

Marks of the Faithful Preacher, Part 4

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:5

Code: 55-23

INTRODUCTION

The dominant element of 1 and 2 Timothy is a series of commands that Paul gave to Timothy. What makes those commands binding not only on Timothy but also on all preachers and teachers is the call of God. What is the call of God? To find out let's look more closely at that subject.

A. Whom the Lord Calls into Ministry

1. His general call to all believers

Scripture affirms that all believers are to proclaim Christ.

a) Ephesians 2:10--"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. " We are saved for the purpose of doing good works, which include evangelizing the lost. b) Revelation 22:17--"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come. ' And let the one who hears say, 'Come. ' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. " All who hear and accept God's invitation for salvation are responsible to proclaim the gospel to others. c) 1 Peter 2:9--"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. " God's people are to proclaim Christ to others. d) Deuteronomy 11:13--"Love the Lord your God and . . . serve Him with all your heart and all your soul. " Our love and service to the Lord includes evangelizing the lost. e) 2 Corinthians 5:20--"We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. " All believers are responsible to urge the lost to come to Christ. Charles Spurgeon wrote, "The propagation of the gospel is left, not to a few, but to all the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ: according to the measure of grace entrusted to him by the Holy Spirit, each man is bound to minister in his day and generation, both to the church and among unbelievers. . . . [All Christians are] to exert themselves to the utmost to extend the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Lectures to My Students [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978], p. 22). All believers have the worthy call of exalting Christ and extending His kingdom (Eph. 4:1). By exercising our spiritual gifts each of us can serve Christ and His people.

2. His specific call to some believers

God also calls some men to minister vocationally. Throughout Scripture that has always been God's way.

a) Exodus 28:3--The Lord said to Moses, "You shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me. " Aaron, the brother of Moses, was to be properly cared for because God had set him apart as the high priest of Israel. b) Isaiah 6:8-9--Isaiah said, "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, Here am I. Send me! And [the Lord] said, 'Go, and tell this people. '" The Lord called Isaiah to proclaim His message to the nation Israel. c) Jeremiah 1:5--The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. "d) Jeremiah 3:15--The Lord said to the nation Israel, "I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding. "e) Ezekiel 2:3-4, 7--The Lord said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me;

they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. And I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children; and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' . . . You shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious. "f) Acts 9:15--The Lord said, "[Paul] is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. "g) Ephesians 4:11-12--The Lord "gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. "h) Colossians 1:23, 25--"Continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister. . . . Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God. "i) 1 Timothy 1:12; 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11--Paul said, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service. . . . I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. . . . I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. "God also called Timothy to preach, and in Acts 16:1-4 we see him beginning to minister alongside Paul.

B. How the Lord Calls Particular Ministers

How can a man know if the Lord has called him to preach? I believe Scripture indicates four ways he can know.

1. He calls subjectively

I believe that men who are called to preach are internally compelled to do so by the Holy Spirit. Spurgeon described that compulsion as "an irresistible, overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling to others what God has done to our own souls" (Lectures to My Students, p. 26). Paul said it this way: "If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me" (1 Cor. 9:16-17).

Now compulsion isn't necessarily the same as ambition. Ambition usually stems from our own desires to fulfill certain established goals and dreams. But compulsion is generated by an external source--in this case the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives a man the compulsion to preach "for the sake of the Name" (3 John 7) and aspire to the office of an elder (1 Tim. 3:1). Certainly Joseph Alleine, a Puritan pastor and author of *An Alarm to the Unconverted*, had an inner compulsion from God to preach. It was said that "he was infinitely and insatiably greedy [for] the conversion of souls" (cited by Spurgeon in *Lectures to My Students*, p. 26). His spiritual passion for reaching the lost resulted in his being imprisoned on numerous occasions. In poor health he died at the age of thirty-four.

I believe Scripture indicates that Timothy also had a spiritual compulsion to preach. Otherwise Paul wouldn't have mentioned him as his partner in ministry: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia" (2 Cor. 1:1). Throughout the rest of that chapter Paul used the pronoun "we" because Timothy was his co-laborer in ministry. In verse 19 he directly refers to Timothy's preaching Christ.

I believe Philippians 2:19-22 also indicates Timothy's spiritual compulsion to minister, for Paul said, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. " Both Paul and the Philippian church knew of Timothy's faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel.

Entering the Ministry for the Right Reason

In lecturing to his students at the Pastor's College, Spurgeon said, "If any student in this room could be content to be a newspaper editor, or a grocer, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a senator, or a king, in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way; he is not the man in whom dwells the Spirit of God in its fulness, for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants.

"If on the other hand, you can say that for all the wealth of both the Indies you could not and dare not espouse any other calling so as to be put aside from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, then, depend upon it, if other things be equally satisfactory, you have the signs of this apostleship. We must feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel; the Word of God must be unto us as fire in our bones, otherwise, if we undertake the ministry, we shall be unhappy in it, shall be unable to bear the self-denials incident to it, and shall be of little service to those among whom we minister.

"I speak of self-denials, and well I may; for the true pastor's work is full of them, and without a love to his calling he will soon succumb, and either leave the drudgery, or move on in discontent, burdened with a monotony as tiresome as that of a blind horse in a mill" (Lectures to My Students, pp. 26-27). If you would enter the ministry, be certain you are called to do so.

2. He calls objectively

Today God doesn't call his messengers with a voice from heaven as He did with Paul or some of the Old Testament prophets. Instead He links His subjective call to objective factors such as a man's circumstances and spiritual giftedness. God will make His call evident by giving a man spiritual wisdom, courage, an affection for God's people, and an ability to lead. So God's call begins with a compulsion and then takes shape through His providential ordering of a man's experiences and abilities.

John Newton wrote, "That which finally evidences a proper call, is a correspondent opening in providence, by a gradual train of circumstances pointing out the means, the time, the place, of actually entering upon the work" (cited by Spurgeon in Lectures to My Students, p. 34). That was Timothy's experience. In Acts 16 Paul identified Timothy as a young man he wanted to train for the ministry. Undoubtedly that happened as a result of God's providential ordering of circumstances. Later Timothy was ordained for the ministry (1 Tim. 4:14). His circumstances, opportunities for ministry, and spiritual giftedness had been in place, by God's design, for some time. If God calls you to preach, He will do the same for you.

3. He calls collectively

Collectively the church must evaluate a man's character to see if he meets the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:2-7: "above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money.

"He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?) ; and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (cf. Titus 1:6-9).

A man might believe he is motivated and gifted for the ministry, but he might not have a godly character. That's why it's necessary for the church to hold him accountable. In Acts 13:1-3 the church affirmed Paul and Barnabas for their missionary work. In 1 Timothy 4:14 the church elders laid hands on Timothy in recognition of his call to the ministry (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6). God follows that same pattern today. If He calls you to preach, your church will be able to affirm your spiritual gifts and character.

4. He calls effectively

The man whom God calls to preach will also have an effective ministry. First Thessalonians 2:1

reveals that Paul and Timothy's ministry in Thessalonica "was not in vain." Paul affirmed and complemented the effectiveness of Timothy's ministry by saying, "He is doing the Lord's work, as I also am" (1 Cor. 16:10). If you believe you have a spiritual compulsion and giftedness to minister, you still need to ask yourself, Has my present ministry in the church been effective? Do sinners face conviction? Do saints grow?

Since the Lord called Timothy to preach, Paul instructed him about being a faithful minister in 2 Timothy 4:1-5. In those verses we find the marks of a faithful preacher and teacher.

REVIEW

I. THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 1)

A. His Compelling Responsibility (v. 1a)

B. His Coming Evaluation (v. 1b)

II. THE ESSENCE OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 2a)

III. THE SCOPE OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 2b-d)

A. He Is Always Ready to Minister (v. 2b)

B. He Exposes Sin (v. 2c)

C. He Encourages Right Behavior (v. 2d)

IV. THE URGENCY OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (vv. 3-4)

A. The Unbeliever's Intolerance of Truth (v. 3)

B. The Unbeliever's Appetite for False Teaching (v. 4)

V. THE ATTITUDE UNDERGIRDING THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 5a)

LESSON

VI. THE COST OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 5b)

"Endure hardship. "

A. Expect Suffering

Many preachers want a ministry free of difficulties. However, I believe faithfulness to God's Word and the endurance of trials are the marks of an effective ministry. A preacher has the choice of either enduring or compromising a difficult situation. That's why Paul told Timothy, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. . . . Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1, 3). Timothy knew that "difficult times" would come (2 Tim. 3:1) and that some would "fall away from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1). Nevertheless, he was to follow the steps of Paul and fight "the good fight" (2 Tim. 4:7).

B. Accept Suffering

Timothy not only expected suffering, but also willingly accepted it. The writer of the book of Hebrews said, "Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you" (13:23). Here the Greek verb translated "released" (*apoluo*) speaks of releasing someone from prison. Apparently Timothy was imprisoned for preaching Christ. Since it's likely Hebrews was written soon after 2 Timothy, Timothy may have been jailed while ministering in Ephesus, shortly after receiving 2 Timothy. Like Timothy, we also are to endure whatever rejection, hostility, and persecution that comes from following Christ.

VII. THE EXTENT OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 5c)

"Do the work of an evangelist. "

The Greek term translated "evangelist" (*euaggelistes*) is mentioned only here and two other times in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11). However, the verb *euaggelizo*, which means "to proclaim good news," is mentioned over fifty times. And the noun *euaggelion*, which means "good news" or "gospel," is mentioned over seventy times. Preaching the gospel to the lost has a significant place in the New Testament.

Evangelists are proclaimers of the good news and often serve in places where Christ is not named. Here in 2 Timothy 4:5 "evangelist" occurs without the definite article and therefore is a general reference to an evangelist's work or function.

Advice on How to Proclaim God's Word

In preaching I believe there are some important things to remember.

1. Make your message simple and clear

Don't try to impress people with your erudition or extensive Bible knowledge. There's no virtue in making a message hard to understand. Notice the simplistic beauty of this familiar rhyme:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

2. Rely on God, not on manipulative techniques

Preaching calls for a response from those who hear God's Word, but don't try to manipulate that response. Unfortunately, some churches do just that by using lilting music and dim lights right after the message has been preached. They've been told that such techniques make it easier for people to believe God's Word. But Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for many years, correctly labeled those manipulative tactics as "psychological conditioning" (Preaching and Preachers [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971], p. 268). God alone, not lilting music and dim lights, causes one to believe in Scripture.

Lloyd-Jones went on to say, "You should not put direct pressure on the will. The will should always be approached primarily through the mind, the intellect, and then through the affections. . . . As the mind grasps [God's Word], understands it, the affections are kindled and moved, and so in turn the will is persuaded and obedience is the outcome. . . . Obedience is not the result of direct pressure on the will, it is the result of an enlightened mind and a softened heart" (p. 271).

The use of manipulative evangelistic techniques implies "sinners have an inherent power of decision and of self-conversion. But that cannot be reconciled with scriptural teaching such as . . . Ephesians 2:1, 'You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' . . . There is an implication here 'that the evangelist somehow is in a position to manipulate the Holy Spirit and His work. The evangelist has but to appear and to make his appeal and the results follow inevitably. . . . [That] tends to produce a superficial conviction of sin.' . . . A sinner does not 'decide' for Christ; the sinner 'flies' to Christ in utter helplessness and despair. . . . No man truly comes to Christ unless he flies to Him as his only refuge and hope" (pp. 279-80).

Timothy was to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5) by proclaiming the Word, not using manipulative techniques. You are to have that same commitment. When evangelizing the lost your main point is to proclaim "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). You are to tell the lost about the depravity of man, eternal judgment, the cross, the resurrection, the atonement, and Christ's second coming. As Spurgeon said, "Give the ungodly no rest in their sins" (Lectures to My Students, p. 345).

VIII. THE GOAL OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 5d)

"Fulfill your ministry. "

The Greek term translated "fulfill" (plerophoreo) means "to accomplish" and speaks of doing something wholeheartedly. Wholehearted ministry was certainly characteristic of Paul, who said, "I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (Col. 1:29). It's no surprise that at the end of his life he could say, "I have finished the course" (2 Tim. 4:7). That reminds me of my grandfather. In the final days of his earthly life, he still had the desire to preach, wanting to fulfill all God had given him to do. Do you have a strong desire to finish your spiritual course? Endeavor to

serve the Lord "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5).

Focusing on the Facts

1. What makes the commands of 1 and 2 Timothy binding on all preachers?
2. According to 2 Corinthians 5:20 what are you responsible to ?
3. By exercising our _____, each of us can serve Christ and His People.
4. According to Ephesians 4:11-12 why does God gift some men as pastors and teachers?
5. Men who are called to preach are compelled to do so by the _____.
6. How does Scripture indicate Timothy's compulsion to preach?
7. How does God objectively shape a man's inner compulsion to preach?
8. According to 1 Timothy 3:2-7 what must the church evaluate? Why is that necessary?
9. What does 1 Thessalonians 2:1 reveal about the ministry of Paul and Timothy? How does that apply to the man who is pursuing the ministry today?
10. What are two marks of an effective ministry?
11. Why did Paul tell Timothy to be "a good soldier of Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3)?
12. According to Hebrews 13:23 how did Timothy suffer? What was the apparent cause of his suffering?
13. What is the function of an evangelist?
14. What are two important things to remember when proclaiming God's Word?
15. Why should you not manipulate people into a spiritual decision?
16. How can you follow Paul's example and finish your spiritual course (Deut. 6:5)?

Pondering the Principles

1. The apostle Paul expressed his spiritual compulsion to share God's Word by saying, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). Martyn Lloyd-Jones commented, "Is there any reason why Paul should be thus devoted, more than any other Christian? We cannot claim his gifts, and we have not received his special call to be an apostle, nor have we seen the risen Lord as he saw him. . . . But the same Lord has died for us, our debt to him is equally great. . . . Are we prepared to deny ourselves and to forego things which are perfectly legitimate and lawful to us, for his sake and for the sake of those who know him not? . . . God grant that [your] response . . . may be a willing and entire surrender . . . to Christ and to his service" (The Miracle of Grace [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986], pp. 59-60). Ponder those wise words and let them serve as a personal challenge.

2. Like Timothy you are to endure hardship in serving Christ. Look up the following verses and prayerfully meditate upon them, asking the Lord to help you endure all the trials you experience in life:

Job 23:11-12

Matthew 10:22

Galatians 6:9

Hebrews 12:1-3

James 1:2-4; 5:10-11

1 Peter 2:19-21

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