

After Six Years

by Paris Reidhead

The key to effective ministry is to have a ministry from the Lord, to the Lord, about the Lord, and by the Lord, and to have a clean heart and motive.

Duration: 40:27

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:5

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the ministry received from the Lord. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing that the power of ministry comes from God and not from ourselves. The speaker also highlights the need for Christians to renounce dishonesty and deceit in their ministry and instead manifest the truth to others. He reminds the audience that one day their ministry will be reviewed by the Lord, and encourages them to strive to fight the good fight, keep the faith, and finish the course in anticipation of receiving a crown of righteousness.

Transcript

On two periods of our church year, we are responsible to see men and women regarding responsibility in the Sunday school and in the church. It's our custom never to present a nomination at an annual election or for appointment to Sunday school office. Anyone that has not been personally consulted and invited to accept the responsibility is under the law.

We are engaged now as a Sunday school nominating committee in finding staff, teachers, and officers and superintendent for this Sunday school year. And again, I am brought face to face with the fact that what Miss Eva Cornelius of Gospel Light Press said two or three years ago in Winona Lake is true. She said, I do not believe that any Christian should accept a responsibility unless they do it as unto the Lord and unless they have a call from God.

We believe that God has a plan for every life. We believe it's the intention and will that every member of his body should contribute to the wealth, the health, the prosperity, the spiritual ministry of that body. We're made up of many members.

We're all related to each other because we're related to the head. And therefore, I propose this morning to ask you to consider with me something that has to do with ministry, your ministry. In Ephesians, we're turning, please, to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, for this is the portion that shall engage us.

I make reference, however, to Ephesians chapter 4, where it says he gave evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry. And the ministry was generally associated with someone such as myself called pastor, minister. But every Christian has a ministry, and pastors, duly noted and recognized, were given to the church for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry.

And we, therefore, would conclude that when in the revelation our Lord indicts one of the churches for the sin of Nicolaitans, it was that they had made distinction between clergy and laity and had put different levels into the lives of the people. Now, I believe everything a child of God does is important. Our God is the God of infinite detail.

You cannot take a glass and view the little flowers that grow in the desert floor so beautifully presented by Erwin Moon in one of his films without realizing that God is the God of exquisite detail. Now, if he's concerned about the minutiae of nature, that which can only be seen through a magnifying glass that perhaps only angels with their clear vision could enjoy, how much more is he going to be concerned about the details of my life and yours? Therefore, what I am presenting ought to apply to every Christian, every missionary, every Christian servant. Now, Paul spoke biographically many times, and I suppose that it's due to my advancing into middle age so rapidly that I am becoming inclined to reminisce a little.

After 25 years in the Lord's work, I think you're entitled to a certain amount of it. I hope it doesn't become epidemic at all, but I still feel that there's a little right that's earned. And the fact that today represents six complete years since first I stood before this congregation might give me a little further incentive to speak with reminiscence.

But I am concerned now not about something personal, but about something real, though to illustrate the point, I shall make personal reference later. Let me call to your attention that in 2 Corinthians 4, we have three clear divisions in the chapter. The first is verses 1 to 7, and we will call it the ministry received.

Notice, the ministry is received from the Lord. Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Paul indicates that valid ministry is to be ministry that is received from the Lord.

Now, I think this is applicable to every level and every area, every particular kind of service. It may be that the Lord has called, given you the gift of administrations or the gift of helps. And in that sense, your place in his body may be to assist in many of the details which are so indispensable.

We've all heard the legend of the battle that was lost because of a nail in a horseshoe that caused the prince's horse to limp and for him to lose his place at the front of his soldiers, and thus they were routed. And so the blacksmith who didn't do well his job was responsible for the loss of the battle. Therefore, there is such a thing as the ministry of helps, ministry of gifts of administration, certain detailed responsibilities that fit into the personality and the thinking of some.

Now, whether it be that or be Peter on the day of Pentecost preaching with anointing, preaching in power, it ought to be recognized that in every case, in every instance, at every point, the ministry is to be from the Lord. Whether it be a secretary in the office, someone that is responsible for wrapping books that are being mailed, making notations of gifts that are received, visiting, calling, whatever it is, we ought to have

a sense that this is received. You remember, I believe it was Aristarchus to whom Paul wrote, saying, Remind him of the ministry he has received and from whom he has received it.

And there is, therefore, this sense that if you accept responsibility, you are not accepting it primarily from a group that may invite you or present the opportunity. You are accepting that responsibility from the Lord. And this is Paul's statement.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry as we have received mercy, it is a gracious thing. It is a charisma bestowal that we should have the privilege of being laborers together with him. But notice that it involves a disclaimer of all personal interests.

We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. We are not using the Lord's work for self-promotion. We are not using this as some place to exalt ourselves.

We have renounced this. There is no double motive here. No sense in which this becomes the means for personal aggrandizement.

We have renounced all hidden motivation. We have renounced all sense of using God. We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty.

Nor are we walking in craftiness. No sense of enlarging or increasing at the expense of others the place given. Nor is there any sense that one is to use the word of God deceitfully.

Not this. The word is quite clear, perfectly clear, that it is to be done with the word allowing to do its work in the heart of the ones who use it as well as those to whom it is sent. The word of God is to have free course and be glorified.

And so it is a ministry from the Lord which has at its end the glory of God, not even the approval of the group to whom it is rendered. You see, if we seek the approval of men, the men may have less an intent than God's glory. And therefore, if the ministry is from the Lord, it is also to the Lord.

Do you minister in the task you have in Sunday school as a deacon, as a deaconess, an elder? Do you minister to the people or do you minister to the Lord? This is the issue that is to be settled. It's a ministry not to men. It is a ministry from the Lord and a ministry to the Lord.

But we further see it's not only a ministry from the Lord and to the Lord, but in verse 3 and 4, it is a ministry about the Lord. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Now, he gave evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry.

But the work of the ministry is from the Lord to the Lord about the Lord. And it is everything that he does for his church is to the end of getting this message of his grace to those for whom it's intended. Now, bear this in mind.

The church is not to be viewed as an end in itself. I think that it is a great mistake. It is a dangerous mistake, in fact, that we should have allowed ourselves to come to the place that we think God's work is done within the precincts of the building or within the frame of organization.

This is not the place of God's work. I used an illustration in the Bible class earlier that it is no more that God's work is to be done within the frame of organization as the ultimate end than that the purpose of a college is to feed the young people in the dining hall. Now, a college that has boarding students has a dining hall.

And, of course, the chef and the dietician are concerned that the meals be on time, they be balanced and wholesome and appetizing, and the students eat. Though my experience has been they never need to worry too much about that. They are usually quite eager and anxious.

But nevertheless, satisfying the students with three meals a day is not the end of a college. This is not the purpose of a college, to run a good restaurant. The purpose of a college is to nourish the students that they may go and learn and then subsequently use what they've learned.

And the purpose of the church is not just to have large services beautifully designed and presented for the approval of the congregation. The purpose of the church is to feed them and nourish them and instruct them for the work that's to be carried on the other six days and part of the seventh out in the community. And therefore, this is the understanding of every part of the ministry.

An elder is for the perfecting of the saints. A deacon for the perfecting of the saints. Deaconess is also for the service and the protecting and the nourishment and strengthening of the body.

The Sunday school class is for the teaching and instructing of the children. Every part of the ministry has to be aimed in presenting mature Christians that are able to carry the gospel out to them that are in darkness, whose minds have been blinded by the God of this world. Not simply to run the machinery at a high rate of speed with a healthy and wholesome hum.

This is important. But if you can fill every seat and fill every organization and it stops at the doors, it is a complete failure. The place of ministry is out in the highway and the byway.

It didn't even say we were to bring the sinners in to be saved. It says go and preach, not bring to be heard, to hear. And it's therefore the intention of the Spirit of God that the ministry is to be about the Lord, from the Lord, to the Lord, and about the Lord.

And we're to carry the gospel to where we work and live and play, where we buy, where we study, to every area of our life. Each of us to be effective. But notice something else.

It's not only from the Lord and to the Lord and about the Lord, but it's also, and I'm grateful for this, by the Lord. For in verses five to seven, he makes it clear. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Too frequently when someone is being asked to consider a place of responsibility, they will say, but I don't have the ability.

And of course, I personally consider this one of the prerequisites for achievement in any area. For the person who says, oh yes, I'm able to do that, this is right in keeping with the abilities that I've had, is the person that is quite incompetent for the task. For we're not wrestling with flesh and blood and tasks and details alone.

We're wrestling with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age. And it therefore behooves us to recognize that the ability that is to be employed in the task is that which is not natural to us, but it's supernatural. You'll notice in the seventh verse, seeing it, we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

And who of us but what can testify to the earthen quality of our lives, our minds, our abilities, our personalities? And anyone that would think, equate himself with the message that he preaches is entirely misunderstanding both himself and the glory of that message. Why should it be that God allows lips of men that have been used to communicate uncleanness and bitterness and anger and wrath and malice in the days of their impenitence, why should these same lips be used to exalt, to magnify, to glorify the Son of God and communicate to some heart that message of eternal life? We'll never know. We'll never know.

But remember this, dear friend, that if you have been washed in his blood and born of his Spirit, you had to come bankrupt. That one who has the benefit of an education, that one who's had the benefit of years of experience and successful administration, has certainly something to bring to the Lord's work and service that another doesn't. We know that Nathanael was a faithful servant and apostle, but we know that Paul was used in a way that Nathanael wasn't.

And we recognize that there are human differences, but we also recognize that in the beginning of Paul's ministry, when he thought, and this is my personal opinion, that his past experience, his education, and his connections were sufficient for the Lord's work, for we find him quite boldly and confidently preaching there in Damascus, that the Lord had to give him a three-year postgraduate course in unlearning and send him into the backside of the desert where he forgot all that he'd learned and lost contact with all that he'd known, and when he was utterly stripped and utterly broken, and God says, Paul, now what do you have? And he says, nothing, and I can't do anything, and I'm through and finished. Then the Lord says, no, you're just beginning, you're just starting, because he had to come to the place that he was an earthen vessel and the things that he counted gain to himself he counted loss to Christ, and he was prepared to present the little that he had for the great blessing of the Lord. And so it is that we should recognize that the ministry is from the Lord, and it is to the Lord, it is always about him to those whose minds are darkened and who are in sin, but the power is from the Lord.

Previously, Paul has said that he came not in the excellency of men's speech. He didn't come in the genius of his own forensic ability. He didn't come with his own eloquence.

He said, I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, in order that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but it might stand in the power of God. And so the question is not how much ability do you have. All vessels are made of the same kind of clay.

The question is how clean is that vessel, how clean the motive, how clean the purpose, how clean is the heart and mind and intent and spirit. And if you are a vessel clean through Jesus' blood, and the only end and the only aim of your life is to glorify him, and you accept the ministry from him, and it's a ministry to him, not to men, and it's a ministry about him, then it can be a ministry by him. And it will be God who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And you will not be preaching yourself how much ability you've had, but you'll be preaching Christ. And the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ will shine out of the veritable darkness of your little earthen vessel. It will not be you, but it will be him.

You remember that when Gideon conquered the Midianites, it was that he had men that had light in an earthen vessel. And when the vessel was broken, the light would shine. And when our little clay vessels are broken at the cross and we've come to the end of ourselves, then the light of Christ can shine through us and give glory to God and honor to him and bring salvation to the lost.

And so we must understand that this ministry is to be received of the Lord. But we notice something else. This is the hardest part because we recognize that just as the ministry is received, the minister is reviled.

And we see this in verses 8 to 12. It will always be true. It's true of everyone.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken.

Cast down, but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

So then death worketh in us, but life in you. Now, if you will receive the ministry from man, and it's a ministry to man, and it's a ministry about man, and it's a ministry by the energy of man, then this doesn't apply. Because the God of this world will see to it that you're not troubled, that your path goes smooth and happily along the way.

But you'll see the fact is that it doesn't disturb his kingdom. The only place where this, that we have in verses 8 to 12, is applicable, is where the person has come to the place that the ministry is from the Lord, to the Lord, about the Lord, and by the Lord. And this hell hates.

This Satan hates. And so whenever it is a ministry that's come from above, then we can expect opposition to come from below. Interestingly enough, in a book that's been written, some of you may have read, I read in just an abbreviated form, *The Devil's Advocate*.

They were speaking about a certain man in Italy that was being considered for canonization as a saint. And it was interesting to state that the one qualification that they had to find was that he was persecuted. That he was misunderstood and maligned.

For if he hadn't been, there was no possibility that he was worthy of canonization. Well, be sure of this, your sainthood doesn't depend upon a committee. For if you were born of God, then you'll become a saint in Christ, not by the approval of a board that voted, but by the grace of God who shed his blood and died and rose again, that he might take you out of darkness into his marvelous light and place you in his family as a saint.

But remember, he has said, they that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Now, if your ministry is, I say, for man, then you're going to have to have the approval of man. If it is to man, you're going to have to have the recognition of man.

If it is about man, then you're going to have to have all the rewards that come from man. If it is by man, then you're going to expect that it'll have a place carved. But if it is from the Lord and to the Lord and about the Lord and by the power of the Lord, then you're going to anticipate that what Paul said will be applicable.

Our Lord made it clear. He said, don't you understand that men shall persecute you and revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. And again, he said, they that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

And the consequence is this, that when you take the task as an elder, if your ministry is from the Lord and to him and about him and by him, then you will understand that hell is going to hate you, do everything he can, Satan is going to do everything he can through all the millions that he has to discourage and dishearten you. So if you're a deacon, so if you're a Sunday school teacher, and so in any function that you may have in any place that you may fill. And thus, let us notice the problems that confront the one who has a ministry from the Lord.

First, the trouble. This trouble comes from many different sources. Unfortunately, it often comes from the memory of the past.

For I find many times the servants of God, missionaries and others, are troubled by the memory of their past sin and wonder how God can ever condescend to use a person whose mind was so defiled by evil thoughts and hands by evil deeds and lips by evil words and ears by that which was heard that was unclean. And I find many servants of God that have been oppressed by the enemy, oppressed by Satan because they're haunted by the memory of the past and they can't see how God can fill and bless and use a life that's been so stained in other years. But we know this, that the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin.

And though from every side we're troubled, yet we need not be distressed, for his Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And then it says we are perplexed. Oh, how perplexing so many things are.

Why one is criticized for the things that they don't deserve and not criticized for the things they do deserve. It's so strange. It's so strange.

I had a pastor and his wife come in to see me some time ago. And the young son had just gotten out of the service and was thinking of going into the ministry. And they'd been in the ministry 28 years.

And the mother and the father sat there, tears streaming down both their cheeks. They said, our son tells us that he wants to go into the service of the Lord as a pastor. And the father and the mother both said, almost interrupting each other, when we look back on these 28 years, when we look back on the criticism we've had, when we look back on the cruelty we've experienced, when we look back on what's happened to us, we don't want our son to go into the ministry.

We don't want him to suffer what we've suffered. We don't want him to go through the agony we've gone through. Oh, we don't want to stand in his way.

We don't want to tell him. And here were parents just torn with inner agony because their son wanted to go into the pastorate where they were going to experience cruelty and abuse beyond anything that anyone ever deserved. And they pled with me to give them some answer.

And I said, there isn't any answer. There's only one thing you can do. And that is turn him over to the Lord and say, son, the Lord's will be done because greater will be his grief outside of it than in the will of God.

Let him go into the will of God and God will meet him and God will bless him. But wasn't it a terrifying thing that these parents should have to feel that way about the things through which their son was to pass as they look back on their 28 years? Because this persecution had not come from Satan. It hadn't come from the accusations.

It had come from people within the church that with cruelty unspeakable and foundationless had torn and sawn asunder and taken the living flesh from their bones groundlessly. For had there been grounds to it, they'd have faced it in proper way and dealt with it. And so there's problems that confront.

From without, from the world that is no friend of grace, from within the memory of the conscience, from beside, from those that tear at the very mind and heart and spirit and body of the servants of God. And Paul sees this. He says he's troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, cast down.

And all was bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus. It's not confined to pastors. It will be true of everyone that serves the Lord.

You will seek to serve him in any capacity, in any way, in any ministry. And you will find it's true. You will undergo the same thing because you will discover that you're not wrestling with flesh and blood any longer.

The moment that your life is aimed toward his glory, the moment that the end of your life is to exalt him, then hell has to fight you. As long as the end is for your own advantage, for your own aim, you have it from the Lord, from men to men, about men, there'll be no problem. But when it is to the Lord, then hell hates this.

But we understand this. We recognize this. And it's to be accepted by you as a Sunday school teacher.

You're serving the Lord Christ. By you as an elder, as a deacon, in any ministry, any service. You're not surprised when these things come.

Our Lord has told you. Paul has told you. Others tell you.

Accept them from him. Do not let your spirit become embittered. Do not let your heart become poisoned.

Do not let the things take away the joy of the Lord. But let it be that you're serving the Lord Christ. And you know the source of it.

You know the agency of it. Now, I believe in criticism. I believe there's a proper place for it.

But the criticism ought to be given to the person involved in the presence of others, for the profit of that person, and not about him in some distant, peripheral way. For if there is something to be changed, love says the person involved must have it presented to him so he can change it. And Satan says, oh no, don't do that.

Destroy, pull, tear, cut. Take the quivering flesh from the bone. For our purpose isn't to make better and make well and make wholesome and make healthy, but the purpose is to destroy.

You can always tell whether criticism has its origin in hell or has its origin in heaven, for heaven wants there to be an improvement and a change and things to be made right, and hell wants to kill and hurt and burn and sear. You're going to have it both ways, and accept it. I used to say, always consider the source

when criticized, no longer.

Always consider the criticism regardless of the source. And if there's anything in it that can apply to the heart, accept it gladly before the Lord. For we serve the Lord Christ in anything.

Sometimes even the devil points out things that need to be changed, and accept it joyfully and gladly and do it. And so whether you're a Sunday school teacher or a deacon, an elder, whatever your ministry for the Lord may be, and I may be speaking to some visiting pastor, let it be understood, therefore, that we serve him, and we're always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. We are being delivered unto death.

Oh, don't you see it? These circumstances are God's little wheelbarrow, and you need the cross. And so somebody comes up with criticism, unjust and improperly presented, and it comes back in a roundabout way, and it hurts. You've got to do one of two things.

You're either going to bristle in self-defense and say, that's got to be, or else you're going to say, thank God, that's his little wheelbarrow. And you're just going to sit down on the wheelbarrow and let the thing carry you back to the cross, and there you're going to see yourself crucified with him. And so you're always being delivered unto death.

You're always being wheeled back to the place where you can see that when Christ died, you died. And it isn't what happens to us that hurts us. It's what we do about it.

If somebody comes up and hits you, that doesn't hurt you. Oh, it bruises the flesh for a moment. But the thing that hurts you is when your heart is filled with animosity and antagonism and resentment and determination to get even.

That's hurt you. That's poison, twisted, warped you. You've been injured not by what happened, but by what you did about it.

So Paul says, these things are happening, but I'm always being delivered to death. They're God's little wheelbarrow, just taking me back, you know. Somebody comes along, and isn't it wonderful? They have to do the wheeling.

You just sit, and they just dounce you back, and there's the cross, and you see yourself crucified with him. And victory comes out of what could have been the source of great grief and heartache. Now, there's a principle here.

I read this somewhere. I don't remember the author. Suffering is the surest way of making a man truthful with himself.

You know, so frequently, our motives seem so clear, but suffering comes, and we begin to test them. It's like the fire. Gold may appear to be gold, but let the fire come, and we'll find out the nature of the metal.

And so suffering is the surest way of making a man truthful with himself. Henry Ward Beecher said, God washes the eyes with tears until they can behold the invisible land where tears shall be no more. I would put it this way.

No one ever knows how to forgive until he's suffered. And I am sure that suffering is necessary if forgiveness is to be understood by us. But hear this, and let the Spirit of God bless it to your heart.

They feel not their own wounds who consider the wounds of Christ. And when you've come to the place that you can see right through anything that might wound or hurt you, ride through these apertures and behold Him who was wounded for our transgressions. It's true.

They feel not their own wounds who have beheld the wounds of Christ. May the Spirit of God bring that to our heart. But now I close with this, for it will only take a moment.

Verses 13 to 18. We, having the same spirit of faith according as it is written, I believed and therefore have spoken. We also believe and therefore speak.

Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes that the abundant grace mine through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

For our right affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

And thus we come to the place where we see in this last portion the ministry reviewed. The ministry reviewed. Oh yes, the ministry received from the Lord.

The minister reviled. And remember Paul even had the very people in Corinth that had come to know Christ through him and turned against him as they had a party spirit and said I am of Cephas and I am of Paulus and against Paul. And Paul knew that.

And so he tells us here the practice of faith is we believe and speak. And the purpose of his service is all things are for your sake. And the place of affliction is to keep him constantly crowded to the cross.

But the principle of judgment is this. There will be judgment according to truth. And you can commit unto him.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, you be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For as much as your labor is not in vain in the Lord. We serve the Lord Christ.

And one day we are going to stand before him at the beam, at the judgment seat, and give an account of the deeds we have done in the body. In anticipation of that day, Paul said as he wrote to Timothy in that second letter, I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished the course. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day.

But not to me only, but to all them that love is appearing. One day, dear Sunday school teacher, your ministry is going to be reviewed by the Lord. One day, dear elder, dear deacon, dear witnessing Christian, your ministry is going to be reviewed.

You have received it from the Lord. You may have been reviled by men through the agency of Satan. But that's all right, because one day you are going to stand before him.

And then perhaps it will be you will hear him say, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord. I do not know what motivates you. I trust that it is that you share with those who have seen our Lord as he honored the woman that broke the bottle of alabaster and poured it on his head.

And he said, wherever the gospel is preached, this is going to be spoken of as a remembrance. And then that word of honor, the highest word that anyone ever received from the Lord, she has done what she could. Have you received your ministry from the Lord? Is it to the Lord? Is it about the Lord? Is it by the Lord? Well, then rejoice, because one day you're going to stand before the Lord and he, the righteous judge, is going to evaluate it.

We don't need to worry till then, for we serve the Lord Christ. Let us therefore be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for he's told us our labor, not in vain in the Lord. Shall we bow in prayer? Our Father, we realize that the task we have is from thee.

If we were serving the world, the world honors its own. If we were seeking the applause of men, men would be glad to applaud. But to serve the Lord Christ means that we have to commit as to a faithful judge.

Ministry, these Sunday school teachers that faithfully prepare week after week whose names are never known, never heard. Teachers that labor long hours into the night. Staff officers that carry responsibilities.

Those that are prepared to administer in details. Watch after little things, but are so important when people work together. Elders and deacons and officers.

These, Lord, we would believe would serve thee. They're not serving men. They're not doing it as unto men.

But they're doing it to thee. Oh, grant our Father that there may be encouragement given from all who love thee. There may be recognition that they serve the Lord Christ.

Even though they're not seeking for it. Grant our Father that there shall be come to the hearts of everyone that loves thee. A sense that we are laborers one with another and ministers to each other.

Then grant our Father that we shall recognize that in that day we're going to stand before the Lord Jesus at the bima, at the judgment seat to give an account of the deeds we've done in the body. Then our ministries will be reviewed. And then we will stand either approved or disapproved before the Lord Christ.

And so until that time comes, grant to us, Lord, that with faith undiminished, unmoving and unmovable, we shall seek only to be to the Lord Jesus. The hands and feet, the mouth and eyes and ears he asks for. That he can live in us and live through us his own life.

And let joy reign where despair might come and peace where there might be problems. And the consciousness of thy presence fill and keep and thrill our hearts as we walk through the days of our years in conscious fellowship with the Lord Christ. And bless everyone that serves thee and everyone that seeks to serve thee and everyone that has any desire to make their life count for eternity.

And burn home the truth of this chapter until it shall be the source of comfort, encouragement and guidance and strength as we see the ministry received and the ministry reviled and the ministry reviewed by the righteous judge. And then burn it to us, Lord, and help us to live in the light of it. For the glory of Christ we pray.

Amen. Let us stand for the benediction. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be in abide with us now and until Jesus comes

again.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/29/SID29763.mp3>
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