

The Call To Preach

By Pastor Dr. Ronnie Wolfe – August 7, 2011
“Baptist Prayer Day”

Our text today is found in 1 Timothy 3:1 *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.* If a man has no desire for the vocation of preaching the word of God, the best thing for him to do is to leave it alone. If preaching is Mom’s desire or Dad’s desire or brother’s desire, and not for you personally, then it is not for you. Preaching is not done to please mother or dad or friends.

The command is to “preach the word,” as it says in 2 Tim. 4:2 *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.* Those who are preaching for popularity will not preach to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. They will preach to please, because, as you may already know, people have “itching ears.” 2 Tim. 4:3 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;* That time is here now. People want to hear those things that please them and not what pleases God.

As a preacher a man must preach what is true, not what is pleasing. He must speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. He must be careful in his interpretation, staying as close to a literal interpretation as possible, not giving heed to old wives’ fables, 1 Tim. 4:7 *But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.*

Now that we have read that verse, it is necessary, also that a preacher exercise himself unto godliness, living that life that is above reproach, a life in which no one can point a finger and accuse the preacher of some public and shameful sin. He must guard himself against the wiles of

the devil (Eph. 6:11), because the devil knows his weakest points and will attack the preacher in the most unexpected areas of his life. He will try to discredit the preacher who preaches the truth. He will give him troubles that will break his heart and make him want to quit his ministry.

Jeremiah 20:9 *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name.* That is what the devil will do to you if you allow him to do it. . . . *But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.* The word of God will be seared in your heart if you are a preacher of his word, and you will not be able to keep quiet concerning his word. You MUST preach the word in season and out of season.

The preacher has some requirements and restrictions upon his life that others do not have. In many ways it would be easier to do hard labor and perform physical strength than to stand before a people and preach the word of God as it is to men as they are. Oh, yes, many times it will be easy, such as when you preach on John 3:16, because everyone loves that verse; but when you begin to delve into the lives of people and preach to them the way in which they should present their bodies a living sacrifice and separate themselves from the world, that message is not so easy to preach, especially if you are preaching to some in the audience who have very bad sin in their lives, and it will seem that you are preaching only to them about their present and personal sin.

These are some of the requirements that you must consider as you count the cost of being a preaching of the Gospel of God and the word of God as it is written in the Bible:

Looking at 1 Timothy chapter three, we see, first, the preacher must be blameless, vs 2. This means that he must have a godly life of which no one can say truthfully that he is involved in a sin that would bring disgrace upon his job or cast a shadow of doubt or bring disgrace to the church

of which he may be pastor. Look at verse 7: 1 Tim. 3:7 *Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

Second, he must be the husband of one wife, 2. Now, there would be no reason for Paul to mention this if the man were going to be the husband of one wife at a time, since that would only encourage divorce and a lack of commitment; but he is here saying that a man, if he is married, must have only one wife and to be committed to her for life. In Mark 10:9 The Lord said, *What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* In other words, when God puts a man and woman together, they must stay together. If a preacher divorces his wife, he loses much of his reputation as a faithful man, since he cannot be faithful to his own spouse (wife).

Third, the preacher must be vigilant, 2. This means to be watchful, keeping an eye on the things that are happening around you. It also means to be temperate: in other words, not overdoing anything but keeping everything to an average level without going overboard. Some preachers go overboard in some of their preaching. They find a pet subject that they really enjoy and preach on it time and time again, the same message over and over. There are too many things in the word of God to preach without having to hobby-horse a certain subject.

Fourth, the preacher must be sober, 2. This means that he must control himself from temptations that will come his way and to think with a clear mind, having the truth of God within reach of his thinking so that he can make decisions in his own life based upon God's word and not on the outward pleasures that sin offers for a season. Sin can feel good, but it is short lived. One day the preacher must answer for each and every sin in his life: the preacher as well as all believers.

Fifth, the preacher must be of good behavior, 2. This word means to be modest or well

arranged, not sloppy or disarranged until he cannot keep up with what is going on, taken aside to his own enjoyments rather than to look upon his work as a very serious and needful work, not preparing himself in a presentable way in the presence of people.

Sixth, he must be given to hospitality, 2. This means that he is “generous to guests.” He must not see people as strangers but to be friendly and warm to everyone no matter what their nationality or their background. He is an ambassador for Christ, and he should present himself as one.

Seventh, he must be not given to wine, 3. The Greek word here simply means “with wine.” In other words, every time you see the preacher who breaks this requirement, you see him with wine. He is, in other words, a drunken man. Do you think it is an unpleasant thing to see a drunken person? Well, you have never seen an unpleasant sight until you have seen a drunken preacher. This is an abomination to God.

Eighth, he must be no striker, 3. A striker is a person who is always ready for a fight and will invite and instigate the fight himself. A preacher should not be this kind of man.

Ninth, the preacher should not be covetous, 3. This means that he loves money, seeks, money, spends money, is a bad handler of money, but always wants more money; he is in the job for money mostly and gives very little to the glory of God but for himself. As you know, one of the ten commandments is “Thou shalt not covet.”

Tenth, the preacher should rule well his own house, 4. In other words, he must superintend, take charge, or order of his own house well. He must be a good arranger, not allowing things to get out of array. He should not be a hoarder, an unclean person, or a person who allows things to go on and on without repair.

Eleventh, he must have his children in subjection, 4. He should be the father, and the children are to be in obedience. The Bible says to children in Eph 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.* The Bible says again in Col 3:20 *Children, obey [your] parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.* And do not become angry with your preacher father if he corrects you, because that is his job before the Lord. He is only doing his duty. The Bible says, however, that he is not to provoke his children to anger: Eph 6:4 *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Verse 5 goes on to say, *(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)*

Twelfth, the preacher must not be a novice, 6. This is a new convert. This means that a very young and inexperienced preacher should not be encouraged to go out on his own at an early age, perhaps being ordained too soon, making him think that he is more mature than he really is. Some of these young preachers are really good at delivering sermons. They can sway a crowd. They can persuade men. They can mesmerize young people. But when it is all said and done, many times they will turn from the truth in order to preach a false gospel or will preach only the Gospel and become lax in the order of doctrine due to their inexperience. If this young man is lifted up with pride, he will fall into a diabolical judgment (condemnation of the devil), or being judged to have the same kind of judgment given to the devil because of his pride. Notice Mark 7:21-23 *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.* Listen to what Solomon said about pride: Prov 11:2 *When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly*

is wisdom. Notice again in Prov. 18:12 *Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.*

[Illustration] - An old preacher was sitting beside a very young preacher on the front row of the church auditorium just before the young man was to preach at the Bible conference. The young man was eager to get up and show everyone what he could do, how he could preach, and the way in which he had prepared and was about to execute his sermon. When his time came, his name was announced, and the young preacher ran upon the platform and behind the pulpit in all eagerness to show what he could do. However, in his pride, he began to stumble over his words. He forgot his illustrations, he fumbled through the Scriptures to find his passages, and he was humiliated. When he had finished, he walked down slowly in disgrace and sat down again beside the old preacher. The old preacher, knowing what had happened, turned to the boy and said, “Son, if you had gone up the way you came down, you would have come down the way you went up.” Remember, “before honour is humility.”

Thirteenth, he must have a good report of them which are without, 7. This points to the people outside the church where the preacher is a member or perhaps the pastor. The people who are in the community always see the preacher, even more than many of the members, who see him only in church. One of the meanings of this word “good” is “honest.” If the preacher lives a life that is dishonorable to the town in which he lives, then he will be of little good to the flock over which he is made overseer. If he does not keep this good report, he will fall into reproach, or something for people to look down upon. Now, if he is reproached about his faith and his stand for truth, that is different; but if he is reproached for his wicked life, that will bring disgrace upon his own life and the life of the church he pastors. This will also be a snare of the devil, which

means that the devil will have ample opportunity to tempt him in other areas, wrecking his life, putting him into the devil's trap, the trap which the devil uses to seek whom he may devour, the trap that will trap each one of us if we are not careful and aware.

Now, these thirteen requirements are meant for the preacher, and they are written very plainly in the Bible, but there are some other practical things that need to be mentioned concerning the preacher. These are simply common sense and given from experience and personal knowledge.

First, a preacher must be a reader. He must, first, read his Bible continually. He cannot be absent from his Bible reading for any length of time at all. The Bible must be his breath for the ministry, the lifeblood for his personal life and subject of his preaching. Paul told Timothy to "give attendance to reading" 1 Tim. 4:13.

But, then, he must read books in theology, history, customs, some even on the lives of men whom God has used in a mighty way, biographies of men whom God has used because of their faith, their prayer life, their work, their commitment, not to give these men undue praise, but to learn from their experiences.

Second, a preacher should have at least a minor contact with some other languages. First, he should learn the English language, in which many preachers are very lacking. They need to learn to spell and to use punctuation and build their vocabulary. Then the preacher should, if possible, study the Greek language, in which the New Testament was originally written. He should have a little training in the Hebrew language, in which the Old Testament was mainly originally written. If he has the time and ability, he may also learn some Latin and a little German, since much of religious writing is done in Latin and German. If he wants to learn Spanish or some other practical language, that would be good, also.

In our English language we use some phrases and words from French, Latin, German, and even other languages. From Latin we have words that we use in writing our papers, such as *op cit*, *abid*, *ad hominom*, *ad hoc*, etc. From French we have *abbey*, *barter*, *beauty*, *castle*, etc. From German we have words like *blitz*, *cobalt*, *diesel*, *frankfurter*, *dachshund*, etc.

In Latin literature we have the theology of Augustine, the theology of Jerome, and the theology of Tertullian. Also in Latin we have the writings of Erasmus, Thomas More, Francis Bacon, and many more.

In French literature we have “The Travels of Marco Polo” and the works of Voltaire.

In German literature we have “Steppenwolf,” “Mein Kampf,” “Don Quixote,”

As a preacher, your learning never stops, but the Bible must be your first book. It must be the life spring of your thoughts, your intents, the emotions of your heart, the beliefs of your mind, and motives of your actions, and the comfort of your soul.

Abraham Lincoln: "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book."

George Washington: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

Daniel Webster: "If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

John Quincy Adams: "So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society. I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year."

-> If these men can say these uplifting things about the Bible, what can the preacher say about it?

Billy Sunday on the Bible

I entered through the portico of Genesis and walked down through the Old Testament's art gallery, where I saw the portraits of Joseph, Jacob, Daniel, Moses, Isaiah, Solomon and David hanging on the wall; I entered the music room of the Psalms and the Spirit of God struck the keyboard of my nature until it seemed to me that every reed and pipe in God's great organ of nature responded to the harp of David, and the charm of King Solomon in his moods.

I walked into the business house of Proverbs.

I walked into the observatory of the prophets and there saw photographs of various sizes, some pointing to far-off stars or events--all concentrated upon one great Star which was to rise as an atonement for sin.

Then I went into the audience room of the King of Kings, and got a vision from four points--from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I went into the correspondence room, and saw Peter, James, Paul and Jude, penning their epistles to the world. I went into the Acts of the Apostles and saw the Holy Spirit forming the Holy Church, and then I walked into the throne room and saw a door at the foot of a tower and, going up, I saw One standing there, fair as the morning, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and I found this truest friend that man ever knew; when all were false I found him true. - (Billy Sunday Speaks [New York: Chelsea House, 1970], p. 23). <http://slaveforchrist.blogspot.com/2011/06/billy-Sunday-on-bible.html> (8/4/2011)

So, if you still desire the office of a bishop, the office of preacher, the office of pastor, then you desire a good work; but it is a hard work. It is an intense, time-consuming, day-to-day, continuous, never stopping work. It is many times a thankless work, but sometimes it is a work whereby you may receive praise of men, even if you don't deserve it. But it is to be done to praise of His glory.

We haven't even talked about the life of a martyr or the hardships of people rejecting what the preacher preaches, the wayward members, the un-tithers, the unrepentant, the people who promise to come to church and don't, the people who are not even in the church who check your theology, the people who actually need help financially and those who only want help and do not need it, those who go from church to church begging for their livelihood. We have not talked about those long trips, hauling missionaries from state to state, calling people on the phone, scheduling missionaries' meetings, meeting them at the airport late at night and taking them back in the wee hours of the morning.

But all in all, if you are really called of God, you work with patience, love people who seem to be unlovable, giving your time and money to others, even when you cannot spare either one, but glorifying God that he has called you into the ministry.

I hope I have not discouraged anyone today; but if God has called you by his grace into the ministry, there will be nothing that will hold you back. Listen to the apostle Paul: At the end of his life he said, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: 2 Tim. 4:7.* Oh, I want so much to do that, and I want God to call young men to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray for it; I desire it; I long for it. *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. Matt 9:38.* Pray, my friends, pray!

1. There must be a Desire – 1 Timothy 3:1 “desireth the office of a bishop.”
2. There must be a Conviction – Eph. 4:1 “I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.
3. There must be Surrender – Hebrews 13:17 Heb 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.
4. There must be a Sending – Ac 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. ----
Ac 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; [namely], Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: