

# *Called to the Ministry?*

## How to Know Whether or Not You are Called to the Ministry *A study by Earl Jackson*

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Stephen,

I sympathize with the struggle you are having about this issue of "how to know if you are called to preach?" In the light of Sunday's message from *Jeremiah 23*, you should be concerned. That passage is clearly condemning prophets who claim to speak God's word, but in reality are speaking their own words. They claim to be sent, but in reality they are UNAUTHORIZED to speak for God! **"They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD" (verse 16). "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied" (verse 21).** There are other passages which deal with this very same concept, but I did not mention them on Sunday, because we had all we could do to deal with this one passage. You might also want to look up and study these passages which also address the concept of UNAUTHORIZED PREACHERS: (*Jer. 2: 8; Jer. 14: 14; Jer. 27: 15; Jer. 28: 15; Jer. 29: 9, 31; Ezek. 13: 3; Ezek. 34: 2; Matt. 23: 13-29; Lk. 11: 42-52*).

Just as there are UNAUTHORIZED, and therefore UNSENT preachers; there are also AUTHORIZED and SENT preachers. Here are some examples of preachers who have been authorized and sent by God: (*ISA. 6: 8; Jn. 20: 21; Acts 13: 4; Rom. 10: 15*). The Romans passage asks **How shall they preach except they be sent?** The answer is not given, but it is merely implied and assumed based on doctrinal concepts which should be universally understood by every believer. There are lot's of questions treated like this in the Bible. Questions that are not explicitly answered, are answered based on extensions from, and applications of other Scriptural passages, precepts, lessons, doctrines and principles. See 1: 6 of the London Baptist Confession of 1689. (Note: if you do not have a copy of the London Baptist Confession of Faith you can get it here: [http://www.reformed.org/documents/baptist\\_1689.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/baptist_1689.html) You should have this document, especially if you think you are called to preach, because it presents the historic Christian doctrinal position with Scripture references).

So let's think about this very important question of *Rom.10: 15. How shall the preach except they be sent?* The question confirms the Biblical concept that UNAUTHORIZED preachers (i.e. unsent preachers) must never attempt to preach God's message. Why?

Because God cannot use the message preached by these Unauthorized preachers? No, God can use the Word of God, even when it is preached by false prophets or unauthorized preachers. There is a notable example of this in *Phil.1: 15-18*. Paul is talking about false preachers who *preach Christ out of strife and contention, not sincerely (vs. 14-15)*. Then he mentions the true preachers who preach Christ out of good will and love (*vs. 14,16*).Next he makes an amazing statement in verse 17. *“What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice“*. What we are to make of this passage seems clear...GOD CAN AND DOES SOMETIMES USE EVEN FALSE PREACHING. Does this justify men appropriating to themselves a spiritual office without a Divine call to the office? Absolutely not. False preachers, and UNAUTHORIZED pastors are an abomination to God (*Prov. 28: 9; Prov 12: 22*). But can He use them? Absolutely, because He says: *“My Word will not return unto Me void, but it will accomplish that whereunto I have sent it” (Isa. 55: 11)*. God can use the water of His word in spite of the vessel carrying it.

We should underscore, that this appears to be an exception rather than a rule. The rule is that men should be AUTHORIZED by God in some manner. And churches must listen only to those whom are so AUTHORIZED, and not to false teachers. So, how are men authorized? How can they, and others recognize that they are authorized? How can we tell who is authorized and who isn't authorized? How can a person know for certain that he has a genuine call from God upon his life? What exactly is a call? Is it an audible voice? Is it an inner voice? Is it a voice at all? What constitutes a call? What kind of people does God call? How can we confirm, and be certain, that we have a call of God upon our lives? What role do people have in confirming, recognizing, and validating a persons Divine calling? What are the qualifications for ministers? These are just some of the important questions I am going to try to answer from the Scriptures.

### **I can see that this study will be very useful in at least three situations.**

- 1)** It should present Biblical concepts for anyone who is wondering whether or not he has a Divine call to the ministry. It is absolutely essential for a person to understand, how God calls? Why God calls? Whom God calls? And what is a proper response to God's call? And how to make certain that people recognize a Divinely called person?
- 2).** It should be useful as a guide to churches, which are responsible to God, for the souls of men; and which are responsible to make absolutely certain that they call only an AUTHORIZED pastor for the leadership and nurture of the flock. Churches often make serious mistakes in this area, because they pretend that it doesn't really matter whether or not they find out if a preacher has been called or not. This is a grave error which this study will clearly expose.
- 3)** It should have at least some usefulness to open the eyes of the people (the flock) so that they don't follow any of the false shepherds and prophets that are abounding in our day. Every believer should be able to recognize an UNAUTHORIZED AGENT. Some will doubt me on this point, because after all, even the eleven true apostles did not recognize that the person who was handling the finances, was himself a devil. I will attempt to prove that the case of Judas was unique, and that now that Scripture is complete it should be impossible for the very elect to be deceived in that fashion.

So this should be a very interesting little study. If it ministers in the above three areas, then it will have fulfilled its mission. I looked to see what kind of books, articles and sermons I could find upon this topic, but this is a barren field. I could find only a small handful of materials. So this encouraged me in the undertaking of setting in order the Scriptural teachings upon this subject. At least I am not plowing somebody else's field. We will be exploring, as it were, in virtually uncharted territory. May God bless our study.

We have already shown the danger of entering the ministry presumptuously. Going when we haven't been sent, and speaking without God's words on our lips, are grave and serious dangers. *Malachi 2: 7* has a strong word concerning this... "***For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.***" The priests of old, the prophets and the Christian minister, are all *the messengers of the Lord*. This has the connotation of Divine authority and Divine representation. His ministers are called among other things: *Ambassadors, Heralds, Stewards, Watchmen, Messengers, Teachers, Pastors, Bishops and Elders*. All these titles indicate the high degree of responsibility that comes from being a commissioned representative of another. An *ambassador* from an earthly king, is a position of great importance, because he represents his king's governance, laws, society and policies. It is no wonder that Jeremiah said his heart was broken when he observed the false pastors whom God says: "***I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied... Behold, I am against them... I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.***" This is the great problem of the ambassadorial impostor. And he is an impostor whom God has not sent.

Moses was "*sent*", and his case is instructional in this matter. "***Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain***" (*Ex. 3: 10-12*). Moses was sent as a divine ambassador from the Eternal God, with the express purpose of delivering God's people out of Egypt. It is a normal human reaction to disbelieve such a Divine commission when it first comes. Listen to Moses: "***Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?***" God...I'M NOT QUALIFIED FOR THAT!...I'M JUST MOSES!...I'M A NOBODY. I HAVN'T BEEN TO SEMINARY...I STUTTER, AND I CANNOT EVEN SPEAK PROPERLY... YOU CAN'T CALL ME LORD...I'M NOT QUALIFIED!

Moses, you may think that you are not qualified. But *I Am* your qualification! And *I Am* your authorization!

Very often one of the first signs of a real Divine call is the almost instant denial by the recipient of the call. I CAN'T DO THAT! People who are swift to enter the call as an

impostor, do so in a fearless assertion of self confidence. People who are truly called, are usually very reluctant and doubtful of themselves. Delivering the Egyptians was the furthest thing away from Moses' mind, heart and desire. But God pressed the issue by reminding Moses that he was not just somebody who stepped up to the ministry uninvited, but he was indeed *sent* by the Lord. Look at verse 15. ***“And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you.”*** Moses doubted it, but God commanded him to say it. ***THE LORD GOD HATH SENT ME.*** Moses not only ceased from his doubting about it, but he verbally acknowledged it, and he reinforced it with the words of his lips. Had he remained in his state of disbelief concerning his call, he would have been sinning, and God would have dealt with him in a different manner (See the clear case of Jonah the prophet). But God was merciful to Moses, and his heart was immediately softened to embrace God's call and predestinating purposes. When Moses spoke these words to the children of Israel, and later to Pharaoh, he absolutely believed in them and their validity over him and over all involved...***GOD HATH SENT ME.*** God has qualified me. God has authorized me. He is the ***“I Am”***. I am the ***“I am not”***. I will obey Him.

We see the same sort of language in the mouth of the Apostle Paul. See how clearly he verbalizes his calling and ambassadorship. ***“ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God” (Rom. 1: 1).*** ***“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (Col. 1: 1).*** ***“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ” (1Tim. 1: 1).*** ***“Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle” (1Tim. 2: 7).*** ***“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (2Tim. 1: 1).*** There is no doubt that Paul clearly understood, believed, affirmed and proclaimed the fact that he was ***sent, called, separated unto, and ordained to his apostleship and preachingship, by the will of God.*** Those who are truly called, even though they may doubt it at first, will fully come to the place where they totally understand and embrace their Divine calling.

Of course the obvious question is “How do we know that Paul wasn't just being presumptuous, and jumping into the ministry in the energy of his flesh, and without any spiritual warrant?” Well, his conversion and calling on the Damascus Road, are clearly revealed in scripture. But your calling, and my calling are probably not so dramatic and monumental. Nobody saw me get smitten with blindness at the presence of an audible heavenly voice. I had no such experience. That did not happen. Yet I am called. I had no witnesses of the event. But suppose that Acts 9 had been left out of our Bibles, and nobody witnessed Saul's conversion either? If that were the case, and it's not, but if it were...***WE WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO KNOW THAT PAUL WAS NOT BEING A PRESUMPTUOUS IMPOSTOR, BUT THAT HE WAS INDEED CALLED OF GOD AND SENT!*** How can we know such a thing? The answer is the same inspired key that we use to know if we, or anyone else, is truly called. So this is very important. If you need to, reread what I am about to say many times. Read it until you get it...over and over, till you get it. It is a key factor in the scriptural doctrine of a call to the ministry. It applies no matter who you are, when you live, where you live, or when you serve. You

will not be confused about your calling if you examine it in the light of these Biblical principles. They are the key.

## 1Corinthians 9: 16-19

These verses are critical in identifying who is, and who is not, called of God. “***For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.***” There is a lot in this passage that should occupy our attention, especially if we are trying to ascertain somebody’s calling. We can know if Paul was called? And we can know if we are called?

There was a time, not long ago, when the local minister, was perhaps the most well respected and beloved person in the community. He was usually the most educated. He usually lived in the nicest house (the manse or parsonage). He had a job that gave him lots of leisure, afforded him opportunities to read the classics, meditate on poetry and listen to fine music. His job was much envied and desired, because it seemed like a “Cake Job” (to use a modern term). Many men indeed lusted after just such a job, because it seems so easy an cushiony. It is the idea; job in many peoples mind. (Right now I’ll not discuss the real labor-intensive nature of caring for men’s souls. It’s actually the most difficult job in the world. But I’ll discuss that later). Right now, you need to see and understand how easy it is for someone to fantasize about, and covet what appears to be the ideal “Cake Job”. It is just because of these false notions and fleshly desires that many impostors have entered the ministry...not with a divine call, but motivated by the desires of the flesh and heart.

What does this have to do with anything? Plenty! Paul says that preaching the gospel gives him NOTHING TO GLORY IN. See it in his words? ***though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of (v. 16)***. For the person who is truly called, there is no self-satisfaction (no glorying) in the gospel ministry. Money grabbing preachers, who enter the ministry for the glory of it, evidence by their conduct and their words, that they are in it for the **glory**. Preachers like this, who are desirous of vain glory, wealth, ease, self-satisfaction, fame or any of the other fleshly desires, are not called of God. They are impostors. Thus according to Paul, the first mark of a called minister is that he is not desirous of glory. He does not practice self-glorification.

Lets’ get back to Paul and let us learn the second characteristic of a truly called preacher. Paul continues by saying, ***for necessity is laid upon me***. Perhaps this is the most important identifier of the true “called” man of God. A great **necessity** has been placed upon him. The great burden placed upon the called servant is the burden of obedience to

your Lord and Master. We must obey Him in everything we do and think. And if we obey Him, we will also love souls and the gospel will burn in our heart. I am not inventing this. Look for yourself and see what Paul said unto king Agrippa about his heavenly calling.

***“And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision”***

I have highlighted and underlined the key thing in Paul’s summary to king Agrippa of his divine calling. ***Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.*** Think about it Agrippa...I’m standing here, preaching to you, because I am obedient to my Master. There is a lot that can be said about such obedience, but the most notable thing about this heavy ***necessity***, Paul says, is this: ***necessity is laid upon me.*** I did not seek it Agrippa. God put it upon me. He laid it upon my shoulders. It is the heavy burden that I bear day and night. Indeed oh King Agrippa, I will gladly bear it, even unto the uttermost ends of the earth. Why? Not so I can glory. But so that He may receive all the glory! ***I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision!*** It’s all about Him, and nothing about me. This Agrippa, is now the whole reason for my being. It was for this purpose that I was born, and it was for this purpose that Jesus Came to me. See It? ***I have appeared unto thee for this purpose.*** For what purpose? ***To make thee a minister and a witness.***

A person with a Divine call upon his life soon figures it out. It is part of his destiny. I could produce numerous examples showing that the call is really from before the womb. Consider Jeremiah and John the Baptist as examples. ***“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” (Jer. 1: 5).*** Do yourself a favor and study the first ten verses of Jeremiah. They beautifully illustrate the dynamics of the call of God upon a prophets life. Even as a child Jeremiah was shaped and molded by this destiny which God had for him. It was the very purpose for his existence. He was created to be a prophet. Paul is announcing the same concept in ***1 Corinthians 9***. Jesus told him that it was for this express purpose...i.e. the purpose of God. He appeared unto him...to make him ***a minister and a witness!*** It was Paul’s destiny. What is your destiny? Have you realized it? And are you fulfilling it? A truly called servant, will find these things out. He will know them. He must know them. He will be compelled to know them. And that is why Paul says what he says next.

***“Yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”*** Paul concludes his Epistle to the

Colossians with a very direct and pointed word to a person who is only mentioned twice in the Bible. He says: “**And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it**” (Col. 4: 17). Take heed Archippus. You have received a ministry. You have a calling from the Lord. (In *Philemon 1: 2* he calls Archippus a *Fellow soldier*). Archippus, you are a fellow soldier under Divine commands. Your heavenly general has called you. He has blown the battle trumpet. He has fitted you for what you are to do. You have a destiny Archippus. SEE **THAT THOU FULFILL IT!** It’s no different for you Archippus, then it is for me. **Yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!**

What Paul says to Timothy is along the same lines “**But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry**” (2Tim. 4: 5). When he says **Make full proof of thy ministry**. He is saying **FULFILL IT!** It’s not an option to ignore it. You must embrace it. Make full proof of it. Fulfill your ministry. Fulfill your calling. Do the work of an evangelist.

In Colossians 1 Paul says some things about his own gospel ministry. But notice **be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...whereof I Paul am made a minister** (v.23). (Then he has the wonderful verse 24, which I don’t want to read, but you can check it out if you want. It is a verse which totally deglamorizes the ministry by showing it’s terrible attendant sufferings). What I want you to see is verses 25 and 26. “**Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints**”. These are truly pregnant verses. Much could be said about God’s predestinating purposes **The dispensation of God... Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations**. But I don’t even want to touch upon that...all I want you to see is the words I underlined: **to fulfill the word of God**. Paul’s destiny, which he was **made a minister** for, was to fulfill God’s word...not just in the sense of prophecy (which is indicated), but in the sense of OBEDIENCE. Paul’s obedience to his heavenly calling, was the fulfilling of the word of God. Think about this. If you are called; like Paul, like Archippus, like Timothy, like Jeremiah, like Daniel, like John the Baptist; then you will fall on your face before God and men, and you will say: “**Yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!**”

I could spend hours talking about that one concept, but I don’t want to. My purpose here is merely to be suggestive. But if the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart about a call to the ministry. By all means follow his leading. If that means looking up the very significant meaning of the word “**WOE**” then by all means do that. If it means exegeting every word individually, then do that. You have to be true to God, and not me. This is serious stuff, and just because I am moving on to a different thought, does not mean that you should move on with me. Maybe you need to stop and do some re-reading. Learn how to listen to God’s word, and apply it to your own soul. If you cannot apply it to yourself, then how are you going to ever apply it to the souls of your hearers?

**“For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation**

*of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then?"* With these words, Paul now moves his discussion to that of motivation. What motivates him to act as he does? This has practical implications if you are debating, in your own mind, your calling. It also has applications for a church, which is trying to acknowledge a person's Divine calling. Churches are expected to seek out, and recognize those among them who have indeed been called. They are people whom God has "gifted" to the church (*Eph. 4: 11-12*). It behooves them to recognize these gifts and utilize them for the Glory of God. They are repeatedly told to *know them*, to *esteem them highly*, to *mark them out*, to *submit themselves unto them*, and to *seek the word of the Lord* from them.

(*1Thess. 5: 12-13; Phil. 3: 17; 1Cor. 6: 15-16*). These are not optional things. These are essential things, which the church must do to recognize those among them whom the Lord has sent. *"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him"* (*Deut. 18: 18*).

So exactly how does *1Cor. 9: 17* relate to motivation concerning the calling to ministry? Paul is describing how the "human will" functions in response to God's call. It either acts willingly, in obedience (*doing the will of God from the heart Eph. 6: 6*); or unwillingly, in disobedience. Then he makes a pretty remarkable statement, he says in effect: EITHER WAY, GOD'S WILL IS DONE. The little word "but" is a very common Greek particle, and it can be translated "but" (and often is translated this way), but it can also correctly be translated "and" or "or". That changes the meaning of the sentence ever so slightly. It could be translated: *"For if I do this voluntarily, I get a reward, and (or) if I am unwilling to do it, I am still entrusted with an obligation (or stewardship)."* So he is clearly saying that either/or, in both cases, willingly or unwillingly, ministry is still his obligation and responsibility. He is a trustee (a steward), whether he accepts it or not, whether he wants it or not, whether he believes it or not. Voluntarily, or against his will, it does not matter...God has called Him, and God's will, will always be done. I want us to look at a perfect Biblical illustration of this important doctrine.

*"Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah"*

(*Jonah 1: 1-3*). Nothing could be clearer than the fact that Jonah was UNWILLING to perform what God called him to do. Did his unwillingness change his ultimate destiny as a messenger of God? Absolutely not. It would have been easier for him, had he simply willingly obeyed. He would have received (to use the words of Paul) *a reward* the easy way. Instead, he chose to disobey God and act unwillingly, and thus irresponsibly.

*"Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah."* It reminds me of when Adam and Eve tried to hide themselves from the *presence of the Lord (Gen. 3: 8)*. Such attempts at hiding are exercises in futility. God prepared a perfect fish to eat Jonah, and to bring him to a different kind of prayer closet where he could never hide from God.



Did Jonah's unwillingness and disobedience, in any way, set God back, or cause Him to change Jonah's calling? Did it surprise God? Did it worry him? Absolutely not. In fact, Jonah did not know it, but he had an appointment in the belly of a fish, that God was going to force him (against his will) to keep. Man's willingness or unwillingness does not change God's plans. God called Jonah to go Ninevah, and to Ninevah he would go!...whether he likes it or not, whether he approves of it or not, whether he believes it or not, whether he is willing or not! Jonah, it does not matter what you are going to do, because you are going to do exactly what I want you to do! You see Jonah...I AM GOD! I do all my will, all the time. ***My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isa. 46: 10).***

You can read the rest of the story on your own. You probably are familiar with it already. But my point is that Jonah illustrates Paul. Paul, ***kicked against the pricks (Acts 9: 5).*** He resisted God's call. He was unwilling. He persecuted God's people. (***Read Acts 26: 14-16***). So there is more to ***1 Cor. 9: 17*** than meets the eye. It is a powerful testimony to the absolute Sovereignty of God in the matter of who He calls and why. Even though Paul asserts in Acts that he was not ***disobedient to the heavenly vision***, we learn from this verse (***1Cor. 9: 17***) that his obedience did not come easily or without mental re-adjustments. He was made willing, in spite of his unwillingness, and it happened in God's time and at God's place (on the Damascus Road). He deals with us in the exact same way. He is not less Sovereign in the administration of our calling than He was in the administration of Jonah or Paul.

Because of this note of the Sovereignty of God over the call, and our response to it, it brings up the whole notion of the role of Divine providence in our calling.

## **Galatians 1: 15-24**

***“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.”***

It has been observed by men of God, in all times, that God's providence has been operative throughout their lives in order to fit them for, and bring them to, their Divine

calling. Once Paul acknowledged the call of God upon his life, it became crystal clear to him that God had *separated him from his mothers womb, and called him by His grace*. This strongly suggests that Paul recognized that everything in his life was ordained, by the grace of God, to fit him for his Divine calling.

There is no such thing as chance. Everything happens in fulfillment of God's absolute sovereign plan. God has decreed His purpose and it shall happen. (*See Rom. 9:11, Isa. 46:10-11, Eph. 3:11, Acts 4:28 and 2 Tim. 1:9*). God pre-programmed everything that will come to pass (*Eph. 1:11*). Everything can be traced back to God's ultimate plan, for *from Him are all things (Rom. 11:36). There is a time for every purpose under Heaven (Eccl. 3:1)*. God has planned out this great purpose to the smallest detail. This includes the exact timing when everything would occur. He also prepared every relationship with every other detail. Nothing was ignored. Even the smallest and seemingly insignificant detail was included, such as the number of hairs on our heads.

“Chance” was a concept invented by certain Greek philosophers, especially promoted among the Epicureans (who were opposed in *Acts 17*). It denies the existence of a personal and sovereign God who foreordains everything. Similarly, there is no such thing as luck, either good or bad. Nor is there any fortune or accidents. Even the roll of dice has been determined by God (*Pro. 16:33*). Conversely, there is also no such thing as blind fate, a concept promoted by the ancient Stoics. False doctrine always tries to eliminate the absolute Sovereignty of God. It cannot be eliminated. But He can certainly eliminate those who oppose Him. “Whatever will be will be“, because God has determined it to be so. Coincidence is true only in the sense that two events may coincide, or happen at the same time. But that is because God planned it like that.

John Gill, in his massive commentary, was the first, and possibly the only, commentator to ever comment on every single verse of the Bible. At this verse, his comments clearly point out that he saw here, in the statements of Paul, the doctrines of the Providence and Predestination of God. Watch out as you read this quote. It is the longest sentence you'll probably ever read. Gill was fond of extremely long sentences. **“By his "mother", without a figure is meant, his real natural mother, whose name is said to be Theocrita; and this separation from her womb is to be understood either of that distinction made of him in Providence, as soon as born; which not only took him, and safely brought him out of his mother's womb, but ever since took special care of him, and saved and preserved him to be called; for all the chosen vessels of salvation are distinguished from others, in a providential way; they are more under the special care of Providence than others are, even whilst in a state of unregeneracy; God's eye of Providence is upon them, his heart is towards them, he waits upon them to be gracious to them, and many are the remarkable appearances of Providence for them; see Psa 22:9. Or rather this designs divine predestination, which is a separation, a setting apart of persons, for such and such purposes, as here of the apostle; and the eternity of it, it being very early done, from his mother's womb; whilst he was in it, before he was born, and had done either good or evil; from the beginning of time, from the foundation of the world, and before it, even**

**from eternity: all which phrases express the same thing, and intend either his predestination to grace and glory, to holiness and happiness, to sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, and to the obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; or his predestination to apostleship, to the work of the ministry, to the Gospel of Christ, to which he was separated in eternity, and in time; reference seems to be had to Jer 1:5 or indeed both, and his separation or predestination to both was owing to the sovereign will and good pleasure of God, as was also his after call.”**

When you are considering your call, or someone else’s call, it is essential that you consider the providences of God in your life or their life. Has God been at work, even from your childhood, in preparing you for your calling? Many preachers can testify, that as they look back in retrospect (hindsight), they can see how God worked, throughout their upbringing, life and education, to fit them for their calling. Perhaps he gives a person certain mental capacities for learning and understanding at an early age? Were you interested in spiritual matters or religious things from childhood? Did you seem to enjoy the whole concept of church, church music, preachers and preaching, from an early age? Did you ask questions, or exhibit an interest in Sunday School as a child? Did you early on ask things, and seek out answers like: “Where did I come from?” “Why am I here?”

Paul certainly had a great intellectual capacity, which God developed in him as he sat at the feet of Gamaliel. He exhibited an interest in the law of God and other things at a very early age (*Acts 22: 3*). He became a very devout, educated and zealous Jew. *An Hebrew of the Hebrews (Phil. 3: 5)*. So, even though as a non-believer, he was involved in a discipline that made him a persecutor of Christians: It also fitted him intellectually and spiritually, for the calling that he was to have as a Christian minister. I have personally known people who were, early on in their spiritual journey, involved in false religions and cults, whom God saw fit to deliver into the glorious light of the truth in Christ Jesus. He called them, and even used the things they learned in the false systems, to make them better servants and ministers of the Grace of God. Does not this show the mighty hand of God’s Sovereignty and providence over their lives? I have known others who learned a foreign language as a child in school, only years later to find out that God was calling them to be a missionary in a foreign country where that very language was spoken. This is clearly the predestinating purposes of God at work in their lives.

I can look back in my own life and see how God early on gave me an understanding of balance, beauty, art, music, books, mathematics, logic and clear thinking; which I have used over and over in my ministry ever since. I was not an A student in school, but that did not matter, nor hinder me, from learning how to think in a way which God would later use repeatedly in my life and calling. I have seen these sorts of things over and over as I have ministered, and as God has brought His call to others through my teaching and preaching. I don’t know how many men have heard God’s call to the ministry through my voice. But it is a significant number, as I have preached and taught all over New England. I am aware of at least 7 or 8 that I know of. I can say with some authority, that God’s call is attended with Divine providence throughout the years of ones life...even

from *the womb*. Has His providence effected His calling in you? Think about what He has done in your life. You might just be surprised to find that He has done it all to call you and equip you for His service.

Paul makes another tremendously important statement here in Galatians. You should underscore this in your Bible, especially if you think that you might have a call from God upon your life. He said: *immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood*. When was this? Paul says that it was on the occasion of when God “*called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen*”. When he received his call to preach...HE CONFERRED NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD. The implication is obvious... HE DID CONFER WITH HIM WHO IS NOT FLESH AND BLOOD! In fact, the text seems to indicate that he took three years to do just that...confer with God (See verse 18). God does not reveal anything about the three years Paul spent in the desert city of Damascus, but this one thing is certain, and is revealed. In the deserts of Arabia he did not confer with flesh and blood, but with the Lord Himself!

What do we get from this? Well, I at least, get that it probably took Paul three years to sort everything out in his mind, and fully understand and appreciate what God had done to him. God took him, in an instant, from being a persecutor of God’s people to being an Apostle of God to God’s people. That is quite a radical transformation and calling. While he says that he was not disobedient to the heavenly calling, he also indicates that it took him at least three years to get himself ready for the fulfilling of it. The conferring with that which is not flesh and blood, is an important step in Paul’s calling and qualifications for the ministry. You should follow Paul’s path if you think God has called you. You need a period of communion with God about it. Such conferring with God imparts knowledge of His will to our minds. Consider the case of Peter. Jesus said to Him: “*Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*” Peter received direct knowledge about Christ from the Holy Spirit, apart from flesh and blood. This includes, but is not limited to, his own flesh and blood, as well as the flesh and blood of other humans. Men do not impart God’s knowledge to other people, or to themselves. God is the only one who can re-arrange the neurons and synapses of the brain, and instantaneously alter our thinking without the process of re-education. Returning to the venerable old Dr. Gill look what he says: “**Neither the Gospel, nor any part of it, is an human device or discovery; it is not after man, nor according to the carnal reason of man; it is above the most exalted and refined reason of men; it has in it what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of: its truths are the deep things of God, which the Spirit of God searches and reveals: and which men, left to the light of nature, and force of reason, must have been for ever ignorant of, and could never have discovered.**” So the point is; that God, when He calls somebody to be a minister of His word, (notice that this was when Peter was given his special call *Matt. 16: 18-19*); also conveys special knowledge of the same, directly to the mind, without the agency of flesh and blood in any way shape or form.

Some teachers and theologians have erroneously asserted, that after the completed canon

of the Scriptures, God has ceased any and all manner of direct revelation. This is known as the doctrine of “Cessationism”. It is a theological heresy, partly because it tells God what he cannot do!...GOD, YOU CANNOT SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE MINDS OF MEN. And partly because it tells man what he cannot receive from God!...YOU CANNOT RECEIVE ANY KNOWLEDGE FROM GOD DIRECTLY, BECAUSE THE SCRIPTURES ARE COMPLETE. Both of these heresies are without warrant from the Scriptures themselves, and they are a lame feeble-minded and blasphemous attempt to do away with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit found in *1 Corinthians 12 thru 14*.

Cessationism is an attempt to get rid of all the gifts, but it came about primarily as the result of trying to mainly get rid of the **knowledge gifts**, i.e. the gifts which imply and teach “direct revelation”. See the gifts of *word of wisdom* and *word of knowledge* (*1Cor. 12: 8*), the gift of *faith* (v.9), (Faith is one of the knowledge gifts conveyed by direct revelation). *Prophecy* and *discerning of spirits* and *interpretation of tongues* (v.10) are also **knowledge gifts**, which are imparted by direct manipulation of the neurons and synapses of the brain. But the cessationist does not believe in the operation of these gifts today. It is no wonder then, that so many young cessationist men, find it very difficult to ascertain God’s will for their lives, especially as it relates to their call to the ministry. They are too busy listening to flesh and blood. They have been told that they cannot listen to non-flesh and non-blood, and that non-flesh and non-blood, cannot speak. This is most unfortunate, and it is a lie. This effectually puts the Holy Spirit out of business. He is exclusively, non-flesh and non-blood. But according to those who are warped by this cessationist false doctrine...the Holy Spirit cannot speak. Is the call of God a voice? Yes it is. Is it heard by flesh and blood? No it isn’t. It’s an inner voice, heard by God’s direct manipulation of the neurons and synapses of the brain.

*“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isa.30: 21).*

Cessationism does away with the Holy Spirit, so verses like this and like *1Jn. 2: 27*, have no meaning whatsoever. *“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”* (Compare also verses *20, 1Jn. 2: 20-21; Jn. 14: 26; Heb. 8: 10-11*) . The knowledge and teaching of these verses is direct from God. Here it is called *the anointing*” . *1Jn 3: 24* says that our knowledge of His presence in us comes direct from the Holy Spirit. *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. Jeremiah 31: 33-34* is an important passage dealing with God directly manipulating the neurons and synapses of the brain, writing His word directly on the human heart. It does away with conferring with flesh and blood when it says: *“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD.”* How does God do this? By direct revelation to the brain. *“I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts”*. There is a sense in which spiritual truth is directly imparted to the mind (heart) of believers. *They shall teach no more* because God is teaching directly to the brain without the

agency of flesh and blood. The Bible not only indicates that God can do this, it says that He does do this. This does not do away with the validity of the written word as the basis for our faith and practice. It simply establishes the priority of God over the human mind, and His ability to search it and change it at His will. So my advice to you, especially if you are trying to sort out whether or not you are called of God, is that you don't listen to the nonsense and blasphemous teachings of the cessationist's, who rob you of direct communion with God; but that you make your way spiritually to Damascus and spend some time conferring with God, who is non-flesh and non-blood. He can and will impress His light and truth directly upon your mind, if you are indeed one of His called and chosen ministers.

Paul goes on, (in the passage of Galatians One, which we are considering), to indicate some of the things that happened following his three years spent in communion with God in Damascus. One thing he says, is that he spent 15 days with the Apostle Peter (v. 18). He later met with the Apostle James (v. 19). Then he mentions what amounts to his first missionary journey to Syria and Celicia (v. 21). While these verses are important, I want to concentrate on the things Paul says which have a more direct bearing our subject of a Divine call to the ministry. So that means that we should say a few words about verses 20, 24, and 25.

Verse 20 indicates the content of Paul's teachings. "***Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.***" This statement was not accidentally placed here, as if the Holy Spirit had nothing to do with it. It was placed here precisely because the Holy Spirit wanted to authenticate the source and content of Paul's teachings. Paul had a definite, clear and real calling from the Lord. One of the proofs of his calling is his teachings. They are the absolute truth...***I lie not.*** This is so very important to those who are wondering whether or not they are called of God. Do you have a passion for the truth? Or do you have a lackadaisical and unscriptural attitude that says: it really doesn't matter what we believe, as long as we love the Lord and our fellow men and have a warm and fuzzy feeling in our hearts? Do you intend to honor God in every word you speak or write? Or do you just want to put forward your own agenda, regardless of its content? Will you be willing to speak the truth, even when it means uttering words that will not "win friends and influence people" in your own popularity contest? Is the truth so important to you, that you will be willing to speak it boldly, even though its content clearly condemns men's evil thoughts and ways? Perhaps those of your own household will turn against you (***Matt. 10: 36***). Will you still speak the truth, and speak it uncompromisingly? Is the truth preeminent in your mind and heart? Are you willing to change what you believe if you learn that it is not in fact the truth? Will you do whatever it takes to say with Paul...***I lie not?***

If your pure motive is to honor God, then you, like Paul, will position yourself in His presence ***before God***, (not before flesh and blood), a position from which flows the truth that will keep you from lying. Are you concerned about presenting God's absolute truth? Then you will not be concerned about the approbation of men. Human approval does not empower the message of God. It has to be "the truth", which is derived from Him and

not from flesh and blood. Human approval, can in most cases, actually weaken and dilute God's message. It might sound nice, and win you points with other people, to pepper your writings and sermons with quotes from this expert or that expert, and to write books with hundreds of footnotes from Dr This or Dr That; but GOD DOES NOT NEED MAN'S VERIFICATION OF HIS TRUTH. It is far better to speak God's truth than to quote man's wisdom and human opinions.

My own writings and teachings have been criticized because they don't seem scholarly enough, because I do not frivolously quote human authors. The only time I'll quote someone, is if I think that they have said the truth in a better way than I could have said it. This does not mean that I am non-scholarly. In fact, I have more books in my library, than some public libraries have in their's. With thousands of volumes, ranging on every subject imaginable, I am more than well versed on the various opinions and positions of men when I write or speak on a particular subject or text. But since God does not require man to verify his truth, I prefer to let God be self verifying. That is why I quote scripture in preference to the teachings of men. It is ten thousand times more important what God says, than what Dr So-and-So says. I'm not trying to diminish the validity or content of Dr So-and-So's message, especially if he has received it *before God*. May God bless all faithful and true ministries and messages. But are we supposed to elevate the flesh and blood behind the message? Or are we supposed to elevate the truth which the message contains? Paul put the emphasis on the truth *I lie not*.

What this means, is that if you are truly called, you will think about God's truth (*Phil. 4: 8*). You will learn God's truth (*2Tim. 2: 15*). You will become a scholar of the truth. You will open your mouth, and truth will come out (*Zech. 8: 16; Prov. 12: 17; 1Tim. 2: 7*). You will take up your pen, and the ink will spell out the truth (*Isa. 8: 1; Ps. 45: 1*). You will touch peoples hearts with the truth and not mere human reasoning (*2Tim. 2: 7*). You will hold up the truth. You will focus upon the truth. You will be absorbed with the truth in everything. Truth is essential to ministry. If you could care less about it, then you are not called. But if it is the joy of your soul (*1Cor. 13: 6*), then quite possibly you could be called to labor in it. What a high and noble calling it is, to labor day and night in the truth of God. Gird up your loins with the truth (*Eph. 6: 14*).

Now look at verse 23. "***But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.***" I believe that this also has some bearing on how to recognize your calling from God. God does not call people who have no personal testimony of His grace. You cannot preach grace if you cannot show it in your life. He who was our persecutor is now our preacher! Think about this. It is wonderful, and it is a key to effective ministry. God uses saved people. God's saved people have a testimony of His transforming work in them. You are not saved if you have no grace from God. If you are not saved, you are not called. These things go together and are essential to know if you are really a called vessel of the Lord. The heavenly ambassador has a testimony that is inexplicable apart from the grace of God. There is no other explanation except that God has made a new creature (*2Cor. 5: 17; Gal. 6: 15*).

This is also a potent, but implied, warning. An unsaved ministry is an abomination against God. To be unsaved is to be UNAUTHORIZED. Churches who call people to become their pastors, without questioning their regeneration and conversion, are out of line spiritually. They should not be considered Christian churches at all. They are pagan temples of humanistic philosophy. They are not Christian in any way shape or form if they will allow lost people to fill their pulpits. A Christian church is one that follows Christ in all things. If Christ say's that the lost *are of their father the Devil (Jn. 8: 44)*. Then they belong in their father's house of darkness, and not in the pulpits of Christ's church! This might seem trivial to some, but it is absolutely critical for the health and wellbeing of Christ's church. All around the world today, there are churches which gather on Sunday to listen to godless men bringing messages out of their own empty hearts. A polluted well does not pour forth the water of life. Darkness does not create light. *"A bad tree cannot bear good fruit" (Matt. 7: 18)*. *"Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8: 7-8)*. Get them out of the pulpits! They do not belong there! If they cannot please God, then they certainly cannot do his work!

## Ephesians 3: 7-8

*"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. 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."*

There are several passages of Scripture similar to this one (Look up *1Tim. 1: 12-14* as an example). But I chose this passage because it is a very concise and clear statement of the fact that a call to the ministry is a matter of God's grace, gifting, enablement and placement.

First of all notice that Paul says that he was *made a minister*. The verb GINOMAI means "caused to be". That's what he also indicates in *2Cor. 3: 6*, *"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"*. There he says that God *made us able ministers*. The word is different in 2Corinthians. It has the idea of "enablement" or "being made to be able". Both words indicate that Paul did not make himself, or enable himself to become a minister. God made him a minister, and because of it, he was an *able minister* i.e. qualified / AUTHORIZED. He was *raised up* by God (*Deut. 18: 18*).

The concept is further enlightened by his use of the word ENDUNAMOO in *1Tim. 1: 12*. *Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me*. The concept is that Paul is passive and God is active. God MADE HIM. God ENABLED HIM. And 1Timothy uses even a more forceful word: *putting me into the ministry*. This unusual word means "prostrating me" in other words **putting me into a prostrate and totally passive**



**position.** This is the same word which is used in *1Cor. 12: 28*, one of the key passages concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church. There it says: “***And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.***” Notice that this list of gifts to the church stresses ministry gifts...apostles, prophets, teachers etc. They are “*set*” in the church by God Himself. This is the word meaning “to be put prostrate”. There is a significant lesson here, and it includes the idea that when God puts us into a position of ministry, it is a position where we should be flat on our faces before Him! We are the passive recipients of His active grace. We are not the initiators of our own call. We are not the cause of our own effect.

This leads to Paul’s next words. ***According to the gift of the grace of God given unto me.*** Grace is one of the key theological concepts of the New Testament. It is considered by some to actually be one of the attributes of God. Others consider it to be just an aspect of the Love of God. In Hebrew, it is HESED; in Greek, CHARIS. It has within it’s meaning the idea of “without merit” or “undeserved” and it relates to God’s favor or love. So with that in mind, we could accurately paraphrase Paul’s statement as: “According to the gift of God’s undeserved favor (love)”. This puts the call to the ministry in the realm of God’s gifts of grace. We do not deserve to be shown this special display of God’s love. He calls us by His grace.

If we wanted to, we could expand greatly upon this subject of God’s grace. But that is a subject for a whole separate study, or perhaps a book. Suffice us to simply say, that everything in the Christian life is a matter of God’s grace. ***“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1: 17).***

Paul continues his discussion about how he was called to the ministry with a very significant phrase. He says that all this was ***by the effectual working of his power.*** The word for effectual working is the Greek word ENERGIA. It is where we get our word “energy”. The word for power is DUNAMIS. That’s where we get our words “dynamite, dynamo, dynamic, dynamics”. It means “miraculous power.” So this is really a power packed statement. Paul is saying, that everything that happened; concerning his calling and placement in the ministry; was according to **the energy of God’s supernatural and miraculous power.**

I believe that there is too little of God’s miraculous empowerment, His supernatural energy, in the modern church. We basically have the horrible notion that God doesn’t work like that today. This false concept has robbed the church of all the Divine gifts of the Holy Spirit! And the gifts of ministry are no exception. **WE’VE BEEN ROBBED!** I don’t want to get into it, but **“Dispensationalism” is the thief!**

And her bastard child is “**Cessationism**”. Wrongly dividing the word of God, has taken away the miraculous, wonder-working power of God, from the church. This is clearly evidenced by her weak and powerless preaching. The message of the modern pulpit is effeminate dribble, spineless poppycock, meaningless sophistry, human rhetoric, showmanship, psychological manipulation, and flattering oratory. It is not the ENERGIA and DUNAMIS of God. Those things have been stolen from our services.

When Peter preached under the DUNAMIS and ENERGIA of the Holy Spirit three thousand people were driven to believe. I use the word “driven” because it shows the supernatural effect of God’s Spirit. When preaching is of the Holy Spirit it is *mighty by God to the pulling down of strongholds (2Cor. 10: 4)*. God worked in mighty power. And God also works in mighty power today. Well? It all starts with our ministers calling. If he is not called *by the effectual working of his power*, he too will be a weak, effeminate and meaningless preacher just like the majority of preachers climbing into America’s pulpits in their flesh and not in the Spirit. If the preacher doesn’t start out right; then the odds of him being right, and staying right, are very slim. I’m not saying that God can’t get a hold of a preachers mind mid-stream and turn him around, or endue him with power from on high. I’m not saying that at all. Of course God can change a pansy eyed preacher into mighty Peter or Paul. That is our only hope, if some churches are ever to be delivered from the blight of the meaningless pulpit. But if the preacher is endued with God’s supernatural energy from the very beginning. If he is called from the start through the explosive and dynamic supernatural power of God; then he will have a much harder time forsaking the truth and turning himself into a panty-waist preaching petunia. I don’t mean to insult petunias. God can use one to deliver his message if He so chooses. But it is not very likely. Nor is it likely that a truth-compromising, smooth-tongued orator is going to really deliver a message from God. It isn’t happening. I’ve been in churches all over this country and I know what the jellyfish preachers are preaching. It isn’t the truth. I know it’s not the truth because it’s not being delivered with God’s ENERGIA and DUNAMIS. This is happening all over America. People don’t even know what real preaching is any more. They are so used to hearing a soft-spoken homily, a quiet-side chat, an uplifting sermonette; that if John the Baptist ever mounted the pulpit stairs, they would damn near have a heart attack! Preaching, according to Paul, is to be a demonstration of the Holy Spirit and power. *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power (1Cor. 2: 4)*. Anything less than this is false preaching. False preaching doesn’t deliver the goods. False preaching coagulates the blood in the veins of the church, and sends an icy chill down her spine.

I don’t want you to misinterpret me. I have heard some truly great and powerful preachers. There are still many of them. It is like when God told Elijah that he still had 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (*Rom. 11: 4*). There are still great preachers, but they are a rare breed. They are not afraid to open their mouth and let the Lord fill it (*Ps. 81: 10*). If you find a preacher like that, then you better join yourself to his ministry immediately! Because it is not God’s will for you to be in a dead church, and he obviously led you to a true man of God. Follow him as he follows God (*Heb. 13: 7*). *Be*

*ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ ( 1Cor. 11: 1).* Marry yourself to his ministry, and if he moves to a different church, then follow him. He is a treasure in an earthen vessel, and the power that he possesses is of God and not of himself (2Cor. 4: 7). God has ordained him to be your teacher.

The preacher who is like this, and who is truly called, will also be like Paul in one more vital characteristic. He will not be a proud man, but very humble. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given.* He will realize his weakness. And Glory only in Christ's strength. He will always remember *the hole of the pit from whence he was dug (Isa. 51: 1).* and *the miry clay (Ps. 40: 2)* from whence he was pulled. I am not talking here about any kind of false humility, which makes humility its boast, and tells people how many days it fasts, and puts a phony downcast look on its face, and drips with pious gas bag words. I'm talking here about the genuine article...a deep inner recognition of self nothingness, and a total absorption of Christ's everythingness. *He must increase, but I must decrease (Jn. 3: 30).* A truly called preacher, will know his position...down in the dust, at the foot of the cross. When he beats upon his chest to confess his sins to God, he will *not so much as lift up his eyes (Lk. 18: 13).*

When a humble man preaches, his purpose is to only glorify his Lord. You might catch an occasional tear in his eye, when he extols the wonders of salvation, or when he attempts with feeble tongue, to spell out the glories of heaven, or the awesomeness of soul conquering grace. You might hear a faint quiver in his voice as he recalls something from his own testimony, or as he prays for the burdens of his congregation. But he will never boast of his own greatness, or toot the horn of his own self-satisfaction. His sufficiency will never be of himself, but of the Lord. He will be a humble man...the genuine article...sort of an image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This does not mean that he will shrug from unpopular duties. Even Christ had to drive the money changers out of the temple with whips. But that was because their sin was so perverse it could not be tolerated. Did that make Christ proud? Of course not. I'm sure that the whole time He was doing it, inwardly it must have broken his heart. See how Paul delivered negative news. *For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you (2Cor. 2: 4).* It broke his heart when he had to *reprove and rebuke (2Tim. 4: 2).* But God is not a wimp. And neither will a truly humble man be a wimp when it comes to preaching *the whole counsel of God (Acts 20: 27).* But as he does so, he bathes the whole thing in humble prayer. His closet is wet with the dew of heaven. Nobody may see it, but its fact will be attested when God speaks directly to men's souls through his inadequate words. He is humble, but truly blessed indeed. It is not a weakness. It is, as it was for Paul, the real source of his great strength (*2Cor. 12: 9-10*). .

I am confident that we have covered the major issues in this question of how to know whether or not you are called to the ministry. Now we need to move to the adjunct area of what are the qualifications which must be met.

# Biblical Qualifications

If you are indeed called, then you are not just to rush in upon a ministerial position. There are qualifications which must be met. These are clearly spelled out in the Scriptures. Like other areas of Gods truth, this area is not optional. It is mandatory. This study should be not only instructive to the called ministerial candidate, but also to churches who are responsible to install only qualified people in the two church offices...pastors and deacons. Both these offices have their own set of qualifications. But for this study we are going to only concern ourselves with the office of pastor, which is the highest office of Christ within the church. (The office of "Apostle" has ceased with the death of the last "Apostle"...John).

The office of pastor is designated by several synonymous terms in the Scriptures. Pastors are called *Pastors* (*Eph. 4: 11*), *Bishops* (*1Tim. 3: 1-2; 4: 22; Tit. 1: 7*), *Overseers* (*Acts 20: 28*), and *Elders* (*1Tim.5: 17; 1Pet. 5: 1*). They are called also, though less commonly called *pastor/teachers* (*Eph. 4: 11* note: the word "and" is not in original). They are called *men of God*(*1Tim. 6: 11*). They are referred to as *The messengers of the churches* (*2Cor. 8: 23*). Paul speaks of them as *The ministers of God* (*1Cor. 6: 4*), *ministers of Christ* (*Rom. 15: 16; 1Cor. 4: 1*); *ministers of the New Testament* (*2Cor. 3: 6*), *ministers of righteousness* (*2Cor. 11: 5*), *Preachers* (*Rom.10: 14; 1Tim. 2: 7; 2Pet. 2: 5*), *servant of the Lord* (*1Tim.2: 24*), *servants of Jesus Christ* (*Phil. 1: 1; Jude 1*), *soldiers of Christ* (*Phil. 2: 25; 2Tim. 2: 3-40*), *stewards of God* (*Tit. 1: 7*), *stewards of the grace of God* (*1Pet. 4: 10*), *stewards of the mysteries of God* (*1Cor. 4: 1*), *teachers* (*Eph. 4: 11; 1Tim. 2: 7; 2Tim. 1: 11*), and then they are called *Angels* in the book of Revelation (*Rev. 1: 20; Rev. 2:1*). You can probably find other designations for this office, but these are the main ones. All these titles are worth studying because they provide insights into the nature of the office. For instance they are called "Overseers" because they watch over the churches of Christ. They are called "Teachers" because they expound the doctrines of the Bible. You should study all of these designations. It is a profitable study.

## 1Timothy 3: 1-7

*"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must*

*have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”.*

I want to underscore the importance of these qualifications before I actually discuss them. It seems that there is a modern flippancy toward them, as if they did not matter. I have actually heard pulpit committees (an unscriptural office, but one which most churches use when trying to find a pastor), I have actually heard words to this effect: **“Oh that’s ok? But it doesn’t really apply to us today. After all, we’re living in different times. They wore sandals back then, and they wore long robes. Would you tell us to wear sandals today? It just doesn’t apply. We are living in the modern world and things are a lot different now than back then”.** This sort of un-Christian, flippant attitude, toward God’s Word does not cut the mustard. God said what He meant to say. And God tells us what we are supposed to think and do. Who cares if they wore sandals back then? If God commands us to wear sandals in His word, then we better be wearing sandals! If God tells us to shear our hair, paint our faces purple and stand on our heads; then we better shear our locks, get out the spray paint and bend over! If they wore sandals, it was because they lived in a different time and place and did not have shoe stores. Who cares? It has nothing whatsoever to do with the issue of pastoral qualifications. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the obedience of pulpit committees, or the obedience of churches trying to select a new pastor. People who express a sinful nonchalance about the Scriptures, are not saved, and they have no business on committees or boards or anything else in the church. I wouldn’t even have them as a toilet sweeper in my church, because they dishonor God in their thinking. Everything done in the church is to be done to the Glory and Honor of God. If it doesn’t glorify Him, then it should not be done. Disbelieving and disobeying the Bible is never acceptable under any circumstances. It is blasphemy, and practical Satanism. Get it out of the churches of Christ. I’d rather worship in an empty church, or in a back woods lot, then to rub elbows in a packed congregation of blasphemous Devil worshippers. When you throw out God’s word, That’s what you are...A Child of the Devil and a Worshipper of the Devil! (See the story of Adam and Eve, when they disregarded God’s word). **GET OUT OF CHRIST’S CHURCHES! YOU DO NOT BELONG HERE alongside true believers! YOU BELONG IN THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN. GET OUT! GET OUT NOW!** There will be no mercy for you in the eternal flames of God’s maximum extreme torture in hell. **GET THEE BEHIND ME SATAN!** Get out. You are damned if you call God a liar! You are damned if you do not believe the words that He has spoken. It is not a flippant little issue of non-importance. It is the issue of the difference between being saved or being reprobate. It is of ultimate importance. If you refuse to listen to God and obey His word, you are none of His. You are a God-hater. No matter how loudly you may protest, you are still a God-hater if you disbelieve His word. Show me one verse of scripture saying that you can be saved, and be a God-hater at the same time! I will eat my Bible, remove myself forever from the ministry, and never mention the name of the Lord again, if you can show me that verse! If you produce it, then my faith is vain, my life is death, my soul is a joke, and the Bible is nothing more than glorified toilet paper. Show it to me. I want to see it. I’m waiting to see it. **BUT IT DOES NOT EXIST!** *“Every word of God is pure” (Prov. 30: 5).* *“Thy word is True” (Ps. 119: 160).* *“Let God be true , but every*

*man a liar” (Rom. 3: 4). “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” ( Jn. 17: 17).*

I know that I have digressed slightly, but it is essential that you learn how to think as a believer. Things that people pooh-pooh away, like they aren't important, may be of the gravest importance. **We are to bring into captivity every thought of our brains!** *“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2Cor. 10: 5).*

The words “It's not important” should not be in the vocabulary of a Christian. The world thinks things are not important. Unbelievers think things are not important. Ignorant children think things are not important. Retarded people think things are not important. The Devil thinks things are not important. But we know that everything is important. Not one seemingly insignificant little sparrow falls in isolation from God (*Matt. 10: 29,31; Lk. 12: 6-7*). **Everything is important.**

You will give an account for every idle word that you speak in this life (*Matt. 12: 36*). If that is the case, then your words ought to have meaning and message. Strong says that an *idle word* is **“a word that produces no good effect and is not calculated to produce any”**. These are just the types of words that are always on the lips of the lost worldlings ... useless words, meaningless words, empty words, vain words, words that sooth the conscience without content, words that lull the soul to sleep, words that entertain the fancy, words that pretend, fantasy words, make believe words, deceitful and deceiving words. The Bible calls them IDLE WORDS. They should not be on the lips of God's children. We must honor Him in our speech. Why am I pointing this out? Because you have been saying ... “Oh that's not important“, or “this really doesn't matter”, or “that doesn't apply”. These verbalizations betray the defects in your heart. Jesus said, **“Out of the abundance of the heart...THE MOUTH SPEAKETH” (Matt. 12: 34; Lk. 6: 35).** **“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.” (James 3:6).** Your mouth is the barometer of your soul. What's really in your brain, is spewing out of your mouth. Out of your brain (heart), your mouth is speaking. It's spewing forth all the time. Day and night. Every time you speak...out it comes! You cannot stop it. You cannot help it. You cannot control it. God designed you like that. That's the way all people have been constructed. Have you ever noticed how when a person is born again, their speech immediately changes? They don't even have to be told, not to swear and take the Lord's name in vain. IT just happens! It's because what's in their brains (a new creature) comes out of their mouth. They cannot control it. God made them like this. They are constructed with mouths as indicator's of their hearts. I listen very closely to what people say. Why? Because I can tell immediately what's in their hearts. So the key is to have hearts (minds) that have been, and are being, **transformed (Rom. 12: 2)**. Transformation is both a present possession for a believer, and a process. If you are saved. You are transformed. You have a new brain function, that you never had before. Neurons and synapses, dopamine and serotonin, alpha waves,

beta wave, theta waves, everything about the brain comes under the Lordship of Christ. And for the first time in your life, you really feel alive. Because for the first time in your life you are alive (*John 10: 28*). But it doesn't stop there, because it is an ongoing process as well. In the last two minutes you learned that the words "It's not important" should not be in your vocabulary. That's true. But the way to change your vocabulary is not to study the dictionary. The way to change your vocabulary is to change your thinking. Bring that old thought into captivity. Clear out the old cobwebs in your brain. Now you know that you shouldn't think like that. Reel in your thinking and make it conform. That's what God says, and that's what He teaches. "***Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus***" (*Phil. 2: 5*). So Do it! A popular book was written with this title: JUST DO IT!

I said all that, and I will now instantly tie it in with our text, and bring you an immediate application, in one second, that will either convict you of sinful thinking, or confirm you in your knowledge of the Lord and His word. Pay close attention. Now we will see if you learned anything. In an instant we will know if you are thinking right or wrong about what has just been discussed. Every good sermon must have an application. What does it mean? How does it relate? What am I talking about? And what does it have to do with anything? I'm talking about is verse two. Now I know that I haven't yet expounded verse one. But that's OK. Don't panic. We'll get to it. I do stuff like this all the time. Read verse two. I'm gonna force you to reel in your thinking. I'm gonna force you to throw out the words 'It's not important' once and for all time. Just read the first part of the verse. That's all I need to either convict you of sinful thinking, or confirm you in the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. What does it say? Look at it! IT IS IMPORTANT! ***A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.*** Now I already have told you, unequivocally that IT IS IMPORTANT. IF IT IS IMPORTANT THEN DON'T SAY THAT ITS NOT! What am I talking about? It's easy. I'm talking about the fact that a woman can never be called into the ministry because she can never ***BE THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE!*** Now are you saying "It's not important"? Who cares if your denomination ordains women? Who cares if your seminary says that women can be pastors? Who cares if anybody on God's green earth says IT'S NOT IMPORTANT! I don't care how loud they say it. I don't care if ten thousand ordained women march into the church where I am preaching and call me a bigot. The Bible says IT IS IMPORTANT. Put up the picket signs babe. And fall on you face and repent. UNLESS YOU CAN BE THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE, YOU CANNOT BE A PASTOR! Period. Final. The important word has been spoken. Let every man be a liar.

Now that you have learned how to think right about verse two, when we go to verse one, or verse four, or verse five, or verse six, or verse seven; you will read the words ***Man***, and ***He***, and ***His***, in the manner in which they are supposed to be understood. THESE WORDS ARE NOT GENDER NEUTRAL! They are masculine because God wanted to put masculine pronouns in a passage dealing with the qualifications for a Bishop. The translators recognized this and used only the appropriate male pronouns. They are masculine, because feminine pronouns cannot apply to the ***Man of God (1Tim. 6: 11)***. Feminine pronouns do not apply when God is speaking of ***Holy Men (Ex. 22: 31; 2Pet.***

*1: 21*). Only a total nin-com-poop would try to read this passage as though it can somehow mystically include women! It can't. **THIS PASSAGE DOES NOT INCLUDE WOMEN...IT TOTALLY EXCLUDES THEM... FOREVER!** Women are not called to the ministry. They cannot be called. God has never called a woman, no matter what she may feel or think. For God to call a woman, He would have to be a moron. He is the one who excludes them. Surly He is not so stupid that he does not know what He has written! Any woman who thinks she is called is deluded. There are no women preachers. There are only women impostors. They are excluded. Woman cannot be preachers. They should never set foot in a pulpit. If they call themselves: "Reverend" or "Pastor" or "Bishop" or "Elder", or any other title that applies only to men; then they are either homosexual, trans gendered, or cross dressers... These titles cannot apply to women. Any woman who attaches one of these titles to herself is twisted and warped. These are masculine titles used to describe men who are called of God, and installed by Him for the work of ministry. They are all masculine words, and can never be feminized. It's like calling a woman a "jock". She can't be a jock, because a jock is a masculine word.

When God created Adam he masculinized "him", and "he" has been a "he" ever since. "She" on the other hand, while taken from "him", is not "him". "She" can never be "Him". I realize that we are living in perverted times when people attempt to surgically alter their "He" into a "She", and their "She" into a "He". These blasphemous perversions of thinking, and gender confusion, have entered the sacred arena. Churches are being conditioned by these perverts to take the "him" and the "he" out of the pulpit, and change it to a "her" and a "she". How blind and stupid are we? There is something wrong if you cannot tell a "She" from a "He" especially if your in church! I really that there are confused people who have gender identity issues because of things that have happened to them in this sick world. But there is no excuse for the church of the Living God, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, to be confused on what is a male and what is a female. All gender issues are settled by Genesis. *"Male and female created He them" (Gen. 1: 27).*

It seems ludicrous, that we have to stop and go into such depth, to explain the simple difference between male and female pronouns. I thought everyone learned that stuff in preschool. But over the years, I have seen the steady erosion of the plain and simple truths of God's word, because people want a Bible that fits their way of thinking. And they don't want to fit their way of thinking to the Bible. They want a "God in their own image" (as the cover of a Jethro Tull album clearly says). When are we gonna wake up and quit playing games with God? This is serious stuff! It is not to be taken lightly. Of course I'll never win "the preacher of the year award". That award is given only to pansies who say what everyone wants to hear, who cower to the status quo, and who never make waves by preaching truth. God forbid. I don't want that award. I'm not looking to win the good housekeeping seal of approval. It's not a popularity contest for me. I could care less what men think. I despise their approval. But with all my heart, and soul, and might, I care what He thinks! He is the only one who counts!



This study seems to be growing longer than I had planned. But I'm sure that God has a reason for all of it. Maybe you needed to hear exactly what I have been saying. ***"I speak the truth in Christ, and I lie not" (Rom. 9: 1). "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not" (2Cor. 11: 31). "Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (Gal. 1: 20). "I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not" (1Tim. 2: 7). "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (1Jn. 2: 21).***

Verse one is so simple, and yet many men, trying to find out whether or not they are called, have missed what it plainly tells them. ***"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work"***. This verse is three things. It is a statement which can direct you into the ministry. It is a prohibition which can keep you out of the ministry. And It is a qualification which all ministers must have.

Let's talk about the prohibition first. If you do not have a sincere *desire* to do the Lord's work, then you have no right to usurp this ***"good work"*** to yourself. When God speaks here of ***"desire"***, he is talking about something deeply spiritual but also deeply emotional. Paul said ***I magnify mine office (Rom. 11:13)***. *Desire* is a very interesting word. It has as part of it's meaning the root of an ancient verb (OREGO), which means "To reach out after something". Albert Barnes puts it this way: ("to reach" or "stretch out" - and hence to reach after anything, to long after, to try to obtain). I get that sense from Paul. When he says that he ***magnified his office***, he is not boasting, rather he is showing how he longs after the office...reaches out and stretches himself to the limit to execute it. It is the desire of his heart. This is the same wonderful word that we find in ***Heb. 11: 6 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*** When you long for heaven, when your heart stretches out toward the ultimate horizon of Grace, then you are experiencing *desire*. You cannot enter the ministry if you do not have that kind of *desire*. The doors are shut if you do not have that kind of heart. God does not want you, if you do not ***"desire to serve Him with all your heart and soul" (Deut. 11: 13; Deut. 13: 3; Josh. 22: 5; 1Sam. 12: 24)***.

That's the prohibition of verse one which can keep you out of the ministry. Now lets talk about the statement of verse one which can direct you to see your call into the ministry. It is a very encouraging verse to one who may have doubted his calling of God. Do you *desire* to reach out, and serve God with all your heart? If so, then that is a good sign that he has called you. Are you looking for a verse of scripture that can confirm your calling, and give you the inner assurance that you seek? Look no further. This is the verse that can do that. Maybe you have never read it before, or thought about it. Just put two and two together. You have had a great burden, an inner desire, but you have not been sure if you are called. Put two and two together. If the *desire* is there, then the calling is there also.

But this is not a *desire* that does not count the costs. You must read and study this passage carefully. The qualifications here, exist because of the many potholes that you

might fall into along the way if you don't meet them. The job is not without its attendant hardships and risks. You must weigh these things carefully. The pay is lousy. The people don't appreciate what you do. The hours never cease. The tragedies you have to deal with make you want to explode. The study is a weariness of the flesh. The way that people expect you to have answers for everything is tiresome. The day in and day out struggle to come up with food for a flock that will starve if you don't give it to them. The difficulty of maintaining your own spiritual and moral health. The need to visit and pray with the sick, the dying, the troubled and the lonely. The fact that every face you pass, every eyeball you see staring back at you, is a soul destined for either heaven or hell. The fact that they totter on the brink of eternity, and that you have *the words of life*, this is a terrible and crushing burden, especially if you cannot find it in yourself to warn each one of them to flee from the wrath to come. You carry the load of knowing that you cannot reach them all. As a matter of fact, you cannot reach even one! That is a helpless feeling. No other career exposes you to that. No other business in the world keeps you up at night weeping for souls! And when it is all done and said, after all your years of hard work, prayers, and preaching; you still can't save even one! It's like Sisyphus who kept pushing his huge stone to the top of the mountain, only to have it roll back down where he had to start all over again, ad infinitum. What shall you do? There is no end to it, at least not in this life. "*No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Lk. 9: 62).

We come now to look at verse one in the final sense as a qualification for the ministry. Ministers must substantially meet God's qualifications for the ministry. Now it is doubtful if anyone can meet all the qualifications all of the time. This is why the church has devised language which says that the candidate for the ministry must substantially meet these qualifications. A substantial agreement is not necessarily a full 100% compliance. An example where a variance or non-compliance may be allowed, would be for instance in the matter of verse two where it says that he must be *The husband of one wife*. We have already discussed this phrase in a different context, now I want you to think about it in the context of a qualification for the ministry. Is this a command indicating that every pastor must be married? Or can an unmarried man be put into this office? What about the case of a divorced man? Does divorce disqualify him, because he is no longer *the husband of one wife*? What about the case of a divorced man who is now remarried to another wife? Does that mean that he is the husband of more than one wife, thus disqualifying him for the office? (Look up *Matt. 5: 31-32; Matt. 19: 8-9; Mark 10: 4-12; Rom. 7: 3; 1Cor. 7: 10-11; Heb 13: 4* in connection with this question. Note: I will not be dealing with this question in this study.) How then exactly are we to enforce this qualification? And is it a qualification which might be substantially complied with without being 100% complied with?

I ask these questions about verse two to show how these qualifications are to be handled. It is my opinion that verse two does not for instance disqualify an unmarried man from the ministry. The statement that a man must be *the husband of one wife* is addressing the pagan notion of polygamous marriage which was prevalent even in some of the churches of the Greco/Roman world. Polygamy is never acceptable in a minister. But

Paul himself was unmarried, as were some other Apostles. So the phrase *the husband of one wife* does not eliminate a single man from ministry. (Paul's case is discussed in 1Cor. 7: 1-9. He encourages people to remain single if they can. But if they can't *it is better to marry than to burn* (v 9)).

So the first qualification paves the way for all that follow. A man must have a deep seated and genuine *desire* to serve God and others through this office. Suppose that a person meets all the other requirements, but does not really *desire* the office. Could he still be admitted to it? Yes he could, but it makes little sense. He could be admitted based on his admission that he needs improvement in this area, and that he will diligently seek the Lord to increase his *desire*. Since *desire* is largely an emotional matter, this should not prove to be a problem since God can change *the desires of a mans heart* (*Ps. 37: 4; 1Jn. 5: 14-15*) in answer to his prayers and the prayers of others. *Desires* are not beyond God's control, and He can create them or change them. Which brings up another point.

What happens if a man loses his desire to remain in the ministry? Does this disqualify him? The answer would be yes it does disqualify him. But he should give himself a clear period of time where he seeks the Lord will in this matter. It could be that God indeed is done with him in his present capacity, and it is time for him to move on. (This can only be determined through prayer, Bible study and the prayerful directions from God's people, who must help in these kind of situations).

There is also the possibility that a lack of *desire* is being caused by some underlying spiritual problem which needs to be addressed Biblically. Perhaps there is some sort of emotional attack from the Devil. He is our enemy. We are not automatically immune to his wiles (*Eph. 6: 11*) and his devices (*2Cor. 2: 11*). Spiritual issues in pastors, are issues for him, just like they are issues for the rest of the flock. They require correction or elimination. We are not to be tossed to and fro by every emotional wind or doctrinal instability. Pastors are people like everyone else. So when a pastor loses his *desire*, if it is not just a temporary attack of the Devil, then he is required to remove himself from the office if God gives no remedy for the condition. If you truly don't desire to serve God in the ministerial capacity. Then do God's church a favor and step down, because your preaching will not glorify Him anyway. It will be no big loss to the church if it is no big loss to you. It is no big loss to you, if you could care less, and have no *desire*. So go ahead and step aside and let God put someone in the pulpit who *cares* (*1Cor. 12: 25; 2Cor. 7: 12; 2Cor. 8: 16; 2Cor. 11: 28; Phil. 2: 20*).

**"A bishop then must be blameless"** (*1Tim. 3: 2a*). This is really the second qualification for a pastor. The first qualification is an emotional restriction. The second qualification is a testimonial restriction. It would be good to look down further in the chapter to verse 10, where the same qualification is mentioned for the office of Deacon. ***And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.*** Both Deacons and Elders must meet the same requirement to be ***Blameless***. Verse ten adds ***let these also first be proved***. This is very significant. It indicates that whatever the

word *blameless* means, it is something that is provable or demonstrable. It is something that the people in the church can see and recognize whether or not is present, and whether or not it is genuine. They can look for it and inspect it. It has to be the real deal. A hard cold fact, that can be proved without question or doubt.

So what then does *blameless* mean as it applies to Pastors and Deacons? The word here, while similar to the word in *Phil. 2: 15*, is not exactly the same. There it says: *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.* Notice that the word there is linked to *harmless* which means *sincere*. *Blameless* in this passage means *irreproachable* or *faultless*. These terms certainly pertain to our testimony, and they are related to the word in *1Tim. 3: 2*, but they are not identical by any means. *Irreproachable* and *faultless* do not mean sinless. They are terms which have to do with outward appearances, and things which can be observed by other people. But they are also words that can be wrongfully applied if they are interpreted to mean that the person has somebody's approval. That is why God didn't use this exact word in the Timothy passage. Here it is similar to the way that Paul said that he would not eat meat if it caused his brother to stumble (*1Cor. 8: 8-13*). He did not want to be offensive to others in the way that he practiced his Christianity. Nobody could find fault with Paul in this. He was *faultless*, totally *irreproachable*. But suppose that somebody stands up in a pastoral search committee and says: "Joe Blow doesn't meet the qualifications because he is not without fault. I don't approve of his smoking big fat stinky cigars. He's obviously not *blameless* and I have just pointed out one of his big faults. He is a smoker"? Is That valid? No it isn't, and that's why *blameless* in *Phil 2: 15* is a different word with an entirely different meaning from the word in 2Tim.3.

Anybody can disapprove of anything when they are operating on the humanistic standard of legalism. That's what this is. It is a case of legalism. Somebody, somewhere arbitrarily wrote down the rule "Thou shalt not smoke". They believe it just as if it were in the Bible, but it's not. So what happens, is somebody comes along, who really is basing their lives on Scripture, and because they don't worry about this particular legalism, they are picked out and judged falsely. That's the problem trying to apply the term *blameless* as it is found in Philippians. It is purely subjective. I knew a woman who was told not to come to church because she wore a pair of dress slacks. This was unacceptable dress at this particular legalistic church. I don't blame her in the least for saying: "I'll never set foot in that place again". More power to her. In stating that she is doing herself a favor. Nobody should be regulated and judged by man's arbitrary legalisms and false standards. Nobody ever matches up. A legalism is not meant to be any kind of a rule which believers must follow. Believers must oppose this sort of false supremacist spirituality. But 2Tim.3 is a different story. The word there is a command, and it must be followed.

Now look back at our text: *1Tim. 3: 2*. *Blameless* here has a different meaning, although it still relates to testimony. It means literally to be *not arrested*. This is very interesting

and important. It means that the candidate for the office of Pastor must not have a criminal record since he has become a Christian. Whatever happened before he was saved is a matter of forgiveness and not guilt. God calls ex-cons all the time. Especially when you consider some of the very effective prison ministries that are out there. My own grandfather, who preached in churches throughout the Midwest till the day he died, was a convicted bank robber before he was saved. But God saved him, and that changes everything. What Paul is insisting upon here is that in order for a person to be qualified for the pastoral office. As a believer he must not have a criminal record. **Blameless** does not here mean *without fault*. It certainly does not mean “Sinless”. It means the pastoral candidate is not supposed to be a disrespector of laws and the legally protected rights of others. I know of a pastor, who years ago, shot a Doctor at an abortion clinic. He served time in prison, and was released. His former congregation called him back to be their pastor, and they reasoned that since he didn’t actually kill the man, and since he was standing up for the value of human life, it was fine to rehire him. Is that OK? Are we supposed to let a man who attempted murder speak in our pulpit? Is he qualified to preach, based on this verse? There have been lots of stories in the media about disgraced evangelists, fallen pastors who broke child molesting laws, queer pastors who have joined themselves to paid illegal prostitutes, Roman Catholic Priest’s who have been molesting altar boys for years. On and on it goes. . What are we to think about all this? The answer, is that we better think what God says. He says a pastor must not have a criminal record. He is to be **blameless**. Many churches, following good sense and this scriptural mandate, now have criminal background checks performed not only on their pastoral candidates, but Sunday School teachers and other staff as well. Do you want a child molester teaching your 4<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday School class? Nor should you want a law breaker in the pulpit.

Now lets go on to look at the other qualifications in verse two. We have already dealt with **the husband of one wife**. Now we’ll look at the next thing. This qualification is also expressed in a single word. The word **vigilant** is believed by some to be equal to our word “sober”, but that would make it redundant with the very next word which is in fact the word **sober**. We should not expect that God penned a redundancy in the verse unless it was meant for emphasis. If it was meant for emphasis, then he would have used the same word, and not two different words. The King James translators recognized this fact, and they correctly rendered the word as “**vigilant**”. Vigilance has to do with wakefulness and watchfulness. It is identical with the word in **IPet. 5: 8. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.** See there it is. It clearly means to be awake. Be watching. Be on guard. A Pastor must be watchful and aware, because he watches not just for his own soul, but he watches for the welfare of the entire flock. This might seem like an obvious requirement...a no-brainer, but you’d be amazed at how many pastors I have met who do not meet this requirement. I have met numerous pastors who are in la-la-land. They don’t know what’s going on around them because they are off in some sort of spiritual never- never land, some sort of Zen zone or Nirvana! Come down out of the mystic clouds and get your feet on the battlefield. Sir, in case you haven’t noticed there is a war going on! Are you gonna wake up? Or are you gonna get blown to smithereens by the enemy? Come on. Climb out of that ivory tower, and get involved in the battle.

This is where reality is...not up there in the ozone. Come back to reality. Lower that hot air balloon, and do what you are supposed to be doing...BE VIGILANT!

Now we come to the word *sober*. This is perhaps the easiest word to understand. It means the same thing today, as it did when it was first translated and put into the original English Bible. If you are *sober*, you are not intoxicated. Intoxication in any form, whether alcoholic or pharmacological, clouds the mind preventing right thinking, which God requires in the brains of all His children. Right thinking is clear thinking. Clear thinking cannot exist when the mind is under the influence of chemicals, hallucinogens, narcotics, alcohol or other mentally toxic substances. This is especially true for someone who handles the word of God. How on earth can you *be prepared always to give an answer to every man who asks you (1Pet. 3: 15)* if you cannot even stand up straight because you are intoxicated? Now what if you are only mildly intoxicated? Let say you only had a single cocktail with dinner, a glass of wine or a beer. Clearly your not drunk. But are you intoxicated? Does that count? Or is mild intoxication allowable? I guess that depends on ones definition of intoxication. Since the Bible doesn't give a definition of intoxication or a graph showing various intoxication levels it is a matter of discretion and Christian liberty. But there is at least one very clear New Testament command regarding this, and I'd like to look at it.

*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5: 18)*. If you couple this with Paul's directive to Timothy to take *a little wine for thy stomach's sake (1Tim. 5: 23)* then you should be able to clearly comprehend this matter. There is nothing wrong with a *little wine*. In fact Paul cites some of the benefits. It is good for the stomach. It is good to treat certain recurring illnesses (*oft infirmities*). This cannot apply to grape juice. Paul is referring to fermented OINOS. This is the same kind of wine that Jesus made from pure water in His first miracle. It is good in moderation. But what about excess? It is forbidden in excess. *Be not drunk* is a pretty clear statement.

Now jump down and look at the first part of verse three. This should clarify it all up in your mind. There we read the ninth qualification for a potential pastor. What is it? *Not given to wine*. It literally means *staying long by the wine*. It means lingering over the bottle. Drinking a lot, over a period of time. It is drinking that has gone beyond a "medicinal sip" into something that could be dangerous or hurtful. My advise, and I have no express command for it, is that nobody was ever hurt by not drinking. But many have been hurt by drinking. So a minister, or anybody else for that matter, will have no problems at all if they abstain altogether. This is not commanded, or demanded by scripture, but abstinence is never forbidden. If you cannot abstain, because you need another drink, then Alcoholism is your problem, and you have no business in the pulpit. Seek immediate medical help, because your drinking should be given up completely and is at the problem level. (Just a word to you, if you do have an alcoholic drinking problem. You must never try to give up drinking cold turkey. If you have high levels of Alcohol in your blood, you could be endangering your life if you try to just quit on your own. You must not do that. Chronic Alcohol withdrawal is a serious medical

emergency. It should be attempted only under medical supervision, because it can be life-threatening. Seizures, cardiac arrest, stroke and coma are all possibilities when withdrawing from addictive blood levels of alcohol. Please check into a hospital if you have to quit being addicted to alcohol. There are no do-it-yourself programs for withdrawal. Cold-turkey could kill you. You need to be in a clinical environment to protect your life while withdrawing). Just a note pertaining to this last statement. I am a certified drug and alcohol counselor. I have taken college courses on this, and I am very familiar with alcohol withdrawal syndrome. I renew my license regularly. No preacher should ever tell an alcoholic to just throw the bottle away, and that Jesus will cure him instantly. Deaths have resulted from this kind of dangerous and unscriptural advice. Don't speak, fellow pastor, if you don't know what the hell your talking about. If you tell someone something like this, and they die or have seizures or fall into a coma, YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE! There have been many lawsuits stemming from this sort of BAD ADVICE. Don't be irresponsible. Give good advice,...advice that is fitting from a minister of the truth. Tell them to get immediate professional attention. Tell them that you will gladly give them a ride to the hospital for help. But don't try to help them using unscriptural "gospel magic" or "Christianized voodoo"! When you tell them that Jesus will magically take the desire for booze away, when they simply throw the bottle away, that's what you are doing...your practicing voodoo. And voodoo disgraces the Lord in heaven. Use your head and be honest with those whom you are trying to win and to help.

*"Of good behavior"*(v.2) will occupy our minds now. It is really not the best translation, although technically it's not wrong.. *Good behavior* as we commonly think of it is akin to law abiding, and orderliness. Not disorderly. That is part of the meaning intended. But the Greek word also conveys the notion of **modesty**. Some translations even translate the word this way. Maybe your Bible version simply says *modest*. If it does, then that too is an acceptable translation of KOSMIOS. And I feel that the concept of modesty should be introduced here as a qualification for a pastor. This means that he won't be immodest in his dress...i.e. skin tight pants, preaching with a hairy bare chest, flexing muscles like a muscle builder, who worships the human body. Those kinds of things would be immodest. Exhibitionism, nudism, chains and whips, bulldog collars and that sort of thing are all immodest. You laugh that I mention these things, but I know one preacher who felt that God called him to a ministry in a nudist colony, and every Sunday he preaches his sermon in his birthday suit, and he's not ashamed. He's proud of it. He counsels people in the nude. He performs weddings in the buff. He extols the virtues of public nudity, and he is very vocal about it. This, is the height of immodesty. He is not called of God. The flesh is his God.

I especially like this next qualification. *"Given to hospitality"* is a warm and cheery qualification. It almost means **fond of guests** . But it can best be summed up in our modern phrase: **Happy to see you!** That's what given to hospitality really means. I'M REALLY HAPPY TO SEE YOU! This is wonderful, because it implies that the pastor will have a genuine love for people, and be deeply concerned about them. It is wrong to interpret *Given to hospitality* as meaning **being a party animal!** That is not at all what this means. To make it mean that a pastor should always be busy entertaining at bar-b-

ques, picnics, party's, social events, ho downs, and gala affairs is to misinterpret this important qualification. A pastor can be "Happy to see you" without having to open up his home for a party. In fact, it has nothing to do with his home. His home should be private. It is not a public meeting place. Perhaps he has a wife who doesn't meet this qualification. She hates to see people. When they show up it makes her nervous and uncomfortable. She cannot get excited about entertaining or anything like that. That's OK. She is not required to have the qualifications of a pastor. In fact, she is none of anybody's business. She is not your wife. She is married to the pastor. And she is not married to the congregation. The pastor choice of a wife is none of your business. The pastor on the other hand is your concern. You are required to see that he meets these qualifications if he is to be your pastor. You have no right to judge his wife. But he is fair game. Does he truly take an interest in people? Is he "HAPPY TO SEE THEM"?

**"Apt to teach"** is one of the most important and interesting of the qualifications. It is interesting, because it is not exactly what we would expect. I like this about studying the Bible. God has not written it like we would have written it if we were the author. If I were the author, I would have said that a pastor must be **apt to preach**. After all isn't that what a preacher does.. He preaches. God say's no. He must be apt to teach. There are several reasons for this. First reason that God emphasizes **"teaching"** over **"preaching"** is that not all Elders are preachers, but all Elders must be teachers. Perhaps this makes no sense, but I'll try to explain. The Bible lays out a pattern for local church government that specifies a multitude of officers. There is not supposed to be one Deacon, there is supposed to be a plurality of deacons (In Acts 6 they chose seven.). The same is true of the ruling office of the church. There is not supposed to be one pastor, because who's to say that he won't set himself up as a mini dictator or local church pope? God has patterned the church to have a **plurality of elders** (*Acts 14: 23* | *1Tim. 1: 5*; *2Tim. 2: 2*). In rare cases a church may only have one pastor, but the norm and standard of the New Testament is that there be more than one. With this in mind, think about what I just said. Not all Elders are preachers, but all Elders must be teachers! Usually there is one among the elders who is the pulpit preacher. He is comfortable in front large groups of people. (Please notice that "public speaking" is not one of the qualifications for a pastor). So if a man has gifts of public speaking...preaching, as we call it. Then He will usually be selected out from among the elders to be the main speaking or preaching elder. He just happens to have public speaking gifts. But don't forget. He still must be **apt to teach**.

So what on earth does it mean to be **Apt to teach**? It is a knowledge qualification, and not a public speaking qualification. You can be **Apt to teach** and never stand before an audience, a class room or a small group. **Apt to teach** has nothing to do with public ministrations. It has to do with mental qualification. He must understand the fundamental doctrines of the scriptures. He must be able to transfer them to other people by one on one teaching. If he is knowledgeable about the Bible, he must be able to get it across at the most basic level. Maybe God will never have him climb the pulpit stairs to preach. Maybe he will never have gifts in that area. He can still be a pastor as long as he is **Apt to teach**.



Since we have already commented on *Not given to wine* we will skip that and move along to *no striker*. This is a simple qualification, but it is particularly important since men have, from the earliest ages, settled their differences with the fist's. It is as old as history. "If you don't agree with me, or if you do me wrong, then I'M GONNA PUNCH YOUR LIGHTS OUT! I'll show you whose boss. POW. How's them apples. I just gave you a knuckle sandwich". This ones simple. A pastor does not settle his issues with physical force. There is a better way. He must seek it out and use it. Diplomacy is a pastoral skill. Punching is not.

*"Not greedy of filthy lucre"*. I'm warning you in advance that I am gonna be doing some serious stepping on toes with this one. With the age of mass media came an unprecedented explosion in mass evangelism and mass ministry. Crusades were organized, advertised, and packed to record capacity in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Never before could preachers reach so many people. With the increased use of the television, the audiences grew from a few thousand to audiences of millions! Nothing like it has ever happened in the whole long history of the church. Technology was forever married to the gospel message, and it revolutionized everything. It even changed the very definition and understanding of church in the mind of the masses. People began using the television as a substitute for the brick and mortar local church. Their pastor became their particular television preacher who was their favorite. If they don't like him...they change the channel. If they don't agree with what he's preaching...they change the channel. If they don't like the music, or the choir, or the color of his robe, or the way that he speaks, or the shape of his nose, or the tone of his voice...they change the channel. For the first time in history, the phrase "the invisible church" actually had a real tangible meaning. But this is the key to it all. Television is expensive...very, very expensive. Satellites cost millions to build and launch into space. Programming cost's are exorbitant. T.V. Cameras require specialist to operate, and control rooms filled with expensive equipment. So what does that mean? It means that for the first time in human history, the ministry of the gospel became totally dependant upon the money-grabbing capabilities of the preacher. The most successful ministries were the ones that raised the most money. Money, by necessity, became the primary focus of these programs and this new breed of preacher. It was absolutely necessary for them to raise the money for the operation. If they did not raise the money, they would not, and could not survive. No money, or lack of money, is the death knell of the television based ministries. All of them, no matter how good they are,(and some of them are quite good); all of them are totally dependant upon lots of money for their survival. It takes boatloads of cash to start and maintain a ministry from coast to coast, and even more to go internationally.

Now here is what has happened. It didn't take long for these television preachers to find out that if they were really good at money-grabbing, they could have substantial funds to create almost unlimited wealth and power for themselves. Private jets cost \$36,000,000. Almost all of them have one, so they can shuttle themselves quickly to money-grabbing rally's, crusades, and meetings anywhere in the world. Some of them drive Roll's Royce's and live in mansions ranging anywhere from a few million dollars to up to twenty five million dollars in value. They have shamelessly embraced this way of life for

themselves, and they have even invented a new gospel to go along with it. It is called "THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL". They preach it fearlessly, brazenly flaunting their own personal wealth, and telling their mindless followers, that if they will only send a tithe or a donation, that God will open up "*the windows of heaven*" and will make them rich also. ***"Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not pour you out fantastic blessings, opening the very portals of heaven, in order to pour you out unlimited money, and make you fabulously wealthy, beyond your wildest imaginations. This shall be, saith the Lord of all Gold and all Silver"***! That is how they might translate *Malachi 3: 10*. Actually, I have heard worse translations of money related verses than this. They are shameless in the ways that they pervert the scriptures in order to scam every last dime out of their viewing audiences. And the gullible do what is expected... they give. They give. They give. And then they give some more. One poor 72 year old lady, that I have heard about, gave her entire social security disability check to her television church. She believed the lucre loving, money grabbing preacher who told her that God would not only pay her mortgage payment, But God would actually pay off her mortgage completely! **"He will do exceedingly, abundantly above what you can ever ask, or ever think. He will rain down upon you fabulous riches untold. You will never worry for another thing for the rest of your life. Believe it. God said it. That settles it. Get ready for your blessing. God's getting ready to give it to you, when you give to him. He's waiting to bless you. The lines are open, and operators are standing by"**. SHE LOST HER HOME. SHE LOST EVERYTHING. SHE GOT NO BLESSING. SHE LEFT WITH JUST THE CLOTHES ON HER BACK. SHE IS HOMELESS. AND THE PREACHER LIVES IN A 5 MILLION DOLLAR MANSION WOYJ PAID IN FULL STAMPED ON THE TITLE DEED. **What is wrong with this picture?**

***"Not greedy of filthy lucre"*** ought to be branded on the foreheads of these bastard preachers, who compass land and sea to make converts who are children of hell (***Matt. 23: 15***). Talk about a total disregard for the qualifications of a preacher...this is it. They could care less that the Bible condemns their greedy lust for money. This stuff is real. It happens every day. I'm not making this up. I went online to one of the biggest television ministries in America, and a watchdog group, which specializes in exposing these charlatans, pointed out what I was able to verify for myself. The founder and president of this organization lives in a 5.3 million dollar mansion with elevators and a 10 car garage. He lists his salary on his website as being 1.8 million dollars a year. But the watchdog group, said they obtained records, retrieved from a dumpster, showing that in reality his salary is 88million dollars a year! Think about that. This lying, thieving, scumbag religious impostor is making the tidy little sum of 88 million a year for himself. What's wrong with this picture? Right now, as I write this organization is being investigated by the IRS for tax fraud and tax evasion. The IRS is claiming that they have no right to be

listed as a 501-c3 tax exempt organization. Because in reality they are a for profit business empire, and not a charity at all. In addition, they cannot qualify for membership in the “American Council for Christian Financial Accountability”, an organization that verifies a charity’s worthiness based on their accounting practices. They have been denied membership, because all of the seats on their board of directors are closely held by immediate family members of the founder, and they all receive salaries in the millions. This is not allowable under the terms required for Christian charitable organizations. You can verify some of this stuff yourself if you want to do some digging. Most of this stuff is a matter of public record.

**“The love of money is the root of all blessings”** according to these spiritual pirates. **“The love of money is the root of all evil”** according to the truth of God (*1Tim. 3: 3*). Who are you going to believe? God? or lying, spiritual bastard, pretenders? God did not say it in vain. He knew what He was saying. He meant what he is saying. It is not a suggestion. It is a command. That *a man who desires the office of a bishop* must be ***Not greedy of filthy lucre!***

**“Patient” (v.3).** Most modern versions correctly render this word as *gentle*. Gentle makes more sense as a qualification, because patient is totally subjective. How can you know if a person is patient? Is it something that you can observe? You might think that someone is impatient, when in reality they might just be nervous. How can you tell? All of the rest of these qualifications are observable, and verifiable, (with the exception of *desire*). But patience isn’t observable and verifiable. That’s why I prefer the translation ***Gentle***. I could be wrong on this, and I certainly would not be dogmatic on my understanding of this. It just seems to make more sense to me. If I kick a dog, you know that I am not **“Gentle”**. You might question at that point whether I am **“impatient”**. Perhaps I lost my *patience*? But you really can’t be sure. But you can be sure of the fact that I am not **“Gentle”**. ***I JUST KICKED A PUPPY. I’M NOT GENTLE. I’M CRUEL!*** That’s my thoughts on this qualification.

**“Not a brawler”**. At first glance you might not sense the difference between this and **“no striker”**, which was mentioned a little while back. But there is a difference, and it’s not difficult to understand. A **striker** is someone who uses physical violence. A **brawler** is someone who is not peace loving. It doesn’t mean that he necessarily uses physical force, it means that he is quarrelsome. This is ***the lust in the members*** which is mentioned in ***James 4: 1*** and which causes warring and fighting. Being a **striker** is WHAT YOU DO. Being a **brawler** is WHAT YOU ARE. They are really very easy to distinguish, but neither is acceptable behavior for a pastor. Can you slip up and make a mistake and maybe hit someone? Yes, and God can forgive you. But if are a just plain troublemaker (***a brawler***) you don’t get over that as easily. That is part of your mental and emotional make up. Such things are hard to change. Of course God can change these thinking problems. But if you have reached the point where you are contemplating a call to the ministry, and you are still ***a brawler*** there is a strong possibility that God isn’t changing this part of your nature, and you might not be called. He can change you. But is He doing it? That would be the question which you must prove and be able to answer

sufficiently in order to be qualified.

**“Not covetous”**. I’m not going to comment on this since it is virtually the same thing as **not greedy of filthy lucre**. The only difference is that **not covetous** is greed not just for money and wealth, but greed which extends to objects, people or possessions which belong to someone else. This qualification is the same as the Tenth commandment. See **Exodus 20: 17**.

**One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) (Vs. 4-5)**. These verses really constitute just one qualification. You can pretty much skip verse four if you correctly understand the qualification as it is stated in verse five. If the preachers kids are unruly brats, then verse four applies. But verse five pretty much sums up everything God expects under this qualification. If he cannot govern (rule, manage or run) his own home, then he is unqualified to manage the church. This has lot’s of implications, such as the matter stated about his children, but there is also so caution which must be applied here. Obviously if the guy has filed for bankruptcy, he does not no how to rule the stewardship of money which God has given him. That would automatically disqualify, at least in my way of thinking. But let’s say the preachers wife likes to color her hair, and have her nails done. The women of the church feel that this is worldly behavior because of **IPet. 3: 3** and **ITim. 2: 9-10**. They accuse the pastor of not ruling his own house properly. According to them, he should reign in his wife, and not permit her to die her hair and color her nails. Is this correct? Go ahead and study the verses the ladies are using to make their judgment against the pastor. Are they right? The answer is no they are not right, In fact they are dead wrong.

But you say: What about the verses? **IPet. 3: 3**; and **ITim. 2: 9-10** appear to verify exactly what they are saying. How can they not be correct?

OK, listen. **IPet. 3: 3** is not a command. It is not even close. Notice the use of the words **let** and **let not**. These are not words of command they are words of allowance. You can allow this if you want. But most importantly look at verse one. Verse one is where the relevant commandment can be found. **Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands**. If the preacher likes his wife to color her hair, and if he wants her to paint her nails. It is none of your business. He might also like her to wear kicky clothes or bull dog collars in the bed room. That is absolutely none of your business. She is commanded to **be in subjection to her own husband** and not to be in subjection to the women of the church.

Now what about **ITim. 2: 9-10**? This passage like the other is not expressing commands, it is expressing some of Paul’s personal opinions and desires, as he would like to see them. It is so important to view context and setting. Look at verse 8. **“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”**. Paul is expressing here, some things that he would like to see in the churches. He says **I will**. These are his wishes, and they in no way indicate that he is contradicting verse 7 where

he says *I lie not*. Just because he is giving us his wish list does not mean that he is not being truthful. It would be nice if *men pray every where, lifting up holy hands*. But that is not a command. It's simply something that Paul would like to see if he had any control over things. But he doesn't have this kind of control, to turn his personal wishes into laws of God. Nobody has that kind of control. He is still telling the truth, and he is still writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He is simply expressing his personal likes and wishes. But the preacher's wife is to be under subjection to her husband. And while there may be nothing wrong with Paul's wishes. He has no authority over the pastor's wife. The pastor has authority over his own wife. So once again the ladies of the church need to be reminded that they are wrong, and they should keep their proboscis out of other people's business. Once again the Bible does not support legalism. It never does. So if you witness legalistic behavior. Expose it, and then go home and pray. Oh yea, you might also want to *pray...lifting up holy hands*. Paul would get a kick out of that, if he were here.

OK. So *the pastor has to rule well his own household*. I think I've given you at least something of a caution with regard to this qualification. If you are going to accuse him of not ruling well his own household, you better make darn sure that you can substantiate your allegations with Scriptures that actually prove what you are trying to accuse him of. Your personal opinions, your likes or dislikes, your legalistic fetishes, do not count. Back it up with solid Biblical proof. If you can't do this, then pull your big fat nose out of the pastor's business.

***“Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (v. 6).*** This verse should not be divided into two separate qualifications. ***Pride***, even though it is mentioned is not the qualification. It is the effect that happens when the qualification is not met. If he is ***a novice*** he will fall into the sin of pride and ***the condemnation of the devil***. While strictly speaking ***pride*** is not the issue here, it is being ***a neophyte*** or a ***novice***, pride is still a very serious thing and has its own attendant woes.

What then is a novice? Is there some way to tell whether or not a person is a novice? A novice, as I have already indicated is a neophyte. The Greek word means ***a newly planted seed***. This indicates that ***a novice*** is a ***new Christian***. A ***novice*** is a spiritual seedling. God doesn't want a beginner, who is just figuring out which way the wind blows, to be a pastor in the house of God. The term ***elder*** is sort of the opposite meaning from ***novice***. It has the notion of maturity, knowledge and strength. God wants oak trees, and not saplings in the ministry. And that is really what a ***novice*** is. He is someone ***newly planted*** in the Lord.

Now how long does it take for a Christian to mature to the point where he is no longer a ***novice***? That totally depends on the person, and on the Lord. God matures some people very quickly. Look at Paul, within three years of his conversion he was the greatest preacher/theologian that the Christian church has ever seen. Are you a Paul? Only God knows. But certainly as you mature, you will exhibit a greater grasp of God's truth. You

will become very stabilized, so that you are not tossed to and fro doctrinally. See *Eph. 4: 14* and notice the words *be no more children*.

We come now to the final qualification in this passage. ***“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”*** (v.7). This is a very telling qualification. What do people in the world think of him? What is his reputation among the unbelievers who know him? This is one of the only places in the Bible where God values the opinion of the lost and the reprobate. It is really sort of strange. Everywhere else, God doesn't care what they think. He says that ***their imaginations and their thoughts are only evil continually (Gen. 6:5)***. God has a very low view of the opinions of the lost. But this is one of the only verses which show an exception to that. What do they think about this guy who thinks that he is called of God into the ministry? What do the people who work with him think? What does his next door neighbor think? What do his classmates think? What about his barber? What does he think? How about his mail man? Or his drycleaner? How about the waitress at the local coffee shop? What does she think? This is so very, very important. I don't want you to misunderstand. If people have a favorable opinion, that's what we are looking for. Some people might even say things like: “Oh, I've known Joe for years. He is a religious fanatic. I call him the preacher.” If you here stuff like that then odds are that Joe has been witnessing to his lost associates. That's good. Don't expect the lost to understand all this stuff. To them is probably just a religious kook. What you are looking for is honest, non-Christian evaluation. If you hear something like: “Joe? Yea I know him. I wouldn't trust him further than I can spit”. Watch out. That's the kind of stuff you don't want to hear.

Why does God want us to go to the lost like this? Because, ***the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light ( Lk. 16: 8)***. I hate to say it, but some worldlings have more common sense than most Christians. This is a case in point. God expects us to consult them, in this matter, and when we do, we will be accomplishing God's perfect will. That explains why this is the final step...the last qualifier. The lost will help us forever seal and approve of the man whom God has chosen. This is a clear case of the lost and the reprobate, perfectly fulfilling the immutable will of God. God will have them tell you if the man is qualified or not. That is absolutely amazing. It serves as one more reminder, that God is absolutely Sovereign over every step of this whole important task of calling and equipping the man of God.

## Concluding Thoughts

What began as a letter to a dear friend, has grown into a small book. But this stuff is important in a cosmic and spiritual dimension. It affects the condition of human souls for eternity. It is not to be taken lightly, and I think by the forgoing that you can see the research and prayer I have invested in this project. There is another key passage of qualifications, which goes together with the Timothy passage that we have just exposted. It is Titus Chapter One verses six thru nine. It is very similar to this passage which we have studied, with some additions and subtractions. I feel that you should take it up and search it out yourself. Get a good commentary like Albert Barnes or Matthew Poole, and

study the words very carefully, using the Strong numbers, which are found in his concordance, and in some Bibles (which have them listed alongside the words of the text). You need to learn how to properly dissect, interpret and apply the Word of God, especially if He has indeed called you. Nobody can settle the issue for you. You have to struggle with it on your own. God does speak to His chosen vessels, primarily in His word, but sometime in a still small voice, a dream, a word from another person, or a flash of inspiration. You may want to re-read the material I have presented, looking up all the verses, and trying hard to follow all the logic. You probably not gonna be able to “seal the deal” in the first reading. Prayer and Bible study of the various passages is essential.

I totally sympathize with the struggle that takes place when you are trying to ascertain God’s truth. It is not easy, and I am not claiming that it is, or that anything I have written is going to instantly settle it for you. That’s all up to God. Hopefully, now that you have waded through to the end of this, it will have blessed you in a way that you cannot easily calculate. I hope it changes your life forever, and for the better. I know in my own life, as I struggled with the very things that you are struggling with, I found help in at least two wonderful books, which forever changed me. One was Spurgeon’s “Lectures to my Students”, and the other was Charles Bridges “The Christian Ministry”. Spurgeon was a Baptist, and Bridges was an Anglican. So even though I do not fully agree with Bridges’ Anglican model of church government, my life was still changed by the other stuff he presents.

Stephen, may God bless you richly, and bestow His richest favor upon you. If I can help. You know I will do everything within my power, and even if it’s not within my power, I’ll seek His face diligently on your behalf. God bless. Earl