

Title: **THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY**
The Ordination of Richard Clayton Curtis
To the Ministry of the Gospel

Text: Ephesians 3:7-9
Subject: *The Work of the Gospel Ministry*
Date: Friday Evening — November 30, 2007
 Sovereign Grace Baptist Church
 Princeton, New Jersey
Reading: *2 Timothy 3:1-4:5*
Introduction:

Let's begin tonight by reading Ephesians 3:7-9. I am going to talk to you for a little while. Then, I will come back to this passage, as I wrap my message up. Paul is talking about the mystery of the gospel, and says...

(Ephesians 3:7-9) "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. (8) Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; (9) And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

This is truly a very special occasion. We have come here tonight for the public ordination of Bro. Clay Curtis. I am honored that he and you have asked me to be with you for this event. I am thankful, truly thankful that God has made this congregation and your dear pastor such a blessed, delightful part of my life. I have known your pastor since he was a teenage boy, banging out "Great Balls of Fire" on the piano as well as Jerry Lee Lewis ever did. His sister, his parents and his grandparents have been dear friends for a long, long time. I cannot tell you how dear Clay, Melinda and their children, Emma and Will, are to Shelby and me, and to our assembly in Danville. We pray for them and for you continually. God has given you a choice servant and a choice family.

I said, "We have come here tonight for the public ordination of your pastor" not (strictly speaking) for his ordination. Bro. Curtis was ordained to the work of the ministry by our Master from eternity (Jer. 1:5), separated for this work from his mother's womb (Gal. 1:15), prepared for the work from

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his youth under the faithful ministry of his grandfather, Bro. James Watson, and has been in training for this work all his adult life as a member of College Grove Grace Church in College Grove, TN, under the ministries of pastors Marvin Stalnaker and Chris Cunningham. And God put him in the ministry when you called him to be your pastor. Just as the God Holy Spirit separated (ordained) Paul and Barnabas for the worked whereunto he called them by directing the church at Antioch to lay hands on them and send them out, when you laid hands on Bro. Clay, calling him as your pastor, he was separated (ordained) to this blessed work by God the Holy Spirit through this local church.

I have no authority to ordain anyone. I am not an apostle. The ordination of a pastor is the work of God the Holy Spirit by a local church. What we are doing here tonight is publicly declaring what God, through this congregation, has already done. It is for that reason that I asked the men of this assembly to sign the ordination certificate we will present to your pastor at the conclusion of the service tonight.

- There will be no ordination counsel to examine Bro. Clay's gifts and qualifications for the work of the ministry. — You did that.
- There will be no meaningless ceremony of physically laying our empty hands on his head. — There are no apostles here. We have no ability to confer any gifts of any kind to anyone.
- We are here simply to declare publicly what God has done for this man and for you, in making him your pastor.

WISE COUNSEL

That said, I want to speak directly to your pastor. The title of my message is — **THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY**. I will be talking to your pastor; but my message is for you as well as for him. The wise Solomon wrote, by divine inspiration, — "*He that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise*" (Pro. 12:15). In another place the Spirit of God admonishes us by his servant to — "*Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end*" (Pro. 19:20). So I want to begin my message by sharing with you some wise counsel I received from Bro. Henry Mahan thirty-two years ago. I was 25 years old at the time. Pastor Henry Mahan was 50. He and I were preaching together in a Bible conference in Appomattox, VA. I was a very young man, preaching with him and several other men of much age

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and experience. Each day we were there, Bro. Mahan came by my room for a visit. Each time, he gave me a word of wise counsel about preaching. I can almost recall his exact words. I have rehearsed them countless times over the years. They have, I hope, shaped my preaching.

Bro. Mahan's first word of wisdom to me was "**Preach the Gospel.**" He urged me to preach like Richard Baxter, "as a dying man to dying men." From that day to this, it has been my determination every time I preach to do so with the conscious awareness that I am preaching to eternity bound sinners, who must soon stand before God in judgment. — **Let no sermon ever be preached that does not clearly show sinners how God saves sinners by his grace, urging them to seek his mercy in Christ.**

Next, my wise counsellor urged me, "**Don't try to preach to preachers.** Find a man in the congregation who looks like he may have been digging ditches his whole life, who looks like his heart is broken and heavy, who needs comfort and encouragement." That is exactly what God himself demands of those who speak for him (Isa. 40:1-2). — **Every gospel sermon is a message of consolation to God's elect, urging them to look away from themselves and their woes to Christ and his fulness of grace.**

The third wise word of counsel Bro. Mahan gave me that week was, "**Bro. Fortner, find something in that Book that speaks to you, that you need.** If you need it and it speaks to you, chances are somebody else will need it and it will speak to them. If you don't need it, nobody else does." In other words, it is utter vanity to stand in the pulpit answering questions no one is asking. — **Gospel preaching is not defending points of doctrine, but declaring the boundless mercy and grace of God to poor, needy sinners in Christ.**

I pray that God will never allow me to forget these words of wise counsel. I think hell must roar with laughter when preachers stand in the pulpit and try to untie theological knots no one is aware of and argue debates no one cares about. **Until I find a message more glorious than Christ crucified, more needful than free grace, more delightful than infinite mercy, more comforting than absolute forgiveness, more assuring than perfect righteousness, more compelling than redeeming blood, more hopeful than heavenly glory, and more joyful than the infinite, immutable love**

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of God in Christ, I am determined to preach nothing else, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. — “*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*”

PREACH CHRIST

My first word to you, Bro. Clay, is what I have been telling you for years. — Preach Christ. Preach Christ fully, in all his redemptive glory. Preach him high in all the majesty of his being, character and exaltation as King of kings and Lord of lords. And preach Christ incessantly. — “**The flame of Calvary’s love is intense, and should cause a glow in the pulpit.**” (Christmas Evans)

The American Puritan, **Cotton Mather**, instructed his students with these wise and needful words of counsel. — “Among all the subjects with which you feed the people of God, I beseech you, let not the true Bread of Life be forgotten; but exhibit as much as you can of the glorious Christ unto them; yea, let the motto upon your whole ministry be, ‘Christ is all!’”

In 1771 **John Berridge** wrote to his friend and fellow-laborer in the gospel, Rowland Hill, “Avoid all controversy in preaching, talking, or writing, and wage no war but with the devil. Preach nothing down but the devil and nothing up but Jesus Christ.” Happy is the preacher who follows that wise counsel and blessed are those who hear him.

What a blessing it would be if every man who claims to speak for God, who claims to be a gospel preacher, would heed those words! How blessed the church of God would be if those who fill her pulpits were determined to preach and teach nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified! That was Paul’s determination (1 Cor. 2:2). It ought to be every preacher’s determination! **Every man who is sent of God to preach is sent of God to preach Christ crucified, always, in all places, in all his fullness** (1 Cor. 1:17-25).

(1 Corinthians 1:17-25) “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. (18) For the preaching of the cross is

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to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (20) Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

(1 Corinthians 2:2) “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Christ crucified is “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). — He is the singular subject of Holy Scripture.

- He is the **sum and essence of all true doctrine.**
- He is the **life of all gospel ordinances.**
- He is the **secret ingredient of all true worship.**
- He is the **mercy-seat** in whom God meets with men.
- He is the **motive** of all godliness, obedience, service, and devotion.
- He is the **reward** of heavenly glory.
- Jesus Christ is **our God!** Jesus Christ is **our Savior.** And Jesus Christ is **salvation.**
- He is the **Way to heaven;** and he is **Heaven.**
- He is the **Revealer of truth,** and he is **Truth.**
- He is the **Giver of Life;** and he is **Life.** — “*Christ is all!*” When we talk about **divine sovereignty,** we are declaring that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- When we proclaim God’s glorious work of **predestination,** we are showing how that sinners have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ.
- God’s **election** is his choice of some to everlasting salvation in Christ and for Christ’s sake.

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- **Total depravity**, a thoroughly biblical doctrine, is God’s revelation of our need of Christ.
 - **Limited atonement** is the biblical assurance of effectual redemption and grace by Christ, the declaration that all for whom Christ died shall be saved.
 - **Irresistible grace**, or effectual calling, is the almighty, irresistible revelation of Christ in the soul by the Holy Spirit, which causes the chosen to come to him.
 - **Regeneration** is the implanting of Christ in us.
 - **Justification** is the righteousness of Christ made yours by God’s free grace.
 - **Faith** is trusting Christ.
 - **Sanctification** is Christ being formed in us, begun in regeneration and consummated in glorification.
 - **Perseverance** is Christ holding our hearts by grace and keeping us in life and faith.
 - **Baptism** is the believer’s public confession of faith in Christ. Being symbolically buried in the watery grave and raised with him, we confess our faith in his finished work of redemption as our Substitute.
 - **The Lord’s Supper** is our blessed remembrance of Christ.
 - **Eternal life** is knowing Christ.
 - **Heaven** is being with Christ and like Christ perfectly and forever.
- Preaching is telling people about Christ. Anything else is not preaching.**
Call it what you may; but it is not preaching!

OUR MESSAGE

There are none who hold the offices of prophet or apostle today, none who have the gifts accompanying the writers of Inspiration. There are none today who have the gifts of speaking in tongues, miracles, healing, or prophecy. There is no need for any of these things. We have the full, final, complete revelation of God in the Scriptures. Since that which is perfect is come, that which was in part is no longer needed.

Though those supernatural gifts of the apostolic era died when the apostles died, the message of **the apostles and of the prophets is unchanged.** **Their message is our message.** — “*We preach Christ crucified*”(1 Cor.

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1:23). I know that these words are used as a religious cliché by almost all who claim to be preachers. With God's servants, this is not a cliché, but the absolute truth. — *"We preach Christ crucified."*

True, biblical preaching is not merely giving a methodical, historic, grammatical exposition of Scripture. Any man who is not too lazy to study can do that without any special gift. Bible colleges and seminaries produce such preachers by the hundreds every year. **There is something more to preaching than reciting facts!** Yes, true, biblical preaching is always true to the historic, grammatical facts in the Book of God; but it is much more. **Gospel preaching is the preaching of the gospel. It is the preaching of Christ crucified, as he is revealed in the whole Book of God.**

Christ crucified is not simply the most important message of Scripture, the central message of Scripture, the primary message of Scripture, or even the dominant message of Scripture. — CHRIST CRUCIFIED IS THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE. When the apostle Paul said to the Ephesians, *"I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God"* in Acts 20:26, he was saying exactly the same thing as he did in 1 Corinthians 2:2. — *"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."*

It is the office, work, delight, and glory of God the Holy Spirit to speak of, reveal, and convince chosen, redeemed sinners of the person and work of Christ (John 16:7-14). He takes the things of Christ and shows them to us.

- He convinces men of sin, because they do not trust Christ.
- He convinces men of righteousness established by Christ's obedience to the Father as the God-man Mediator and Representative.
- And he convinces men of judgment finished, forever finished for God's elect, by the sin atoning death Christ, our sin-bearer, who put away the sins of his people by the sacrifice of himself.

The convicting work of the Spirit, that work by which he savingly convinces sinners of these things, is done through **the instrumentality of the Word of God** (Rom. 10:13-17), that Word of God by which all who

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believe are born again, that Word of God “*which by the gospel is preached unto you*” (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

(Romans 10:13-17) “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (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? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

(1 Peter 1:23-25) “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

SENT TO PREACH

God called men are men who, like Paul, have been sent to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17). I have absolutely no interest in **debating** points of theology with men, **defending** a creed, a denomination, or a position. The Spirit of God tells us plainly that debate is nothing but the lust of the flesh venting itself in pride to the hurt of another (Rom. 1:29). All my personal experience in the practice has painfully verified the Spirit’s testimony. **It is the business of gospel preachers to preach the gospel, to preach the gospel exclusively, earnestly, and incessantly. That is what it is to preach the Word of God** (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

- It is the gospel of Christ which is **the power of God** unto salvation (Rom. 1:15-17).
- It is the gospel of Christ which is **the standard of godliness** (John 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-24).

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- It is the gospel of Christ which is **the motive for and basis of all consecration, devotion, self-denial, sacrifice, and service** (Rom. 12:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 2 Cor. 8:8-9).

God never sent a man to preach politics, liberal, conservative, or otherwise. He never called a man to preach **psychology, marriage counseling, family values, or social reform.** All these things will certainly be dealt with and affected by the faithful preaching of the gospel; but God never called any man to devote himself to the preaching of such drivels.

Those men who are called and gifted of God to preach, are called and gifted to preach the gospel. It matters not where or to whom God sends his servants, they are all sent with the same task and sent with the same message. Every servant of God attests, — “*Christ sent me to preach the gospel.*”

If we are men gifted and called of God, we must be undaunted by charges of extremism, dogmatism, and a lack of balance. Let the servants of men grovel before their masters about such matters. **God’s servants are totally unconcerned about the approval or disapproval of men.** Being sent of God to preach the gospel, “*we preach Christ.*” Our doctrine, our only doctrine, is what John calls “*the doctrine of Christ.*”

Make it a point to use the most **simple grammar** and **words that cannot be misunderstood.** If someone has to ask what a word you have used means, you ought to be embarrassed by the arrogance and poor judgment that caused you to use it.

Preach with **determined dogmatism.** Never come to the pulpit to present ideas for consideration, but to deliver a message from God to be believed. If you are not confident of the message, the doctrine, and the interpretation, do not give it.

It is not the purpose of preaching merely to inform the mind and stir the emotions of those who hear us. **The purpose of preaching is to move men Godward in repentance, faith, worship, gratitude and consecration.** Rolfe Barnard used to say, “**Preach for a verdict.**” Someone else said, “Where there is no summons, there is no sermon.” **Prepare your messages**

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with a conscious awareness that you are preparing to preach to eternity bound sinners who must know and have Christ, immortal souls to whom you may never speak again.

A GOOD WORK

The Holy Spirit tells us expressly that the work of a gospel preacher, the work of a pastor, is a good work (1 Tim. 3:1).

(1 Timothy 3:1) “This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

There is not a higher, nobler, greater, more satisfying, or more demanding work to be found in this world. I would caution every man, “Do not thrust yourself into the work of the ministry.” If a man runs without being sent, he will be running to trouble. Yet, I would say to every believing man, “This is a work to be desired.”

First and foremost, as I have been telling you for the past three nights, the pastor’s work is the work of preaching the gospel. God’s servants are men who labor in the Word of God. They seek to understand its’ doctrine. They seek to find God’s message for his people. And they try, in every way possible, to carry the gospel to the generation in which they live.

- Preaching
- Writing
- Correspondence

God’s servants are not lazy men. **They are men with a purpose, with an agenda, men on a mission with a mandate from God himself.** Their mission, their mandate is the preaching of the gospel (1 Timothy 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; 1 Corinthians 2:2; Galatians 6:14). The office of a bishop is an work to be desired because it is the work of preaching the gospel.

Next, it is a work to be desired because **the work of the bishop is a pastoral work.** I am fully aware of the fact that in these days of religious nonsense pastoral work is looked upon as business management, social work, psychotherapy, denominational politics, promotion and entertainment. But **God’s servants are pastors, tenders of sheep** (1 Peter

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5:1-4). What a great privilege! What a high honor! What an awesome responsibility! The Lord God has called you and me, and has trusted to our hands the care of his sheep, the guardianship of his family! **It is our responsibility as pastors to...**

- Feed His Sheep.
- Protect His Sheep.
- Guide His Sheep in the Footsteps of the Flock.
- Lead His Sheep by Example.

Are you beginning to see why this is called a good work and a work to be desired? It is the work of preaching the gospel; but it is much more than that. It is the work of caring for the Lord's sheep.

And this is a good work and a work to be desired because **it is every pastor's responsibility to do the work of an evangelist** (2 Tim. 4:5). Without neglecting the care of God's sheep trusted to you here, you are to go out to proclaim the gospel wherever and however God opens the door, seeking the Lord's sheep, establishing local churches, folds for the Lord's flocks, and helping other shepherds.

Very few churches have or want a pastor. Most of them hire a preacher, tell him what his office hours will be, how many visits he will make each month, how long to preach, how many meetings he can hold a year, when he can take a vacation, and what social committees and functions he is expected to attend. God's servants are not hirelings; and they are not June-bug preachers. They are prophets from God almighty with a message to deliver. They will not allow anything or anyone to stand in their way!

GOD MADE

Preachers are made by God alone. Only God can make a preacher and put a man into the ministry. I know that it is customary for preachers to try to get other men, especially young converts, to make a commitment to what they call "full-time Christian service" (I guess they think all others are "part time" Christians!); but I always caution men not to announce a call to preach. I said to a young man in my office last Sunday afternoon who is chomping at the bit to preach, "**No man should ever presume that he has been called of God to the blessed work of the gospel ministry until God**

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has put him in the work. No man is called of God to preach the gospel except those men who are doing it.” An *urge* to preach is not a *call* to preach. If God calls a man to the work of the gospel ministry, he will not have to announce it. God’s people will know it. And he will not have to advertise himself, promote himself, or send out resumes applying for a job. God knows exactly where his *Moses* is. The back side of the desert in the land of Median is not beyond God’s view!

And the place of training for a preacher is within the local church. I do not discourage training. A pastor must be a diligent student, not for three or four years, but all his life. But **the absolute last thing for a man to do who desires to preach the gospel is go to a Bible college or theological seminary.** I tell young men this all the time. Colleges and seminaries are real good at teaching men how to be professional preachers; but you learn to serve God in his church.

This is what I recommend to every man who thinks he wants to be a preacher. Find a gospel preacher and local church of proven faithfulness to the gospel of Christ; move to where that church is; get a job; and serve God in that local church. I am convinced that no man should be given the responsibility of pastoring a church who knows nothing about serving God in a church.

Any pastor who is worth his salt as a preacher will, in his regular sermons, give the best theological training available in this world. A faithful pastor is always well prepared for the pulpit. He does not entertain the sheep with silly games. He feeds the sheep. He instructs people in the Word of God. **What a man learns here is what I call “shoe leather theology,” the kind that helps you walk down the road of life.** The theology a man learns in Bible colleges and seminaries is “idealistic theology,” the kind you debate in coffee houses without regard to the souls of men or the glory of God.

AN ALL-CONSUMING WORK

The work of the ministry is a good work — Feeding Christ’s sheep. It is a work for which God makes a man. And the work of the gospel ministry is an all-consuming work. **Rolfe Barnard** used to say, “One of these days, I’m going to enter the ministry.” I cannot tell you how often I have heard

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Bro. Mahan say the same thing. That may seem strange, coming from men who have spent nearly every waking hour of their adult lives studying, preaching, or traveling somewhere to preach. But the statement is not strange at all, when we consider the facts.

There are multitudes of pastors, evangelists, and missionaries who have never really entered the ministry. I am not talking about professional preachers. I am not talking about glory-seekers. I am not talking about men who serve God for gain. We know that those men are not the servants of Christ and never can be.

I am talking about and my concern is for men who do know the Lord, men who do faithfully preach the gospel of God's grace and glory in Christ. men who have to some degree left home and friends, men who have endured some trial and persecution for the gospel. I am not talking about our enemies, but our friends, men who have contended for the gospel in organized churches here and there, and some even on foreign soil as missionaries. **Many who preach the gospel have not yet entered the ministry.**

The ministry of the gospel is an all-consuming thing! It cannot be a sideline. It cannot be something a man does when it is convenient. It is not a career. **It is, and must be, the all-consuming passion of a man's life!** When Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle, he had to lay down all other interests and concerns. And that man who truly enters the ministry must leave every other occupation and project.

(2 Timothy 2:4) "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

The man who enlists in the army and goes to war leaves his home, business, hobbies, and all his other affairs in the world. The business of the army has become his business. The war he is engaged in is not something he reads about in the morning paper. It is the all-consuming issue of his life. **The Olympic athlete** who runs in a race does so with such determination and commitment that he seems to spend all his time on the track. He appears to have no thought but running. He is consumed with the race. **And**

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that man who enters the ministry, who really enters the ministry has just that kind of determination and commitment.

(1 Corinthians 7:29-31) “But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; (30) And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; (31) And they that use this world, as not abusing *it*: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

I cannot recommend any man to go to any seminary in the world. I know this will offend some who hear it, but frankly, I do not know of a Bible college or seminary anywhere in the world that is committed to the gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace. But I will tell you **five places** to which every man who enters the ministry must go.

1st. **If we would enter the ministry we must go Calvary.** — I say to you, my friend, my brother, my fellow-laborer, — Go to Calvary! There be filled with the glory of God, the beauty of Christ, and the majesty of grace. There be overwhelmed with the love of God in Christ. Daily learn at Calvary the gospel of God’s sovereignty, substitution, satisfaction, and success, and you will preach it! No other message will interest you. Not other subject will appeal to you. No other theme will occupy your mind. That man who sees the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ will talk about it until he dies!

2nd. **If we would enter the ministry we must go to the cemetery.** — You and I cannot enter the ministry until we have buried mother, father, wife, children, and our own lives also. Christ must become all these things to us. So that where the calling, service, truth, and glory of Christ are concerned, his servant has no natural ties.

3rd. **If we would enter the ministry we must go to the garbage dump.** — There we must dispose of our heritage, our learning, our natural wisdom, our self-righteousness, our self-worth, and our fleshly zeal. At the garbage dump, we throw everything away as useless dung, that we may win Christ and be found in him (Philippians 3:4-14).

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4t. **If we would enter the ministry we must open an account at the bank of faith and live upon it.** — We must give up our fishing boats, throw away our nets, and look to Christ alone to supply all our needs. Those who preach the gospel must live by the gospel. Soldiers in the army of King Jesus do not have to pay their own way. Christ takes care of his servants. I have a checking account in the bank of faith. It was opened for me by Christ himself, and opened in his name. Thus far, I have never found the account empty.

- It is the responsibility of every local church to take care of those who preach the gospel (Her Own Pastor — Missionaries — Other Pastors).
- It is the responsibility of every gospel preacher to cut himself free from the entanglements of this world.

5th. **If we would enter the ministry we must go to our studies.** — God’s servants are preeminently men of study and prayer. They addict themselves to the study of the Word. In the eighteenth century, there was a saying that was common in the streets of London. John Gill was so well known for his devotion to study that men would say, “As surely as John Gill is in his study,” such and such will happen.

No man can preach who does not study. Any man who is not content to spend his life in his study has no place in the pulpit of any church. The reason deacons exist is so that God’s servants can study and pray (Acts 6:1-4).

The preacher must forsake business, politics, community affairs, family enjoyments, and many other worthwhile projects. He who enters the ministry can be nothing but a preacher. If he tries to be anything else he will be an embarrassment to himself and to others. But if ever a man enters the ministry, what a preacher that man will be!

- His name will be known in hell.
- His name will be known in heaven.
- It is of no concern to him if his name is forgotten everywhere else.

A dying preacher was heard praying, “God, if you let me live, I will lay down every interest, every activity, and every occupation. I will live only to preach the gospel of your dear Son.” It was too late for him, but not for me

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and not for you. Yet, the only way anyone will ever truly enter the ministry is on his deathbed, as he dies to the world and the world dies to him!

(Mark 8:35) “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”

William Grimshaw once said, “When I die I shall then have my greatest grief and my greatest joy — my greatest grief that have done so little for Jesus, and my greatest joy that Jesus has done so much for me!”

OUR ATTITUDE

Now, let’s look for just a few minutes at the text with which we began — Ephesians 3:7-9, and let me show you the attitude we ought to have with regard to the work of the ministry.

(Ephesians 3:7-9) “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. (8) Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; (9) And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”

What high, lofty and sobering thoughts we ought to have regarding the work of the ministry, the preaching of the gospel! It is an awesome thing to stand before men as God’s spokesman. Each time we stand in the pulpit, it is our responsibility to proclaim the eternal truths of Divine Revelation. We must speak to the immortal souls of men, as one who must give account to God. To me, there is nothing on earth more important or pressing than my preparation for my next sermon. Yet, it is the unspeakable joy of God’s servants to proclaim to men the unsearchable riches of God’s grace, with boldness and power. The work of the ministry is great. It requires all of a man, and more. It is too great for a mere man. Truly, “*we have this treasure in earthen vessels.*” Daily we are constrained to cry, “*Who is sufficient for these things?...But our sufficiency is of God!*”

THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

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“Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!” — Imagine that! The God of Glory has given us the high honor, awesome responsibility, and great privileges of making “all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not.”

Let this ambition fire our souls, to make all men know the glory of Christ by the gospel. Let David’s dying prayer be ours while we live. *“Blessed by His glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory.”* May it please God to put you into the ministry and use you for his glory, that you may serve your generation by the will of God, until he receives you up into Glory, for Christ’s sake.

Amen.