

“The Pastoral Calling”
1 Timothy 4:14-16
(Preached at Trinity, July 11, 2021)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In this chapter Paul has been dealing with Timothy on a personal, pastoral level. Now **Verse 14** sums it all up. “Timothy, you’ve been called by God and ordained by your peers. The Holy Spirit has equipped you for this high calling. Don’t neglect it.”
1 Timothy 4:14 NAU - "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you"
2. Instead of neglecting his calling, Timothy was to give great energy in fulfilling it. Paul uses the strongest of language.
1 Timothy 4:15 NAU - "Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress will be evident to all."
3. In the final verse of **Chapter 4** Paul sums up the total duty of Timothy as a pastor.
1 Timothy 4:16 NAU - "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching"
Philip Ryken:
“Timothy must keep a careful eye on both his behavior and his teaching. If he fails in either one he will fail in the ministry. As Matthew Henry commented, “Those who teach by their doctrine must teach by their life, else they pull down with one hand what they build up with the other.”¹
John Calvin – “The man who wishes to make himself useful in Christ’s service must devote all his energies to maintaining the honour of his ministry.”²
Richard Baxter – “It is a palpable error of some ministers, who make such a disproportion between their preaching and their living; who study hard to preach exactly, and study little or not at all to live exactly. We must study as hard how to live well as how to preach well.”³
4. In this final passage Paul is commanding Timothy to stay on course, both personally as well as doctrinally.
Some pastors go off course, some even leaving the ministry altogether. Some treat their calling as just a job – they put in their time and then retire.
Some, by their actions, render their ministry void. There are many things that can exclude a pastor from the office or render his ministry ineffective.
3. Paul admonishes Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you.”
In these three verses he uses five imperatives:

¹ Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Daniel M. Doriani, and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2007), 180.

² John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964) Page 85.

³ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005) Pages 63-64.

- Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you.
 - Take pains with these things.
 - Be absorbed in them – immerse yourself, commit yourself.
 - Pay close attention to yourself and your teaching.
 - Persevere in these things.
4. Timothy was under great pressure at this time of his ministry. He may have even been in danger of leaving the ministry.
2 Timothy 1:6-7 NAU - "For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline."
5. Before we examine this exhortation to pastors to stay the course, I want to digress for a moment to exhort every believer in Christ.
 As with many of the other qualities of an excellent pastor these are truths that speak to every believer. Although not all have been called to the ministry, we all have a calling. Not a pastoral calling but the Christian calling.
- a. It is a high calling
Philippians 3:14 – "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
 - b. It is a holy calling
2 Timothy 1:9 – "Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"
 - c. It is a heavenly calling
Hebrews 3:1 – "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;"
 - d. We are commanded to give heed to our calling
2 Peter 1:10 – "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:"
Ephesians 4:1 NAU - "therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,"
 - e. Are you faltering in the rigors of the Christian life. Have you stepped back from your steadfast walk? Has your life become inconsistent with your doctrine?
 Paul says, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things"
6. Although not every believer has the gift of pastoring, all of us must be faithful to that which we have been given.
Matthew 25:21 – "His lord said unto him, 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."
Luke 16:10 – "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."
7. We must all: "Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress will be evident to all."

- We must all discipline ourselves unto holiness. This is the duty of every believer. God commands us to be holy.
- We must all give ourselves to being people of integrity—in other words, we must determine in our hearts that we will follow Christ at all times, no matter what it costs us.
- We must give ourselves to continual devotion to the Bible – to read it, study it, memorize it, and apply it to every area of our lives. There are professing Christians who have never read it through. We all need to have a reading plan.
- We must give ourselves to prayer.

The only way we can attain to these high standards is through the Holy Spirit who indwells us and through the consistent application of His Word.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 NAU - "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction"

8. Paul tells Timothy, "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you." The charge can go forth to us all, "Do not neglect the great duty of serving our Lord." Do not neglect those gifts the Holy Spirit has give to equip you for service.

Now let us look more particularly at Paul's charge to Timothy. The focus is upon the faithfulness of the excellent pastor.

- I. The faithful pastor does not neglect his spiritual gift – **Verse 14**

The context is that of abandonment of the ministry. I have seen far too many falter and turn back.

Matthew Henry – "The gifts of God will wither if they be neglected."

- A. "Which was bestowed on you"

The pastor has a particular calling from God – he has particular gifts that qualify him to be a pastor – We saw the outworking of these in **Chapter 3**

1. He has the gift of shepherding – of caring for people.
He has the gift of oversight – the ability to watch over souls.
He must have certain administrative and leadership skills. This includes spiritual giftedness as well as practical experience. This is a problem for many young pastors who have never experienced life in the world.
He has the gift of ministering the Word – preaching and teaching.
There are differing degrees, but all are present.
2. Paul calls this a grace that was given to him
Ephesians 3:8 NAU - "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,"
3. He expressed great gratitude for his own calling
1 Timothy 1:12 NAU - "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,"
4. Timothy's gift was affirmed by a direct revelation from God – "prophetic utterance"
 - a. Today the pastor's call does not come through direct revelation but by the urging of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Today the pastor's call comes through Divine providence.
 - (1) God gives him a desire - a compulsion
 - (2) God equips him to meet the qualifications

- (3) God then opens doors of opportunity
- c. His calling is then confirmed collectively through the church.
- B. The pastor must not neglect these gifts that have been bestowed upon him
The faithful pastor attends carefully to the matter of his ministry – Verse 15
“take pains with these things” – μελετάω - to care for, attend to carefully
“Be absorbed in them”
1. He must have a consuming devotion to his calling
 2. **Verse 10** – "For it is for this we labor and strive"
κοπιᾶω to grow weary, tired, exhausted, wearisome effort, to toil
 3. **Verse 15** - "so that your progress will be evident to all."
 - a. There is progress – The pastor continues to grow in his ministry
As he gives himself to the matters of the ministry he will progress
in them and others will bear witness
 - b. Successful ministries do not just happen but must be built
 - c. God blesses the faithfulness of His people – as we are faithful in
the use of our gifts God increases them.
- II. He pays close attention to the matter of his own life and his doctrine – **Verse 16**
Personal holiness and doctrinal purity
- A. "Pay close attention to yourself"
1. Moral purity, personal holiness, faithfulness to duty
 2. How is this accomplished? The Psalmist gives us the answer.
Psalms 119:9 NAS - "How can a young man keep his way pure? By
keeping *it* according to Thy word."
 3. He must continually guard against the great plague of sin.
He must examine himself continually and pray fervently.
The Word of God is his standard.
- B. He must build his ministry upon doctrinal purity
1. This too is accomplished with the Word of God as our standard
 2. It demands study
 3. It demands unshakable resolve to the authority of Scripture and its
sufficiency.
- C. "you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."
This can be understood in several ways:
1. He will save himself from eternal judgement.
 - a. This focuses upon human responsibility. We know that we are
saved through Jesus Christ alone. We do nothing for our salvation.
We can add nothing to it. But we must never presume upon the
grace of God – Paul didn't
1 Corinthians 9:27 NAU - "but I discipline my body and
make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I
myself will not be disqualified."
 - b. We have examples of many, even ministers, who did not stay on
course – they fell away
2 Timothy 4:10 NAU - "for Demas, having loved this present
world, has deserted me"

1 Timothy 1:19 NAU - "keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith."

c. **Richard Baxter** – “Many have warned others that they come not to that place of torment, while they hastened to it themselves: many a preacher is now in hell, who had a hundred times called upon his hearers to use the utmost care and diligence to escape it.”⁴

d. Perseverance is a distinguishing mark of genuine faith
John 8:31 NAU - "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine;"

Romans 2:6-7 NAU - "who will render to every man according to his deeds: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;"

2. The pastor will save others through the faithful fulfillment of his office.

a. The work of preaching is a matter of life or death.

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 NAU - "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?"

b. The pastor is an instrument of life - God blesses faithfulness as the pastor carries out God’s appointed means for the salvation of souls.

c. Paul is also telling Timothy that his life and preaching is a matter of great importance in the eternal condition of others.

In Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* Interpreter describes the Christian minister:

“Christian saw the picture of a very grave Person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it. It had eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of Books in his hand, the Law of Truth was written upon his lips, the World was behind his back; it stood as if it pleaded with men and a crown of gold did hang over its head. The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand; he can beget children, travail in birth with children, and nurse them himself when they are born. And whereas thou seest him with eyes lift to Heaven, the best of Books in his hand, and the Law of Truth writ on his lips; it is to shew thee that his work is to know and unfold dark things to Sinners.

I have shewed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the Lord of the place whither thou are going, hath authorized to be thy Guide in all difficult places thou may’s meet in the way; Wherefore take good heed to what I have shewed thee, and bear well in thy mind what thou hast seen; lest in thy journey thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee right, but there ways goes down to death.”⁵

⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005) Page 53.

⁵ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Company, Inc.), pages 25-26.

- d. We are saved by Christ alone. No part of His glory can be transferred to men, but God is pleased to do this work through the means of the preaching of His Word by those He has raised up as His ministers.
 - c. Careless behavior in the life of the minister is inconsistent with his office and can render his preaching ineffective.
3. A third way he will deliver himself and others is from the power and curse of sin. And again, this is through the preaching of the Word of God.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAU - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
- a. The pastor's duty is to faithfully preach, warning his hearers to flee from every form of unrighteousness.
 - b. Puritan Thomas Boston was confined to his bed during the final months of his life. On the Lord's Day he would preach from his bed as his small congregation gathered around his window. His final sermon was titled, "The Necessity of Self-Examination." He challenged his congregation to remain true to the faith, begging them to make sure of their eternal salvation and to 'bend all their endeavors and attention to gain a blessed and happy eternity.'"⁶

Conclusion:

1. This is my prayer for each of you. That each would give heed to your soul, giving all energy to make your calling and election sure.
2. My duty is to give attention to both my life and my doctrine so that I don't prove a hindrance to God's great work within you.
 And to labor with all my heart to see you stand before Christ as a pure chaste bride.
2 Corinthians 11:2 NAU - "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."

⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Daniel M. Doriani, and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 192.