

The Calling of a Pastor

By Nick Bibile

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

If someone wants to apply for a job, he first goes to school, then get a good training afterwards, he would apply for the job. However the same formula does not apply in Christianity if someone wants to become a Minister of the Gospel. Minister is a calling of God. John Newton said, "None but he who made the world can make a Minister of the Gospel." The leader of the church is appointed by God alone. It was God who called Moses, God called the uneducated fisherman, the apostles. It is a divine call to the sacred office.

There are many who desire to become a pastor as they would like to preach behind the pulpit, many look forward but how do you know if it is a calling from God or not? The Bible gives the answer as it gives the qualifications for the ministry.

The Biblical qualifications are found primarily in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 but there are other scriptures too. We shall briefly go through some of these scriptures and expose some very important elements. I am reading from the ESV.

1 Tim 3:1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Some of your Bibles may have the word Bishop instead of overseer. The Greek word is episcopos means an overseer. The word Bishop or overseer is the same with that of a pastor or elder.

Acts 20:28-31 Read 1 Peter 5:1-3

There are some people who would like to become a pastor; there is a lot of respect and honor in that word pastor. People look up to you but how many even know that there are some Biblical qualifications to be met. Are you called by your own emotions, your own pride so now you have a flock where you can rule, people will submit to you, once you can use your authority behind that pulpit, there is power, authority, honor and respect. If you want to become a pastor with this kind of motive then you are looking for the wrong job as the Biblical qualifications seem to contradict your perspective. Jesus said Mat 23:11-12 “The greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

1 Tim 3:1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

If you are truly called by God to be a pastor, then it is a wonderful calling as it is a high calling from God. Why is it a noble task? Because you are directly employed by God, God is the employer. You are working for God under the authority of Christ Jesus. You are not working in the White House or in a King's palace but working for the Creator of the Universe, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the One who can bring salvation. Salvation is the greatest thing in this world that can ever happen to a person and now you are God's mouth piece, instrument in salvation for the people. You become an instrument to correct, rebuke and edify the flock. For this kind of job the pastor should have a lot of inner strengths, love, compassion, long suffering, humility, discernment, able to under go trials, a great commitment for the Lord, reliable person, setting an example to the flock, the people in the church can trust the pastor. His first priority should be the Lord not his personal things, need to check his record on his commitment and not what he would tell the church what he would like to do in the future. I will go through few of the most important required qualifications.

Above Reproach.

Living a blameless lifestyle. An upright person, not easy to find a fault. See 1 Tim 6:14

If a pastor is called to high and a holy office and the root of this qualification is holiness. He needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit to preach and minister the very words of God. This is not an ordinary job but a sacred, holy profession.

Exodus 12:16 on the first day you shall hold a holy assembly.

The body of Christ the church is a holy so the pastor should be holy.

Exodus 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

The preacher who preaches on the Sabbath should be holy.

Lev 20:26 You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

God is holy, there fore pastor should be holy.

The word holy is to be separated from the worldly things. The church is holy because it is separated from the world. The Lord's Day is holy as it is separated from all the other days as it is the day for the Christians to fellowship and worship the Lord. The word of God is holy as it is above from all the others; it is separated from all the others. Jesus said, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17) So the pastor who preaches the holy word of God should be holy. We are all called to be holy but the pastor is a man of God, who reveals the will of God to the people, the spokesman of God's word and who is separated to serve the Lord.

The pastor should not be enslaved by the Television, alcohol, sports, computer games, entertainment, always on vacation, sexual immorality, politics, if he is a working pastor, he should set his spare time to have fellowship with his Master and he should not work on Sunday as it is the Lord's Day and he should set the example to the flock.

1 Corin 9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises

self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. 27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

He is called the pastor, the shepherd! Think about it, it is the very name that Christ takes to himself as he said, "I am the Good Shepherd." So the pastor the shepherd of the flock should be Christ-like. The pastor is represented standing by the side of Christ in this great field of work, how holy he should be. He should be devoted to godliness.

The work of the pastor is the most important work in the world. It is the greatest in which a man can be engaged. God is his employer and God wants the pastor to be holy. The pastor will long for the glory of Christ just like Moses wanted to see the face of God. He will strive to be holy and to live the godly life. A worldly pastor will attract a lot of worldly people. The pastor's lifestyle should be godly. The measure of the church's godliness depends upon pastor's godliness. He should be filled in the Holy Spirit instead of the world.

Pastor is appointed to be a living example of the gospel which he preaches.

The doctrine he preachers should demonstrate in his daily life. He is a husband of one wife not a husband of two or three wives, married to one woman. It condemns polygamy. Here we see that a pastor should have a good marriage, a wife that submit to her husband, one who is a helper as the pastor would love his wife.

Here we see his good behavior, good conduct. Sober minded means he is calm, cool headed, person. He is self-controlled means he will not be out of controlled. Respectable is to have a good reputation. Hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The pastor's life should be an example of his teaching. This is one of the fruits of his calling. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

1 Pet 5:1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:
2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;
3 not domineering over those in your charge, **but being examples to the flock.**

Also 1 Thess 2:7-10

7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

The life of the pastor should be heavenly mindedness that he should be a living witness to Christ as he should say, "Be followers of me as I follow Christ."

Prayer

The way to cultivate this holiness and life's example to the others is through constant prayer. The ministry does not belong to him but to God in prayer we see it is the will of God done. In prayer we see the humility and lowliness of the preacher as he asks for guidance. In prayer we see the Spirit taking control not the flesh. The prayer should be their daily breath. The pastor should be a man in the closet than a man in the world. His model is the Lord Jesus Christ. The pastor should rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

He is not only the pastor in the closet but also in public prayer, he needs to show an example of attending the prayer meetings. Where he will pray and intercede for the flock. Show the importance of prayer. Pastor gets his strength from prayer and having close communion with God. He sets the example of a man of prayer.

Andrew Fuller a godly minister who lived during the time of George Whitefield in his dying testimony said, "I wish I had prayed more for the assistance of the Holy Spirit in studying and preaching my sermons." Pastor at the pulpit stands near to God and he should be purified by the Holy Spirit in prayer. Even our Chief Shepherd Christ spent whole nights in prayer and what an example he set for the pastors to follow.

Dr. Howard Taylor, in *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (page 234f.) describes an experience that he had traveling with his father, Hudson Taylor, through China. He writes,

It was not easy for Mr. Taylor in his changeful life, to make time for prayer and Bible study, but he knew that it was vital. Well do the writers remember traveling with him month after month in northern China, by cart and wheelbarrow, with the poorest of inns at night. Often with only one large room for coolies and travelers alike, they would screen off a corner for their father and another for themselves, with curtains of some sort; and then after sleep at last had brought a measure of quiet they would hear a match struck and seek the flicker of candlelight which told that Mr. Taylor, however weary, was pouring over the little Bible in two volumes always at hand. From two to four a.m. was the time he usually gave to prayer; the time when he could be most sure of being undisturbed to wait upon God. That flicker of candlelight has meant more to them than all they have read or heard on secret prayer; it meant reality, not preaching but practice.

The hardest part of the missionary career, Mr. Taylor found, is to maintain regular, prayerful Bible study. "Satan will always find you something to do," he would say, "when you ought to be occupied about that, if it is only arranging a window blind."

Studying the word of God.

He should give his whole heart and purpose to the study of God's word. He needs to prepare his mind and trains himself so that he will go forth do work efficiently for his Master. Pastor must study; study and study and when he grows the congregation will grow in God's word. Pastor does not study just because he has to study to give a sermon but because he loves to study the word of God.

2 Tim 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Pastor should not get into gray areas of scripture, he should concentrate only on the revealed will of God, only what is revealed in the word of God. Not trying to give his opinions or trying to setup scriptures out of context to setup his opinion but giving the whole counsel of God, feeding the flock with a balance diet. Jesus should be the center of his sermon, God is to be adored and magnified in his sermons, the cross is exalted in his sermons, sin should be exposed in his sermons, there has to be conviction of sin, repentance and forgiveness should be preached. He should believe in the most important doctrines of Christianity. The pastor should have a good knowledge of the Old Testament, church history and specially the reformation.

He should pray study and meditate what he is going to preach.

Preaching the word of truth

The most important work of the pastor is to feed the flock of God with the whole counsel of God, not what he likes or he wishes to preach but to preach the will of God, the whole context without cutting the edges. The pastor should study and apply the sermon to himself. When the pastor delivers the message he should never separate himself with the audience as if the sermon is not for him. His heart should be convicted of sins, encouraged and edified first before he preaches to the flock. John Owen said, "If the word does not dwell with power in us it will not pass with power from us."

In his preaching the pastor should have spiritual wisdom, he should be skilled in exposition of scripture, a good communicator. He should take care of the flock with love, care and tenderness.

2 Tim 4:1-2 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: **2 preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

"Preach the Word." There are lots of other things in the ministry and many pastors get caught up in other things and give very little time for preaching the word. This is a commandment to the pastors; the highest priority is to preach the word. Preaching is not only teaching as there is a difference between teaching

and preaching. The word preach in Greek *kerugma* (Noun) *prokerusso* (Verb) to be a herald and to proclaim as a herald. Herald is an officer of the of the king who makes a public declaration. Pastor is like the King's messenger that will give the message of the King boldly. See Daniel 3:4

If you don't preach the true word of God then the result will be verse 3 and 4.

3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

In closing, the pastor should live in Jesus, Jesus should be the lover of his soul, and he should rest in the bosom of Jesus. He should give all the glory and honor to the redeemer our King. The pastor should not be the in spotlight and he should not preach himself but Christ is to be glorified, Christ is preached. Jokes and worldly humor cannot be preached in the presence of the Holy God. The pastor should be able to counsel and admonish the flock. The pastor's should be obedient to his Master and cry out to him in prayer as the following hymn;

Teach me O Lord, thy holy way and give me an obedient mind that in thy service I may find my soul's delight from day to day.

Guide me O Savior with thy hand, and so control my thoughts and deeds that I may tread the path which leads right onward to the blessed land.

Help me, O Savior, here to trace the sacred footsteps thou has trod and meekly walking with my God, to grow in goodness, truth and grace.

Guard me, O Lord that I may ne'er for sake the right or do the wrong, against temptation make me strong, and round me spread thy sheltering care.

Bless me in every task, O Lord, begun continued done for thee. Fulfill thy perfect work in me. And thine abounding grace afford.

Amen (Trinity hymnal 456)

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