prestige, success attracts attention, the attention of success sparks contributions, the contributions demand more and immediate success, this success breeds arrogance, this arrogance dulls the spiritual senses, and so there follows a slack in the dependency upon the Manager of the ministry. In short, this ministry no longer needs the Manager; they have become self-sufficient, thus, a **machine**.

A MONUMENT This ministry, which began with a good, godly man, has long since left the dependence upon its rightful Manager and has become such a success that it needs bigger barns where to bestow its many fruits. This monster sentimentally looks back upon its origin, but not far enough to see its Manager, just far enough to see its man. It may beneficially affect this super-efficient functioning machine to occasionally mention the true Manager, but it is quite acceptable to simply praise its man. This ministry, at this stage of apostasy, leaves the worship of the Manager and begins to bestow honor upon the man that the Manager originally used. If the man is alive at this point he has either willingly followed this apostasy and now enjoys the worship of his own ministry, or is helpless to affect any change, the management having long since passed into the hands of the varied machinists.

MATERIALISM To complete the cycle, this once God originated, God managed, God blessed, God provisioned, God accountable ministry turns back into just another business of the **world**. The Manager, the man, and the movement have long since been forgotten or erased, due to embarrassment. The ministry can now be completely freed of its spiritual origin and begin enter into competition on the stock markets of the **WORLD**.

*Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, **Take heed to the ministry** which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*

CHAPTER TEN

THE MONEY OF THE MINISTRY

Pr 3:5,6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

There is a caste system within today's ministry; we like to divide the workers of the Lord into those who are "full time" ministers, and those who "work." This is unfair on both accounts, for it implies that the full-timers don't work and those who work are not in the ministry full time. Neither should be true. Anyone who embraces the ministry should accept only a full time position in that they are faithful, ready, and instant in their service to our great King. Full time ministers should be honorable because of their indefatigable labor. Unfortunately, these labels exist and will continue beyond my harangue. Paul may have inadvertently started this by his argument against the critical Corinthians. *1Co 9:6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?*

We understand that there are positions in the ministry which either will not allow secular employment, (i.e., foreign missionary who is not allowed to earn income) or demand that the minister give himself entirely to the task of that ministry. We also understand that there can be times in the ministry when, like Paul, the Lord may direct that certain needs be provided through the secular employment of the minister. All that taken into consideration, I will write, somewhat idealistically, concerning what I believe should be the approach of the minister toward the supply of his material needs.

I have heard it argued-by good men-that the Lord needs Christian lawyers, plumbers, garbage collectors, secretaries, public school teachers, doctors, nurses, construction workers, and business men and women, because someone has to *stay by the stuff* in order that the bills might be paid and missionaries trained and sent out, and supported; they should just be Christians on their job. On the surface this sounds just as logical as "God is love." But let's analyze this argument.

The Lord supplied every need of more than two and a half million of His children for forty years in a hot, dusty, barren desert. He did not direct that some go into surrounding nations and find employment and send supply back to their brethren who were serving the Lord in the desert. Ridiculous parallel you say? What of the story of bringing the children of Israel out of captivity under direction of Ezra? They had to cross dangerous lands, and sustain themselves while on the journey and yet Ezra said he was ashamed to require protection from the king. Nehemiah was happy to announce that he did not require anything of the king. The Lord commanded the birds to bring Elijah meat, and He kept the barrel of meal sufficient for the widow, He fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, he caused the 153 fish to jump into Peter's net, and the fish to pick up the penny from

the sea floor and deliver it to Peter. **I don't think the Lord NEEDS Christians to work in secular employment so that He, as Manager, can continue to manage our ministries.**

SO, IS IT WRONG FOR A CHRISTIAN TO WORK IN THE WORLD?

I approach this with the same attitude as I would when a Christian asks, "What's **wrong** with _____ or anything?" My response to this has always been, "Why not ask, 'What's right with it?' and if there cannot be found much right with it, then it is not worth defending."

I confess that I cannot prove, from the Bible that every Christian should be given to full time ministry to the exclusion of secular work. I am willing to concede that there are situations where working in the world will afford more opportunities for witnesses than does full time ministry many times. However, getting Christians to be faithful witnesses while engaged in secular work is not the bigger problem. Rather, getting Christians to trust God completely and step out by faith and develop a heart to give their lives, families, talents, monies, and all else completely to the service of the Saviour is the bigger problem. Thank God for every faithful witness on the job, but would the Lord prefer them to have given themselves completely to Him? I think so. I do know that the early Christians early in Acts were more zealous than they were covetous and as a result they came a lot closer to fulfilling the great commission than our generation seems to be doing. I cannot argue whether the Thessalonians all quit their jobs to serve the Lord but they sure did give themselves entirely and were thereby commended by Paul in the first chapter. This may be a matter of personal heart searching but I will at least offer the warning that you do the searching from the platform of willingness to give yourself completely to the service of the Lord **FIRST**, examining carefully your heart against the current craze of partial service or incomplete devotion. Then, if the Lord overrules and directs you into work in the kingdom of this world, at least you made Him the offer first. I don't see how one could lose with this attitude.

CAN YOU MAINTAIN YOUR SAVOUR?

Mt 5:13 ¶ Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Like many other verses, usually only the first phrase of this verse is quoted, with little teaching or understanding on the last part. The savour of the salt is that quality which distinguishes it from sand or any other mineral. Because of the savour, salt can accomplish things that are peculiar and unique. Salt gives flavor, heals, and preserves, along with a multitude of other needful services of man. Without the savour, the salt has no peculiar quality and men place no value to it.

If the Christian must work in the kingdom of this world, then he should exude his savour so that he may be as unique and peculiar as possible, whereby he can be of value, both to the Lord and to his fellow man. If the job in the kingdom of this world will not afford him this opportunity or makes it overwhelmingly prohibitive for that Christian to exude his savour, then that Christian is worthless in that position. And if that Christian continues in that position under those conditions, he is demonstrating that he is not putting the Lord and the ministry first in his life, and he will completely lose his savour in all areas of life.

*Mt.6:33 But seek ye **first** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* If this verse is valid, then why would any servant of the Lord **first** choose to work in the kingdom of this world rather than serve the Lord and trust Him for *these things*. If a servant of the Lord **must** work in the kingdom of this world, it should be quite temporary, under the conditions mentioned above, and with the earnest desire to, as soon as possible, be back in the service of the kingdom of God.

Satan, as the god of this world, will hire anybody who will give himself in labor for the kingdom of this world. If the savour of salt must be endured, he will do all in his power to limit and suppress its application. Satan, as god of the kingdoms of this world, usually uses his lower agents to sign up his employees. The applicant usually, thank God, has no direct contact with the big boss. Regardless of the money, authority, influence, fringe benefits, retirement program etc., all Satan's employees work for minimum wage and there is not much that survives the term of employment. There is no reward in heaven for 40 years of faithful service with the railroad and you cannot take the gold watch to heaven.

The Lord will employ all that come to Him through Jesus Christ. He meets with them personally, supplies all their tools, promises more fringe benefits than the employee can ever use in a lifetime, gives him a retirement program and retirement home which defies words, is willing to meet with him constantly and answer all questions, solve all problems, even lend a personal hand in the accomplishment of the task, meets every need asked for, rewards doubly for faithful work; that is, He gives fruit both now, and also compounds it upon retirement, he gives you contentment in your workplace and conditions, the finest fellow employees you could hope for, and He adds satisfaction of heart and mind for the work done along with peace that passeth all understanding. HE IS NOW HIRING.

*1 Co 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; **be not ye the servants of men.***

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

Someone asked J. Paul Getty (one of the world's richest men), "How much money would it take to satisfy you?" His simple reply was, "Just a little bit more."

Compare this with the Apostle Paul. Matthew Henry comments here. "What can a man desire more than enough? I do not desire a gift for the gift's sake, for *I have all, and abound.*" They sent him a small token, and he desired no more; he was not solicitous for a present superfluity, or a future supply: *I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent by you.* Note; "A good man will soon have enough of this world, not only of living in it, but of receiving from it. A covetous worldling, if he has ever so much, would still have more; but a heavenly Christian, though he has little, has enough."

WHICH COMES FIRST; THE SALARY OR THE MINISTRY?

I found myself in a circumstance in the Philippines wilderness one time where I had to bathe in a river. I had the Asian style flip-flops on my feet, and as I walked to the river the mud was like thick glue. The more I walked, the thicker it accumulated on the bottom of my feet and flip-flops. At the same time it was as slick as wet ice and I used extreme caution lest I fall and be lost completely.

Dealing with money in the ministry is much the same. It is a necessity that should be avoided if possible. It requires delicate skill to maneuver and will quickly accumulate, so as to make it increasingly difficult to maneuver, as well as treacherous. One slip, and you will need much time in the river to rid yourself of the stain.

There is a hairline's difference between a hireling and a faithful minister. That difference can be settled in the heart of the minister but must be a conscience choice and must be constantly maintained. What happens if the money is not provided; does it affect the ministry? What happens if, in the course of a faithful ministry, the money would be in jeopardy? What happens when the money comes first, along with "sincere and loving" advice? What happens when more money is offered; does this take the management of the ministry? What happens when money is abundantly available to the ministry; does this circumvent the advice of the Manager of the ministry? What happens when the ministry could be much more "successful" if more money was given; would this affect the source and method of proper supply? What happens if the ministry begins to approach the apostasy stage of "Machine?"

Paul covered this subject well in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, but there are delicate problems associated with dependence upon the ministry for your sustenance. There are faults on the side of both the giver as well as the receiver. For instance, does the minister truly have the liberty to administer correction, reproof, or church discipline when those who hold his salary's purse strings are sitting before him?

Does the missionary have freedom to make crucial financial decisions on the distant foreign field or is he bound to consult with his supporters? We could conduct this inquiry in reverse just as affectively. Money in the ministry is a most delicate matter.

Financial independence is a definite plus in the ministry but is not without its own problems. Paul handled all of this very wisely. Consider the Henry commentary once more. “He asserts his liberty ([1Cor. 9:19](#)): *Though I be free from all men.* He was freeborn, a citizen of Rome. He was in bondage to none, nor dependent upon any for his subsistence; *yet he made himself a servant to all, that he might gain the more.* He behaved as a servant; he laboured for their good as a servant; he was careful to please, as a servant to his master; he acted in many cases as if he had no privileges; and this that he might gain the more, or make the more converts to Christianity. He made himself a servant, that they might be made free.”

DEBT: THE MINISTRY KILLER

*Pr 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the **borrower** is **servant** to the lender.*

Nothing hamstrings a ministry like debt. When a man or church puts himself or themselves in debt, their first obligation is to the lender. He or they have short-circuited their supply line from the Lord. They have caused static on the communications line from Heaven to their heart. He or the church has discarded the economy of the Manager of the ministry and adopted a seducing and faulty substitute. The church or man has wrested the economic management of the ministry from an efficient system of solvency, which cost them nothing and hired it out into the control of a usurer. *Ps. 119:8,9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes. Jer. 17:5 ¶ Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE MARKS OF THE MINISTRY

Acts 20:22-24 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 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.

It is no new thing for faithful ministers to meet with the worst treatment where they might expect the best *Mt 10:24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.* Before our salvation, we were numbered among those who were guilty of maltreating Him, *Isa. 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was*

despised, and we esteemed him not. Is it not reasonable for us to expect as much in our ministry if we follow Him?

The good Lord has so chosen that we serve in the eleventh hour and most of us under conditions of comparative security and ease. How then, are we able to be numbered among those who are counted worthy of suffering the **marks** of the ministry? The Lord answers this concern by defining the term suffering. *2Co 11:20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.* The Lord broadens the definition of “suffering” so that it is not limited to physical persecution, or dire poverty, or mental torture. Surely, according to this definition, a faithful ministry, even in Laodicean times can find an opportunity to suffer for the name of Christ.

It is said of John Wesley that when he received his preacher-boys back from their assigned ministry engagements, he would ask them the question, “Did anyone get saved?” If the answer was “No”, then he would ask them a second, “Did anyone get mad?” If the answer were again, “No”, he would question their calling into the ministry. The gist of this is that when you minister faithfully, at some point one of these two things will happen. If neither ever occurs, you might well examine yourself and your ministry.

When we were zealous for vanity in the kingdom of this world, we did not flinch when suffering came; yea, in some cases we eagerly embraced it, as we looked to the hopeful end and the pleasurable reward awaiting. Many a sailor has gone to the bar looking for the headache and black eye he knows is inevitable (Pro. 23:34,35). Many a sports addict has scoffed his injury that he might enter the fray of vanity. Countless battered wives have administered the makeup to greet their abusers, willing to pay the price of suffering in exchange for a semblance of security and relationship. All this vain suffering is rewarded by yet more vanity (and more suffering), evolving into a vicious cycle ending in death.

Look at the contrast. The **marks** of the ministry are not at all in vain. The **marks** of the ministry are not gone unnoticed. The **marks** of the ministry are not unrewarded. The **marks** of the ministry are not just lonely hopeless pain, but are accompanied by the presence of the Monarch of our ministry. *John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. John 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

If we proudly bore the suffering, which accompanies the vanity of this world, then we should welcome the **marks** of the ministry that yield such great profit. *1Pe 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God*

FOUR DEGREES BELOW ZERO

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B.D.

Th. M.

Th. D.

Ph. D.

A vanity I have suffered for years, and continue to inflict upon myself, is the value that I place upon earned educational degrees. I know within myself that the world sets these standards and awards honor accordingly. I understand that it is all based upon pride and politics, but I still fall victim to this vanity. In my fall as a victim, I bothered to obtain four postgraduate degrees; two of these are doctorates and one of these is secular. I painfully confess here that I was in hopes of gaining an audience for my ministry both to hear and to read what I have to say for the Lord. Even now as I write this, I must suppress the hope that someone will be impressed with my degrees. Well, it seems that every time I bring these achievements to the surface of any discussion, or list them on my books, it turns out flatter than a bottle of Coke opened last month. In retrospect, I feel I might have been a bit ahead in my personal battle with pride if I had simply audited the classes and left the degrees to be just what they are --four degrees below zero.

The world rates those who spend time and minister with Jesus as unlearned and ignorant men (Acts 4:13). Paul had a very high degree of education, (Acts 22:3) and those of Athens still were not impressed. Joseph of Arimathaea was smart enough to be rich, but no doubt he suffered ridicule for his association with Jesus. Jesus himself was charged with not having any letters. Even the scientists who are trust Jesus for their salvation, when they compete in the present day, though they have the equal in intellect and education compared to their secular peers, are thought ignorant because they believe the Word of God. I believe Christians should be among the best-educated

people on planet earth, but you just can't win in this contest of flaunting your degrees for the sake of impressing a lost world to come to Jesus. I thought my degrees would lend me the ear of some worldling, but I was wrong. One of the **marks** of the ministry is to be counted among the ignorant, and there is no discharge in this war (1Cor. 1:23-30).

The one biography I have read of R.A. Torrey, told of a life that sustained a steady progress, both in his personal relationship with the Lord, as well as his ministry. This line of progress was uninterrupted and undisturbed by either trouble or persecution. According to this biographer, Torrey enjoyed a ministry devoid of **marks**. I am not suggesting that Torrey was a compromiser in his life or ministry. I feel certain had it been a complete autobiography, the picture may have been painted with a bit more color.

However, the possibility remains that we may serve in this eleventh hour in a calm ministry, which affords us little legitimate opportunity to "suffer" for Him who certainly suffered for us. Let me help you here. Read the verse, *2 Ti. 1:8 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;* Now, ask yourself the question, "What has my ministry ever cost me?" The verse strongly admonishes us to not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, and with this will naturally come *the **afflictions** of the gospel according to the power of God.* So, if we have been true to our ministry in our unashamed-ness, then what has our ministry for the Lord ever cost us?

The patriarch David, when he needed to make an offering to the Lord, was approached by Araunah. Araunah loved his king and was willing to supply the animal necessary for the offering, along with both the alter and the land under the alter. This would have made things smooth for David. He might have come out of this service for his Lord fairly painlessly and quite handsomely. Who was present to question or object, except the Holy Spirit of God? David stated a most searching admonition. *2 Sa 24:24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: **neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing.** So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.* It may be profitable for us to seek out some combat duty, such as publick ministry, in order that the portrait of our ministry might be viewed in eternity with **marks**. Whatever **marks** we may acquire in our ministry for the Lord, we need to remain faithful and not to allow these **marks** to move us, either from our position with the Lord or our progress in the ministry. *1 Thess.3:3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunt*

CHAPTER TWELVE THE MEMORIALS OF THE MINISTRY

*1Th 2:19 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?*

WORKING WITH HIM

2Cor. 6:1 We then, as workers together with him,...

If Jesus promised a reward for giving a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, (Mt. 10:42) surely the rewards of a lifetime of dedication, sacrifice, faithfulness, consecration, and zeal, all given in the attitude of a lowly servant, cannot be figured in this earth's economy (1Cor. 2:9).

To busy one's life with the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ is the most profitable investment anyone can choose. The Lord will be debtor to no man (Pr. 13:21) and will not allow the court of any man's heart to charge Him with contempt, in regard to the just payment of services rendered (Eph 6:8, Col 3:24).

Reward for service in the ministry is paid with awesome interest. The spiritual economist wonders at both the ability and generosity of the Master, whose pay scale cannot be fathomed by earthly commerce. *Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; **good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over**, shall men give into your bosom...*

The rewards of the ministry come both in this life and in eternity and who knows but that one payment is not but an earnest on the reward in eternity. The same can be said of sin. You are paid in this life, at the judgment, and throughout eternity, so why would not good service be paid with at least this compounded interest?

HAVE IT NOW, HAVE IT LATER

1Cor. 15: 58 ¶ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

The portion of my life that has been given to the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ has been the most satisfying segment. At times it was not the easiest going, and even as I say that, the difficult times serve both as profitable preaching illustrations as well as smiling memories--now that they are in the past.

CONFIDENCE: A PRESENT REWARD

*Heb. 10: 35 Cast not away therefore your **confidence**, which hath great recompence of **reward**.*

The **confidence** I was able to enjoy in life in general, as well as the ministry, served as a great **reward**. I understand why both Jesus and his disciples could speak boldly and live so boldly. Their lives were a constant reward of **confidence** in the Lord and His Truth. We do not

have a hope-so religion, but a know-so **confidence**, or as the Bible states it... *Heb 6:19* “Which **hope** we have as an **anchor** of the soul, both **sure** and **stedfast**;”

SATISFACTION: A PRESENT REWARD

Isa. 58:11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and **satisfy** thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Jer. 31: 14 And I will **sati**ate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be **satisfied** with my goodness, saith the LORD.

The world suffers a dearth of **satisfaction**. The servant of God enjoys an abundance of this present **reward**. **Satisfaction** is not paid in increments, but rather serves as a trust fund; always there and forever accruing interest. **Satisfaction** is never dissatisfied; it is a constant balm for this life. **Satisfaction** cannot be shared, but only admired. **Satisfaction** cannot be measured, for it is always great.

One thing is quite evident at the end of Paul's ministry. When I read 2 Timothy chapter 4, I see **satisfaction** personified.

GLORY, HONOR, AND PEACE: A PRESENT REWARD

Rom. 2:10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good,...

Sufficient honey was mentioned as necessary earlier in this book, and now we see that honey comes as a present **reward** in the form of **glory, honor** and **peace**. Balanced is the servant who can receive these, derive needed nourishment from them, and yet not vomit. Don't be too quick to deposit ALL of these present rewards into the bank of heaven; you may need to make a quick withdrawal for the sake of the ministry; “[E]at so much as is sufficient for thee...” *Pr. 25:16*.

Paul said that to be **received with gladness**, to be **esteemed very highly**, and to be **counted worthy of double honor** are **present rewards** for those faithful workers of the Lord. *Phil. 2:29* **Receive** him therefore in the Lord with all **gladness**; and hold such in reputation: *1Thess. 5:13* And to **esteem them very highly** in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. *1Tim. 5:17* Let the elders that rule well be **counted worthy of double honour**, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

It is of a truth that many faithful servants labor a lifetime without any recognition of this sort; surely they will be last in line (Matt 20:8) to receive the greater reward in heaven.

FRUIT THAT REMAINS: A PRESENT AND FUTURE REWARD

1Th 2:19 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?

There is **present reward** in simply being a part of the saving of a soul from sin (James 5:20, Dan. 12:3). Paul said the brethren at the church of Corinth served as a reward to him (2 Cor. 1:14). At times Paul was frustrated with his efforts at Corinth; nevertheless they were fruits that not only remained, but also took rebuke and correction. What a **present reward!**

Truly, the fruit you can actually point to that has remained, grown, and borne you second generation fruit, is a sure **reward**. Those Timothys who go on and even surpass your own accomplishments in the ministry, can be drawn upon to succor and bolster any ministry (Heb. 13:7).

And these are doubled, in that they show up again in the form of a crown of rejoicing for future reward.

HE HAS GONE ON TO HIS REWARD

Heb. 6: 10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Thank the good Lord our **reward** does not depend upon the memory of man. There are untold numbers of servants of God who have gone unnoticed or been long forgotten for their labors in the ministry. The Lord will **reward** these even more than we can comprehend or remember.

The Lord will **reward** your **suffering** (2 Tim. 2:12), and the Lord will **reward** your **sacrifice** (Heb. 10:34). The Lord will **recompense** for your **consecration** (Heb.11:26), for your **righteousness** (2 Sam. 22:25), for the times you **trusted** him (Ruth 2:12), for all of your **giving** (Luke 6:35), and for all those who **preach** the gospel (1Cor. 9:17,18).

There are generous **rewards** not only for those who reap the harvest, but also for those who sow the seed (John 4:36). And there is even a **reward** for those who have lent a hand in any nominal way (Mark 2:3).

Beware though; there are no **rewards** for ministerial wannabees (James 1:25), only **rewards** for those who are doers of the work of the Lord.

CROWNS WAITING TO BE WON

1 Cor. 9:25, **THE INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN** for containing and subduing your flesh for the sake of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thess. 2:19, **THE CROWN OF REJOICING** for souls that you have had a part in winning to the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

James 1:12 and Rev. 2:10, **THE CROWN OF LIFE** for enduring temptation and for simply being faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Pet. 5:4, **THE PASTOR'S CROWN**, given to those who feed, lead, and protect all those given into their pastoral care by our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Tim. 4:8, **THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** awarded simply for loving the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

We are warned to beware that we lose not these crowns (Rev. 3:11).

Paul tells us that all our energy, which we expend in service of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be transformed into tangible material (1Cor. 3:11-15). This will then be laid upon an altar in heaven and fire placed under it. There are two basic categories into which the six materials to be tested by fire can be grouped; that which will endure the flame and that which will not abide the flame, the first group being gold, silver, and precious stones. If you place your labor into these two categories, you can measure your life's service and the amount of the reward awaiting you by that that remains. Loss is dealt to those whose service is valued as wood, hay, and stubble.

“What we have done for ourselves alone, dies with us. What we have done for others and the world, remains and is immortal.” –Pine

RELINQUISHED AND DIMINISHED REWARDS

Mat. 6:2,5,16 ...They have their reward.

Hypocrites in giving, praying, and fasting have already received their reward. They have sacrificed the permanent on the altar of the immediate. If they are saved, they will suffer loss and be comparative paupers for a time in heaven, until all tears are wiped away and the former things are passed.

Moses made a major draft on his reward in a moment of impatient rage. Elijah cut his ministry, and thereby his reward, short because of a bad attitude. The same can be said of Jonah. Jonah could have had a most rewarding ministry in Nineveh and might have been used again in other foreign lands. He forsook all that, and most of his future crowns for the temporal shade of a gourd. Demas gained the world but lost his **rewards**. Judas, if he ever had any spiritual **rewards**, hawked them in to the devil's pawn shop for the **rewards** of iniquity.

MINISTERS HALL OF FAME AND HOME OF THE REWARDER

*Re 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my **reward** is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

John saw the whole future scene of **rewards** when he received the view of heaven prepared for those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. What more could or should it take to satisfy a faithful servant for all eternity, than to hear his beloved Master say to his beloved servant, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of they Lord." (Mt. 25:23)

Having embraced the ministry and been faithful to it for an abundant lifetime, may we all strive for the mastery and run to win the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus that we might, with our faithful service, do our part in the fulfilling of His wonderful kingdom, both on earth and throughout eternity.