

The Gospel Ministry ■ A Noble Task

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being called by God to the ministry, highlighting the specific qualities and responsibilities of preachers and elders. It discusses the significance of being chosen and equipped by God, the characteristics of a true preacher, and the essential role of preaching, pastoring, and prayer in ministry. The congregation is encouraged to support, follow, encourage, do ministry with, and pray for their elder, fostering a Christ-honoring and loving church environment.

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:5, Galatians 1:15, 1 Timothy 3:1, 1 Peter 5:1, Hebrews 13:17, Romans 15:13

Topics: "Divine Calling", "Support for Church Leaders"

Description

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Transcript

Bridgeport, Azle, and further more parts wherever God scatters them. And it's a great day. I have missed seeing the smiling face of Ethan Byrd.

I love it. One last time. Maybe not the last.

We welcome you, Providence Fellowship, and we are joined hip and thigh to you to advance the kingdom, to be a sister church. We're excited. Alistair Begg said, God does not appoint just any Tom, Dick, and Harry to a pastoral pastoring elder.

The same goes for a deacon as well. God appoints specific men unto whom he entrusts the responsibility of gospel ministry. Not perfect men, or only Christ would be the pastor, the shepherd.

Not privileged men, in the sense of it makes them more important, it makes them better, it makes them on some kind of wrong platform or plateau. Not privileged men, not worthy men, not great men, but chosen and called men. As Paul says of himself in Galatians 1, it pleased God to separate me from birth and to call me by His grace to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.

That's true for every preacher and elder in the gospel ministry. Lee quoted the verse from Jeremiah. It's the same thing.

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart and ordained you a prophet to the nations. Preachers are predestined and then born and then born again and converted and called and equipped and sent and placed where Christ wants to put them.

What is a true preacher? A preacher or an elder is a called one, called by God, recognized by the church and sent by God to the church, through the church to advance the gospel. A preacher is a bond slave of Jesus Christ. A preacher, Paul said, is a witness.

I've ordained you as a witness. A preacher is a servant, a servant of Christ, a servant of the Word of God, a servant of the kingdom, a servant of Christ's church, a servant of God's people. We should never, or perhaps I should say we should always see ourselves, if we are in any ministry office, through the lens of we're a servant.

I'm a servant of Christ. I'm a servant of His people. A true preacher is a shepherd, called and equipped to feed, to care and tend, as Jesus told Peter three times in his restoration.

A shepherd to bear the burdens of the sheep and the flock and the lambs, to be there among them, to live life in and out among them, connected to them relationally, to be faithful as a shepherd. A preacher is an ambassador, an ambassador of God, an ambassador of Jesus Christ, an ambassador of the Holy Spirit, an ambassador of the kingdom of God in this world, an ambassador of the Word of God in the gospel. What is an ambassador? An ambassador is one who has been authorized to represent a king or a president and a nation.

An ambassador doesn't represent himself. An ambassador, rather, represents his president and his country in a foreign land that he will be in for a little while. An ambassador is authorized to represent and convey the president or the king's agenda, standards, and message with the king's authority.

All authority is given unto me and heaven and earth go therefore. An ambassador is an authorized representative who is truly nothing special in himself, but is a sent one from the One who has authorized him. Every true preacher and pastor has been sent by God.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John, the Gospels say. Preachers are God's emissaries and messengers. The man is a preacher and is preaching.

It is an astounding, amazing adventure and experience. Jason, you will work lifelong to learn to preach. Every man who's preached five years, ten years, forty years, fifty years, can still honestly say, I'm still learning.

I'm still growing in this. I need to do this different. I need to improve this.

You will work lifelong to learn and to improve. You never arrive. You are always in the school of Christ.

After your PhD studies are over, you're not at school. You're in school the rest of your life. You're in the school of Jesus Christ who continues to teach all of us.

Every Christian is in the school of Christ and every church officer is in the ministry school of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. You are a work in progress and what you are, what you are, and who you

are is more important than how well or eloquently you speak. The call.

I want to talk about the call. I want to talk about preaching and pastoring in these few minutes this morning. The call.

There's a call of God that is from birth and there's a call of God into the ministry that begins to come in time and in space and a man's experience. And that's when it becomes a struggle. It becomes real doubts and fears and all kinds of issues.

The call comes and there's confirmation that begins to come. Confirmation both inward. When I was 19, I planned on being a coach and Christ saved me.

Within a year, I lost all desire to be a coach and I had a growing interest in the gospel ministry. It was inward desire, urges, interest, motivation. So there's the call to ministry is confirmed inwardly.

But it's also outward. Inward confirmation to someone's heart is not all that's necessary. There's outward confirmation.

The inward is subjective. The outward is objective. Inward is you know and you affirm God's calling me to this.

But the outward confirmation, others see and the church recognizes and the church affirms and commissions that confirmation of that call. Called of God. And you must answer that call.

You must choose and obey and follow. James Somerville said this, while you are the one who made the choice to enter the ministry, there was a choice before that choice. The choice that God made in calling you to be His in the first place.

The calling to the ministry. And then there's the equipping. You aren't going to get equipped this week.

If it ain't there, you better not be doing it. God equips a person. How does He do that? He does it, Jason, all your life, though you didn't always know it, God has been equipping you.

Your background, your education, people, He's used key people in your life at a certain point to bring you along. Your trials, your experience, divine providences, books, new direction, new decisions, all of it is God's equipping of a man. Leonard Ravenhill used to say, you can grow a squash plant in six months, it takes twenty years to grow an oak tree.

God shapes His men and that lifelong equipping will continue. Preachers, as pastors, have three specific callings. To preach, to pastor, and to pray.

I didn't plan that alliteration, it's natural, it's just with it, isn't it? You're called to preach, you're called to pastor, and you're called to pray. Preachers are to do three things. They're to preach, they're to pastor, and they're to pray.

They're not called to be famous, not called to be celebrities or CEOs. Preach the Bible, care for and tend Christ's sheep, and pray. You preach to the flock, you care for the flock, and you pray for the flock.

Preach, care, and tend, and pray. So let's talk about these this morning in terms of He who desires the office of an elder, of a bishop, desires a good work. And this is important, by the way, for all of us in the

church of Jesus Christ.

Because every Christian and every saint ought to know what the ministry should be about. Should view it rightly, should view it accurately, should properly treasure it, and should properly see the church of Jesus Christ being built properly as He's laid it out in the New Testament. So this message is very important for every Christian to view the ministry more accurately.

First, preaching. The ministry of the Word of God, the serving of the food of God, the proclamation of the whole counsel of God, the expounding, the opening up, the declaring, and the applying of the Bible. Preaching.

If a man can do anything else, he should. And any true man called to proclaim the Word of God must do that. And God's, a man's gift will make room for him and bring him into that position.

A man cannot make room for his gifts, a man's gifts by divine equipping and divine calling and providence will place him in the office. So, Jason, you're preaching. Make your preaching about Jesus Christ.

If the whole Bible is about Him, and the whole counsel of God relates to Him, make much of Christ in your preaching. Make your preaching about Him. Preaching is a bearing witness unto Him.

Your words and your manner and your declarations point the people away to look to Christ, not inward. Preaching is bringing people to see Him, and hear Him, and look to Him, and grow in Him, and learn of Him. Every sermon ought to make, in some way ought to make the sheep of God mindful and near to the great shepherd of the sheep.

Paul said, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. He says, our aim is to present every one of you mature and perfect in Christ. So, in every doctrinal truth, in every theological sermon, in every ethical principle in the Bible, in every moral truth, there's a connection in that truth that relates to the Gospel, to Jesus Christ.

In every Old Testament event and narrative, in every ecclesiological truth, in every eschatological truth, salvation, sanctification, the Christian life and what grace means, it all leads back to and is centered in and finds its fulfillment and completion in the Lord Jesus Christ. Preach a living and real Christ. That's true preaching, and that's your goal.

Oftentimes, you'll preach and you'll go home and you'll say, well, that was a failure. Lesson learned. Lord, help me improve.

Make your preaching make it about the Lord Jesus Christ. Make your preaching doctrinal. Doctrinal preaching to unfold the theological and the doctrinal truths of the Scriptures.

A friend of mine gave a preacher, he knew a book called Justification and Regeneration. Some of you have heard of it. Gave him this book, this little book on basic doctrine, and that preacher said, that's too much doctrine.

That's too theological for me. The guy shouldn't be in the ministry. Make your preaching doctrinal.

Warm, emotional, doctrinal preaching. Make your preaching prophetic. Now what do I mean by that? Great men from the past believed that every sermon, every time you stand to preach, is a word from God for the people there for that hour.

It's your prophesying the truth to hearts in the moment. I'm prophesying to you right now. Make your preaching prophetic.

And make it simple and plain and clear. You never want anyone to go away and say, what was he talking about? You never want that to happen. I'm not sure what he said, but he sure can speak well.

You never want that to happen. Speak plainly. Speak clearly.

Speak simply. Preach also, make your preaching personal and real. Not having religious aura about it that's different than you always have.

You are Monday through Saturday. Be real. Be plain.

Be personal. Make your preaching pastoral. That is, every time you stand to preach, the sheep are there and they're hungry and they need to be fed.

They don't need to be beaten with the law or with legalism. Pastoral preaching is nourishing good food for the sheep. Also, make your preaching applicable.

More and more, we have to work at studying and learning, how will this help the saints? What in this truth about Christ will meet them right where they are tomorrow when they're at work or when they're in school? Make your preaching applicable. Make your preaching more and more in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. And that's your choice.

To go to the Spirit after study, after preparation. To go to Him dependent, consciously not depending on your preparation or your past experience. You go to Him in desperate dependence on the Holy Spirit and tell Him, I need You, Father.

Fulfill Luke 11 verse 13 in me again. If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will you give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? Give me Your Spirit in this moment to make this sermon real and helpful to your people. Preach independence upon the Holy Spirit.

But also, preach when you're in the pulpit, conscious of the presence of God and be empowered in the moment by the Spirit. Next I would say, make your preaching your own. Don't be anybody else.

Be you. Your style. Your approach.

Your giftings. Your delivery. Don't try to be like anybody else.

Either subconsciously or consciously. Be yourself and God will own your preaching. Anywhere that you preach.

God only made one Jason. This Jason. And He's equipped you to be you.

You can't be anybody else. So make your preaching your own. Next, make your preaching consciously loving.

Have the love of God in your heart toward the people when you preach. Love them as you preach. Have a heart of affection for them when you preach.

Loving as in not harsh or legalistic or condemning. Because a frustrated or depressed or angry man shouldn't preach frustrated and angry and depressing sermons. You have to be filled with the love of God.

Be filled with Christ's love when you speak to His loved ones. Loving as in the love of Christ constraining you and motivating you in your preaching. And when you preach Christ, be sure as much as it depends on you, you are full of Christ's presence and His power.

Ego, personal ego has no place in ministry. It has no place in preaching. No sermon will ever be as good as you think it is or as bad as you think it was.

No. No man's preaching is either as good or as bad as he feels about it. The preacher is often the worst judge about his sermon.

So don't be impressed with your own preaching and don't be depressed wrongly by your own preaching. You're just a messenger. And the importance and the glory is in the message, not the messenger.

Every sermon is a message from God for the people there in front of you. And it's the most important hour on earth. The opening of the Bible, the opening of the gospel.

And Christ, by His Spirit, through this Word, feeding His people. Preaching. Make much of preaching.

If any man desires the office of a bishop, it's a good work in preaching. Secondly, pastoring. Let's look at 1 Peter 5 if you would quickly.

2 Peter 5.1 The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed, hears the exhortation. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly. Not for filthy lucre or dishonest gain, but of a willing, joyful heart.

Feed the flock of God, he says, which is among you. Care for, tend to, pastoring. As a pastor, Jason, you must have the gentleness of a dove, the wisdom of a serpent, the courage of a lion, the skin of an elephant, the heart of a child, the heart of a loving mother, and the heart of a caring father.

A seminary cannot produce a pastor. It takes time, and God's grace, and prayer, and self-denial, and humility, and testedness, and experience to make a pastor. Your pastoring will become what you make of it.

Make your pastoring relational. Be to each one of the flock when you're around them. Be to them as if they're important.

Be to each one how Jesus would be to them. Say to each one in the moment as you depend on Him, what would be His mind and heart as best you know. Treat each one as Christ does.

Treat them. Be relational. Be caring.

Pastor in a caring way. Make your pastoring intentional. You must pursue people when they won't or when they're not available.

Be intentional in pastoring. Make yourself do it in, seize, and out when you feel like it, when you don't feel like it. Be intentional in being a caring shepherd.

Be diligent. Make your pastoring diligent. Make your pastoring non-preferential.

Don't respect others. Don't respect some more than others. Don't pastor those you're close to or that you know better more than you pastor the least among you.

Non-preferential pastoring is important. Make your pastoring discerning. At times, you have to learn to say no.

Could we meet tomorrow? Could we do that tomorrow? I'm out on a date with my wife. I'm not going to be on the phone. Be discerning.

Make your pastoring an equipping ministry. You're not called to do all the ministry. You're to equip them for the work of the ministry.

Make it an equipping pastoring. Make your pastoring in the moment. When you're with someone, God decreed that moment from all eternity for you to be with them.

Be in the moment. Make your pastoring one of patience. And make it one of love.

Remember who you are and what you are among them and before them is more of a sermon than what you can ever say to them from the pulpit. Preaching and pastoring is a noble task. Do you desire it? God's called you to it.

But I thought about the commands and the directives and the duties and the exhortations just in the New Testament that are clear. So let's let Jesus Christ directly speak to you and Paul and Peter, these three bear witness of the glory and the trials and the calling of the gospel ministry. Jesus said this, feed My lambs, tend My lambs, tend My sheep, feed My sheep.

This is an all-exclusive calling. And it's fulfilled practically in what Paul says in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus as well. Paul says to you this morning, but you, O man of God, flee these carnal things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.

I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you. Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Hold fast to the form of sound words.

That good thing which is committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in you. You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. Endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God. A workman who does not need to be ashamed. Rightly handling the word of truth.

The servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all. Able to teach. Patient in humility, correcting those who are in opposition to the truth.

I charge you before God, preach the Word. Be in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching.

But as for you, speak sound things which are in line with sound doctrine. And in all things, show yourself to be a pattern of good works. In doctrine, showing integrity, reverence, dignity, and sound speech that

cannot be condemned.

Watch. Stand fast in the faith. Be brave.

Be strong. And let all you do be done in love. Then Peter tells you, shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as an overseer, not by compulsion, but willingly.

Not for the wrong kind of gain, but eagerly. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being an example to the flock. Preaching.

Pastoring. Now a word to all of you members of Providence Fellowship. I charge you this day.

Turn to Hebrews 13. Hebrews 13.1 through the beginning of verse 9. To the church, Providence Fellowship. Let brotherly love continue.

Do not be forgetful to entertain strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds as being in bonds with them, and them which suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body. Marriage is honorable and all in the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Let your conversation, that is your lifestyle, be without covetousness and be content with such things as you have. For He has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my Helper. I will not fear what man shall do to me.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines.

Saints of Providence Fellowship, verse 7. Your responsibility is to truly remember and all that that means, their life, their ways, their ministry, the importance of it. Take to heart. Have it utmost in your mind.

And remember your leaders, those who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Verse 17, Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourself. What does that ultimately mean? As an elder, faithfully declares to you not his own opinion, but God's truth and God's Word.

What God says from this book, accurately proclaimed, is bound on your conscience to obey your Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. As he accurately and faithfully expounds and opens up God's Word to you, it's not just your pastor preaching. It is Christ in him declaring the very truth of God.

And you're bound to that in obedience. Obey those who have the rule over you and be submissive. Why? Because He watches out for your soul as one who must give an account.

Let them do that with joy and not grief, for that's unprofitable for you. Saints at Providence Fellowship, as a sheep under your elders' ministry, live in such a way, be such a member of the body there, that it is a joy to pastor you and not a grief or a hardship. That they may do it with joy, Scripture says.

Four things I would exhort you as a church to make sure you do toward your pastoring elder and every pastoring elder you have in the future. Four things. Number one, support him.

Support him. Support him spiritually. Support him and his family domestically.

Support him financially. Support him personally. Pastor him in a way.

Send him a text message on Wednesday after a Sunday sermon. Send him a message on Saturday praying for you. Find ways to support him personally.

Support him prayerfully. Be a real support to him and his family. Christ calls you to do that.

Secondly, follow him as he's biblical and as he follows Christ. Follow him. He is leading.

He's leading the flock. He's one of the flock. And he's living the same Christian life you are.

He has the same destination and journey that you have. You're walking together so follow him as he follows Christ. Be a faithful churchman and a supporter of the ministry in your church.

Thirdly, encourage him. This is a little different than supporting him, though I kind of got into that. Encourage him with your own life and your own walk.

You know what's amazing to pastors or deacons? When they see believers who may not have any outward ministry, they may just be in the church, but when they're faithful, they're all in. They're always there. They're giving.

They're dependable. Their hearts are there. They're with the brethren.

They're hanging out. They're really participating. Pastors see that and the behavior of the sheep deeply encourages them.

Be that at Providence Fellowship with your life. Encourage him with your words, your example, and your faithfulness. The worst thing a church member can do to discourage a church leader is to be divisive or critical or discouraging to an elder.

Don't be a negative. Be a positive. Don't be a discouragement.

Be an encouragement. Don't pull him down with your carnality ever or your self-centeredness. Lift him up faithfully, intentionally, lovingly.

Pastors face enough discouragement and pressure and stress without straying sheep adding to it. The devil uses many things to attack God's servants, but one of the things he wants to use and that he often uses, is church members and other believers as a tool of discouragement. Make sure you're never one of those tools of discouragement.

Encourage your elder. Next, do ministry along with him. You serve.

You exhort. You meet needs when you see them. You encourage one another.

You bear burdens. You come alongside. You go visit and strengthen needy saints.

He cannot do it all. He's not supposed to do it all. I remember hearing this over the years.

The most ignorant and unbiblical idea. Well, that's what preachers are paid to do. That's their job.

No, their job is to preach and teach and shepherd and pray and equip the saints to do the work of the ministry in this needy world and to one another. So do ministry along with him. Find creative ways that you can do ministry.

Ask him what you can do. Finally, and fifthly, pray for him. Pray for him regularly.

Your prayers as one member of the body can make all the difference sometimes. Only a pastor knows how hard it is to keep preaching through times of physical weakness, family pressures, discouragement, depression, satanic attacks, misunderstandings, difficult relationships. A single elder in a church or a plurality of elders, all those things come on them.

And when you have to preach week in and week out, week after week, month after month, you're preaching in spite of those things. You're preaching through adversity. So your prayers for your elder are vitally essential and important.

Your prayers directly minister to him and will change things. Finally, be the most faithful, committed, dependable, loving church member possible. And that will edify your church.

It will strengthen and encourage your elder. And it will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ who's the head of the church, who died for the church and loves the church. Have you ever heard the name William Jay? Some of you have.

William Jay lived in England. He pastored in Bath, England. And he lived long enough to hear John Wesley preach in the 18th century and to hear C.H. Spurgeon preach.

Fast forward. He heard them both. Not too many could claim that.

William Jay pastored a church. The same church. Sixty-two years.

You ready for that? Geoffrey Thomas pastored Alfred Place Baptist Church in Wales from 1966 to 2016. Fifty years. Beloved church in Bridgeport, Jason can be your elder for decades and decades.

That should be his goal and desire. That should be your goal and desire. A lot of that will depend on one thing under God.

How you as the church and you as the sheep treat your elder. Treat him in a Christ-honoring way. Treat him in an honorable way, biblically.

Treat him with love and support. Because I believe he is in it for the long haul. For the marathon.

So in all things, let brotherly love continue. William Perkins said this, He who would be a faithful minister of the Gospel must deny the pride of his heart, be emptied of self-ambition, and set himself wholly to seek the glory of God in his calling. Joel Beakey said this, Let every preacher take note.

Amid the frustrations and hardships of ministry, the most Christlike thing is to stay focused on your calling, give thanks to God, and go on preaching the Gospel. David Wilkerson said this, As I look back over 50 years of ministry, I recall numerous tests, trials, and times of crushing pain. But through it all, the Lord has proven faithful, true, and loving in all His promises.

So brother, I say these words of Paul in closing this morning. Romans 15.13 This benediction, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace through believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glory and honor forever and ever.

Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank You that You have said if anyone desires the office of bishop of an elder, he desires a noble good work.

We thank You today. Lord, You have called our brother, Jason, to this office. He has not brought himself to it.

He has been willing and he's been carried along by the providence and the grace of God to this day, to this moment, to be ordained into the Gospel ministry. Lord, we pray that You would this morning anoint him and equip him through the laying on of hands to the work wherein You've called him. We commend him to You and the Word of Your grace, which is able to keep him from falling and to give him a glorious future inheritance.

Blessed be Your name. We pray in Christ's name.

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