



CHAPTER 1

What Your Call as a Minister Is

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

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CHAPTER 1
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1. *You are chosen by God Himself.*

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

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

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

Thought

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

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

2. *You are chosen by Jesus Christ.*

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

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

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

Thought

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

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

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

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

Thought

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thought

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

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

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

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

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

“I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles [unbelievers] the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph.3:7-8).

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

Thought

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

- a) The word “minister” means an *under-rower*. It refers to the slaves who sat in the belly of the large ships and pulled at the great oars to carry the boat through the sea. Christ is the Master of the ship and the minister is *one of the slaves of Christ*. Note: you are only one of many under-rowing servants. Remember also that slaves in the belly of the ship were bound by chains. They were allowed to do nothing but serve the master of the ship. You are a bound slave of Christ: you exist only to row for the Master. You do not and cannot serve anyone else.
- b) God has showered His grace upon you and made you a minister (Eph.3:7-8). God has been merciful to you, forgiven you so much. You owe God your life, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. No greater call and privilege could ever be given a person.
- c) Your greatest glory is God’s call and God’s work. This was certainly true of Paul (Eph.3:7-8). Paul saw the dignity of the ministry, the dignity of being especially chosen by God. William Barclay points out that the ministry was a radiant privilege for Paul. God did not have to persuade Paul to be a minister. No one had to persuade Paul to teach (Eph.4:1); to sing (Eph.5:19); to speak for God (Eph.4:17); to visit (2 Cor.13:1f); to administer the affairs of the church (1 Cor.7:1f); to give his money (2 Cor.8:1f; 9:1f). Paul did not have to be coerced. He saw his call to be a minister as the greatest of all privileges. As a minister of God, you must see the glorious privilege you have in serving Christ (*The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p.145).

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

- The salvation in Christ caused Paul to become a minister (Eph.3:7).
- The salvation in Christ caused Paul to become a preacher. Note Paul’s utter humility. He had what we all need: a deep, intense sense of unworthiness before God.

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

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

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

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

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

Thought

You are the steward of God. The word “steward” (oikonomos) means the overseer of an estate. The steward was always a slave, subject to a master, but

he was *placed in charge* of the other slaves throughout the master's house or estate. He controlled the staff and ran the whole operation for the master. He was set over others, yet he himself was still a slave of the master. His work was not closely supervised; therefore, he had to be trustworthy and responsible.

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

As a minister of God, you are to be esteemed highly for your work's sake. You are *only* a servant of God's, but you are the servant whom God has made steward over His household, over His church and His people. You have been honored by God: you have been made responsible for the imperishable mysteries of God, the great truths of God's Holy Word. You do not deal with perishable things such as money and possessions, but with the eternal things of God Himself, the eternal truths that God wants proclaimed to the world.

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

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit [oh! to know], that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses

unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor.5:18-21).

Thought

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

- a) You are given the highest of titles: you are an “ambassador for Christ.” The “ambassador” (presbeuomen) is a person who is sent forth as an official envoy to represent the Sender and to announce the message of the Sender. Four things are always true about the ambassador.
 - You belong to the One who sent you out.
 - You are commissioned to be sent out. You exist only for the purpose for which you were sent.
 - You possess all the authority and power of the One who sent you out.
 - You are sent forth with the message of the Sender. The message is not your own.
- b) You are given the greatest of messages: “Be reconciled to God.” The message is so critical that you are to “beseech” (deometha) men: beg, intreat, cry, and plead with them to be reconciled to God.

Note that it is “for Christ’s sake” that you are to plead with men. Christ has paid the ultimate price to make reconciliation available to men: He has

taken the sins of men upon Himself and borne the condemnation for them. Because He has done so much, every person owes his life to Christ—every person should be reconciled to God. For Christ's sake, a person should give himself to God.