

Call to the Ministry

by George Kulp

The sermon emphasizes the importance of dedication to God and a passion for souls in the ministry, and provides examples of how to overcome fear and doubt and ensure a successful ministry.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:3, Jeremiah 1:5, Romans 8:28, Philippians 3:12, 2 Timothy 1:9

Topics: "Divine Calling", "Sanctification"

Description

George Kulp preaches about the divine calling and sanctification of individuals for God's work, emphasizing the importance of dedication to God's will from an early age. He shares a story of a young man ordained for ministry whose life was dedicated to God even before his birth, showcasing the impact of parental prayers and consecration. Through the example of John Smith, who struggled with fear and hesitation in answering God's call to preach, Kulp highlights the journey of overcoming obstacles and doubts to fulfill God's purpose. Smith's perseverance and constant endeavor to promote the salvation of souls demonstrate the transformative power of God's grace in a minister's life. Kulp encourages ministers to seek full salvation and constantly strive for spiritual growth and effectiveness in their ministry, just as Smith did through prayer, study, and trust in God.

Transcript

"The Word of the Lord came unto me saying, I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet."

"Gird up thy loins and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee."

"Here am I; send me."

Children dedicated to God, and nurtured in prayer, are very apt to be found at last where God wants them. Men and women with a passion for souls, and a determination to fit themselves for God's will, whatever that may be, will get to the right place. The secret of many a life spent in the ministry, or in mission fields, is to be found in a dedication to God for His work before they were born.

In a large church in a great city a little group of ministers and delegates assembled to ordain an assistant pastor. They filled only a few front seats in the vast auditorium, but they were men of note, and most of them met the candidate for the first time. Among them sat, unrecognized by most of them, a little old man in clerical attire, who gave closest attention to the proceedings.

The young man presented his diploma from a small college, his diploma from the theological seminary in the city, and other credentials customary at such gatherings, and the examination proceeded in regular form, developing, as it went on, his life story.

Born in a home missionary parsonage, living through his boyhood in several small and isolated villages, educated in a remote and struggling college, he had come to his theological studies with a well-trained mind, a strong and deep purpose that was tinged with passion for humanity, and a life clean and robust and strong. The three years of city life and of special study had enriched his mind, added cultivation to his equipment, and broadened his outlook without abating his zeal or lessening his spiritual earnestness. He was fulfilling his life purpose -- a purpose he did not remember to have formed -- when he gave himself to the ministry, nor had he any recollection of struggle in the consecration of self to the higher life of the soul. To him it had all been normal. The processes had been logical and sweetly reasonable.

The council retired for its deliberations, and the vote for the ordination of the young man was unanimous and hearty. But before the council recalled the visitors to the auditorium to announce its decision, and to assign the several parts for the ordination services to follow in the evening, it was suggested that it would be a pleasant and courteous thing to call in the aged father and say a word of felicitation to him concerning the promise and rare spirit of his son.

The old man re-entered the auditorium, walked down its long, carpeted aisle, and was introduced by the moderator with words of hearty congratulation. His eyes and heart were full, and it was with difficulty he controlled his voice. Then he said, "You haven't yet learned the secret of my boy's life. When his mother and I were married we prayed to God for a son, and promised Him that our first-born should be His. When he was born, I took him in my arms and carried him up to my study, and kneeling there among my books, I gave him to God. And I felt in my soul that day the assurance of what I now experience.

"Before he was two years old he was sick unto death. Four physicians, two of them from this very city, called, at great expense, to save his life, declared he could not live till morning, and left us alone with him. But we could not believe he was to die, and we asked God for his life. For six weeks I never removed my clothing, but in the end he lived.

"He grew up generous, light-hearted without frivolity, courageous without being rude, strong and gentle, and always a child of God.

"His mother passed on and did not live to see this day. But I have lived through all these days of faith and struggle, and now I can sing, like Simeon of old, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' Whatever he does and wherever he preaches, I know my boy will be true."

The little, thin form rose to higher stature. The voice that began low and with hesitation rose to prophetic earnestness. The men gathered about listened with breathless interest. And when he sat down no one could speak, but every one was thinking that with such a heritage it was little wonder that the young man was what they had discovered him to be.

John Smith heard the call of God -- saw fields white unto harvest and few laborers. He undertook the duty of carrying the message, with much fear and hesitation. The first time it had been arranged for him to address a congregation, he could not summon sufficient resolution to fulfill his engagement. At the advice and entreaty of some of his friends, he a second time promised to make the attempt; but it is probable that,

had it not been for the remonstrance of his friend, Mr. Stoner, he would not even then have ventured. "As the time approached, he yielded again to timidity, and retired to the teacher's room, intending not to make his appearance at the place appointed. Mr. Stoner was in the room. 'I thought,' said he to Mr. Smith, 'that you had agreed to preach tonight.' 'Yes,' said the other, with much hesitation and embarrassment; 'but I must give it up.' 'What!' rejoined Mr. Stoner, with severe and powerful emphasis, 'do you mean then to ruin yourself? This pointed question, resting a compliance with acknowledged duty on a regard to personal safety, produced the desired result."

The place at which Mr. Smith commenced his public labors was a school-room in Park Lane, where Mr. Stoner himself, some time before, had preached his first sermon. His text was Proverbs 18:24: "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." The embarrassment which he felt upon this occasion was most painful both to himself and his hearers. After having proceeded with great difficulty for some short time, he was compelled to tell the congregation that he could not address them any longer, and he sat down in a state of distress, such as may be anticipated from so humbling an issue of a first attempt. His want of suitable expressions seemed to be the cause of his failure in this instance, and, indeed, for several years afterwards he was not infrequently straitened in his pulpit labors from the same circumstance.

The ill success of Mr. Smith's first attempt to deliver a sermon tended, of course, to increase his indisposition to the work of the ministry, and it was probably some time before he made a second. It was not till the Christmas quarterly meeting following, that he was proposed to be taken on the plan as a probationary local preacher. His name was introduced at the local preacher's meeting by Mr. William Nelson, who had been his fellow-assistant at Mr. Sigston's, and who was at the time gradually sinking under the power of a disease which ultimately proved fatal. Mr. Smith, who was spending the vacation with his parents, received the intelligence of his having been appointed to preach a trial-sermon, in a letter from his dying friend, whose case had just then been declared hopeless by his medical attendants. Mr. Nelson, in the conclusion of his communication, says: "It is settled that you are to take my plan. I hope to live to see you return, but that is only known to God."

This entrance upon the more regular work of a local preacher must have been very affecting to Mr. Smith. A solemn bequest was thus committed to his trust, and if the spirits of those who die in the Lord are allowed to trace the steps of their survivors, the fidelity of the subject must have given a spring-tide of gladness to the heart of him, whom he was thus impressively called to succeed. Undertaking the work in the fear of the Lord, he was blessed; and using the talents given, he proved it true that "to him that hath it shall be given."

Soon a wider sphere of usefulness opened before him, in a call to the itinerancy, and he entered upon the work with humble trust in Him who called him, putting him into the ministry. There was one trait of his character which every minister would do well to imitate -- his constant endeavor to promote the salvation of sinners. For this he studied, prayed and preached, and oftentimes he agonized for souls.

In the course of the year 1816 he became quickened to seek the full power of the cleansing blood of Christ and the utter extirpation of the carnal mind. In a letter bearing date October 5th he says: "My heart is given to God. I am seeking and longing for all the mind which was in Christ Jesus. Blessed be God, I am encouraged by His gracious promises to persevere in seeking full salvation. I long to experience this purity of heart. For this I pray, read, study, watch and trust. It is thy work, blessed God; let me enjoy it. In your prayers do not forget him who blesses God for such parents, and who daily prays for you."

His correspondence with his parents lets us into his inner life. The reader of these extracts that follow, will see evidences of advances in knowledge and love. The first was written announcing his arrival at York, and the commencement of his labors there, and it shows also with what pious resolution he entered upon his ministry:

"Nov. 15, 1816. -- Various have been the exercises of my mind. I think my confidence in the Lord is a little strengthened. I am more and more convinced of the absolute necessity of being clear respecting my own salvation; and, blessed be God, I am saying, 'Lord, I am Thine; save me!' The people are very kind. I am only afraid that my coming among them will prevent some other person from coming, who would be more useful. I feel, however, resolved to be diligent, to lay myself out for usefulness in every possible way, and to give myself into the hands of God. Never did I need your prayers so much as I do at present."

"Jan. 15. -- Yesterday and today I have experienced much uneasiness of mind. I wish to please God, but I fear I am not where I ought to be. It matters not what I hear, or what I read: I have to do with God. It is a personal concern. I shall quickly be gone: then where or what shall I be? O eternity!"

"Jan. 21. -- I have had this day a renewed sense of the favor of God, and a foretaste of the rest from inbred sin. The blessing seemed to be very near. Oh, that I may be enabled to lay hold of it tonight!"

"Jan. 23. -- The Lord is reviving His work in my soul. I am longing for an increased conformity to my Savior, I want more feeling for poor sinners. I must look to Him who had not where to lay His head. I must view Him in the garden, behold Him at Pilate's bar, see Him nailed to the cross, hear Him say, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' and the heart-rending cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me.'" It is this that melts the stony heart. God grant that we may be ever properly influenced by it! The Lord has lately brought many souls to Himself in York. We are expecting a signal outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Oh, that a gracious shower may very soon descend upon us! I have heard Mr. Nelson preach some such sermons as I never heard before. I never see my littleness as a preacher under any man so much as under Mr. Nelson. He has the unction; this makes him great. He tells me that I must bless God for barren times. Mr. John Burdsall was at York last week, and from him I got some important directions respecting study. He recommended a few books, some, some of which I have procured. I am to write to him in a short time, to let him know how I come on."

"Feb. 12. -- My mind has been much composed and stayed upon God for several days past. My confidence in Him has been much increased. I feel conscious of my inability for the great work in which I am engaged; but He has all the wisdom and power, and in Him I trust. If He has called me to preach the Gospel, He will qualify me; if not, He will, I trust, show me, and save my soul. Blessed be God!"

"April 3. -- I am thankful that I am in my closet at half-past nine o'clock. Oh, that I may be able to cultivate habits of regularity! [In allusion to his exercises of mind about preaching, he adds,] I think, surely, no preacher was ever in my situation. Blessed be God, I can cast my soul on the atoning sacrifice of Christ

'Jesus, to Thee my soul looks up.'"

"April 8. -- Oh, the happiness to know that my sins are put away by the sacrifice of Christ! Of this I have not the shadow of a doubt. I want more of the Spirit: for this I pray, for this I read, for this I believe, and I want to believe more. I must believe for salvation; not be saved, and then believe. I have a painful sense of my inability for the important work in which I am engaged: but it is the work of God. He is all-sufficient: if He has called me to it, He will help me; if not, He will send me home again, and He will save me. I am in

His hands, bless the Lord! I never was more sensible of the necessity of experiencing the truths of the Gospel, in order to preach them successfully to others."

"York, May 29, 1817. -- Of late I have had many visits from the Lord, especially in private. Mr. Bramwell once said, 'If you wish for any great and lasting blessing, expect it in private.' Many here speak very clearly on entire sanctification; and, I believe, give satisfactory evidence that they are in possession of that blessing. Who is a people like unto this people? The District Meeting commenced on Wednesday. I was rather afraid that the list of books which I had read since I became a traveling preacher would incur the censure of the meeting: however, it was quite the reverse. I hope to be more diligent than ever. I still anticipate almost insurmountable difficulties in preaching. I am ashamed of my sermons, but I yet hope. This hope, how it encourages -- animates -- strengthens! Mr. Nelson is as valuable to me as ever."

At the Conference of 1817 Mr. Smith was appointed to the Barnard Castle and Weardale Circuit. Here, although he was separated from his friend, Mr. Nelson, he still maintained a correspondence with him, that was a blessing to his soul. One of Mr. Nelson's letters we give as so eminently characteristic of the man, and giving us an insight to this Boanerges that is refreshing and helpful today, as doubtless it was to Mr. Smith. We commend it to the ministry of today:

"York, Nov. 7, 1817. -- My Dear Brother: I received your welcome epistle. I bless God for strengthening your soul and body; and also giving you to see some fruit. The Gospel of God our Savior, preached in faith, will be followed with signs more interesting than even taking up serpents, or drinking deadly poison, and taking no harm thereby. Always go sword in hand, and beg of God the power of the Spirit, while you raise it to His glory, that prejudice with every opposition may be cut down. Eye your Captain, hear His voice, follow closely; be deaf to the voice of the enemy. Now is your time to play the man. Do not study until your head aches. Lay your plans short but clear: look always for Divine aid; and after you have spread the net, close it with great care, that you may there and then bring some to shore. I lately heard a good sermon; the net was well spread, and at the close the righteous were encouraged and the wicked threatened; but no attempt was made to catch a fish. We had better catch a few fishes with a little net, than dash with a great one, and let them all slip under or by the side. Preach in the Holy Ghost, and, before you dismiss your audience, offer them salvation now. Remember first to convert, and then the good fruit will follow: only, the rebel must lay down his weapons, yea, all of them, or he will not succeed with his Prince; but they may be all dropped in a moment. Never lose sight of present salvation, nor of God who is to work it. Give Him all the glory. Should any attempt to praise you, dart immediately to God, 'Lord, I am Thine; save me!'

"My soul is kept in peace and purity. I have some good times in the new chapel. We are all peace: would to God we had prosperity also. We had better be saved in a storm than lost in a calm. God bless you. Write soon. I am," etc.

Oh, that men would learn that the first and most important business of the ministry is to get people to God. For this purpose Jesus came, suffered, died, gave the Holy Spirit, instituted the ministry, and gave the great commission. Some time ago a man was marked for his wickedness and enmity to the Gospel. He seized the hour when people were going to church to drive through the streets with his fishing-tackle strung over his shoulders. Gaming was his delight, and his blasphemy was terrible. Going home from dissipation one Sunday night, he heard that an associate, with whom he had played cards the evening before, was dead. He died without hope, and in great terror; died, calling on God to have mercy upon his own soul and that of his friend. Alarm seized upon him. As his servant came in to kindle the morning fire,

the man threw himself on his knees and cried for mercy. He then and there found the Savior. He at once went to work leading his friends to religion. He pretended to be a preacher in his wild and wicked days, and now he commenced preaching in earnest. When he appeared in the streets and began to preach, people thought he was trying on his old tricks. One of his old cronies and boon companions stood at the foot of the pulpit. He could not tell whether his friend was acting or was in earnest. When the sermon closed, he went up to the preacher and said: "Are you in earnest, or are you doing it for a wager? If you are only trying it on, you are acting splendidly." "Oh! no, my poor friend, I am in dead earnest, and so is my God. He is willing to receive you, as He was to receive me. He has answered prayer for me, and He will answer prayer for you." Crowded congregations follow this devoted servant of the Lord, and under his ministry, desperadoes and the perishing press into the kingdom of God.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-kulp/call-to-the-ministry/>

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