

“The Pastor’s Calling”
Romans 15:15-16
(Preached at Trinity, November 27, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we’ve seen, in **Verse 13** Paul gives a benediction that then sets the stage for the final words of this epistle.
2. Although Paul is an Apostle in **Verses 15-16** Paul speaks more with the voice of a pastor. But his words are very bold. He says he is speaking with the voice of a priest. How can this be? Christianity knows only one Priest—the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone entered into the Holy Place to offer atonement for our sins. He alone serves in the office of our Mediator. So how is it that Paul can refer to himself as a priest?
3. Paul is speaking of the role of the Christian ministry.
He uses a particular word here in **Verse 16** — λειτουργός
 - A. Sometimes in the NT we’ll find the word minister translated from the word—
διακονία – For example:
Ephesians 4:11-12 KJV - "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"
This word refers to service which is the way the NAS translates it.
Ephesians 4:12 NAS - "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;"
 - B. But the word here is different. It refers particularly to a spiritual service.
We get our word liturgy from it.
Romans 12:1 NAS - "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.*"
4. Much is lacking today in our understanding of the pastoral office. This morning I want to examine Paul’s statement here regarding the Christian ministry. It is an important message for pastors but it has application for all Christians as well.
 - I. It is a gracious ministry – It demands a particular calling and gift from God
Romans 15:15 NAU - "But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,"
 - A. The pastoral ministry demands a particular calling from God
Acts 20:28 NAU - "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."
1 Corinthians 12:28 NAU - "And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues."

Ephesians 4:11 NAS - "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers"

1. This calling will present itself as a persistent inward draw
2. It is an inward confidence and persuasion that God has commissioned him
3. It is more than just a willingness to serve
Every Christian must have a willingness to serve.
4. There is a particular, inward call that a man receives to *the* ministry.
 - a. We refer to this as the ministry of the word or the Gospel ministry.
 - b. He is called specifically to leadership, preaching, teaching, shepherding
5. Calvin referred to an internal call and an external call. The internal call is a compelling inward draw which manifests itself in an intense desire

1 Timothy 3:1 NAU - "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do."

- a. There are two words to consider:
 - ὀρέγω – "to stretch one's self out in order to touch or to grasp something"
 - ἐπιθυμέω – "to long for, to lust after, covet"
 - Both words convey an intense inward compulsion and a conviction that must be responded to
 6. Only God can call a man to this office
When a church ordains a man to the office of pastor they are recognizing and expressing the call of God upon his life.
- B. The pastoral ministry demands certain gifts from God
1. There will be pastoral giftedness - a strong desire to lead and shepherd God's people that they might be strengthened and edified.
 2. There will be certain leadership and administrative skills – they are being called to oversee God's church
 3. There will be the ability to teach and preach
 4. He will also have a heart for service
- C. There is another important aspect of the pastoral call that is distinct from Paul's apostolic call
1. Paul in his apostolic call was set apart and confirmed by Christ alone.
Galatians 1:15-16 NAU - "But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,"
 2. The pastoral call must be recognized and affirmed by the church - this is a safeguard
 3. He is set apart and ordained by a group of his peers.
Titus 1:5 NAU - "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,"
1 Timothy 4:14 KJV - "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

II. It is a bold ministry

Romans 15:15 NAU - "But I have written very boldly to you "
pertaining to an activity involving unusual boldness or daring or audacious

- A. Paul admits that he had written boldly on some points
1. What points?
 - a. Obviously, he has spoken clearly with regard to our duty to love one another even when we disagree—to not pass judgment upon those who are weaker in the faith.
 - b. But he has also written on the believer's relationship to the law—warning against the dangers of both antinomianism and legalism—of the necessity of justification by faith.
 - c. He has written on the practical effects of justification—of personal holiness.
 - d. He has even written about our duty to submit to governmental authorities.
 2. With an eye to his calling and the infinite value of souls he gave himself to the task of teaching and teaching with boldness.
 - a. Boldness does not mean arrogance or purposed harshness.
 - b. We should teach with patience and meekness—but with unshakable firmness.
- B. The charge of watching over the souls of God's people is a high calling – it isn't a place to be tentative or wavering in our message
1. Over and over we find the boldness of the pastoral charge
2 Timothy 4:2 NAU - "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."
 2. Paul exhorted Timothy to conduct his office in command mode
1 Timothy 4:11 KJV - "These things command and teach."
 The word describes a direct order
Acts 17:30 ESV - "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,"
 3. God raises up men who will preach in every season; who will not fear the face of men; who will not weaken the message. Listen to God's words to Ezekiel: **Ezekiel 3:7-9 NAU** - "yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate. ⁸ "Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. ⁹ "Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, though they are a rebellious house."
- C. Paul gives the reason for his boldness
1. Because of his high calling
Romans 15:15-16 NAU - "because of the grace that was given me from God, ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus"
 2. Because of his passion for the sanctification of God's people—that they might be holy
Romans 15:16 NAU - "so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."
 ἵνα – a purpose statement – “so that”

III. It is a priestly ministry

Romans 15:16 NAU - "ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

A. This may sound strange. Christianity has but one priest.

1. The RC custom of priesthood is blasphemous
2. Jesus Christ alone is our Mediator. He alone is our Prophet, Priest, and King.

1 Timothy 2:5 NAU - "For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus"

3. Paul is in no way contradicting this. At the very heart of his ministry is Christ. Notice **Verses 17-18** – "*Therefore. . .*"

Romans 15:17 NAU - "Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God."

Romans 15:18 NAU - "For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,"

4. In **Verse 17** Paul says he has something to boast about but his boasting is 100% in Christ.

B. So what does Paul mean here that he was ministering as a priest?

1. Paul is talking about the offering up of a people as a holy sacrifice
2. Is there someplace else in this epistle where Paul speaks of people being offered up as a holy sacrifice?

Romans 12:1 NAU - "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship."

3. A pastor's vocation is to help people in this pursuit of offering up themselves unto God. A pastor must have a heart to build up God's people. Paul saw his ministry as an instrument in the hands of God to raise up a holy people.

Charles Hodge: "In this beautiful passage we see the nature of the only priesthood which belongs to the Christian ministry. It is not their office to make atonement for sin, or to offer a propitiatory sacrifice to God, but by the preaching of the gospel to bring men, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, to offer themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."

4. He must have a desire to present a holy people unto God

2 Corinthians 11:2 NAS - "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."

C. How does the pastor do this work?

1. Through preaching the Gospel - This is the work of the Gospel

Romans 15:16 NAU - "ministering as a priest the gospel of God"

Isaiah 66:20 NAU - "Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD."

2. He gives himself to carefully delivering the Word of God—By feeding the flock with quality spiritual food.
John 21:15 NAS - "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." - βόσκω – “Feed”
1 Peter 5:1-2 NAU - "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;"
3. As teachers we serve a priestly function by being God’s instrument of opening up the revelation of His Word
4. By praying for them. Not praying in their place but praying for them
Ephesians 1:15-17 NAU - " For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."

Conclusion:

1. It is also true that this is the work of each of us.
 - A. Each of you serve a priestly role with regard of your own access to the throne of grace.
Exodus 19:6 KJV - " And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."
1 Peter 2:9 KJV - " But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"
1 Peter 2:5 NAU - "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."
 - B. Each of you are to watch over your brethren so that each one of us might become more and more holy
Romans 15:14 NAU - "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another."