

## Marks of a Faithful Ministry

### Acts 26:19-23

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 8-23-2009

#### Introduction – church shopping

This past April 27 the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life published the conclusions of a major study that they had been involved in. It was titled *Changes in Religious Affiliation in the US*. The very next day and for weeks afterward, there were numerous magazines like Christianity Today, Wall Street Journal, Time Magazine, and others that offered articles (interestingly) on consumer Christianity, and how to find a church that fits. For example, the April 28 issue of Time Magazine had an article called, “Church-Shopping.” It concluded that people don’t choose churches because of theology, but because of things like “location or children’s activities or the quality of preaching or music or potluck offerings.” It went on to say that “the concept of church-shopping itself is uniquely American.” A number of other magazines agreed that this has become an all-American pastime. Slate published an article titled, “The Church Search: Why American Churchgoers Like to Shop Around.” Many of the articles considered church shopping a good thing that has forced churches to compete. That’s what the free market is all about, right? But other articles looked at how the churches were *trying* to compete and were greatly troubled. It has in many cases trivialized the faith by making parking, nurseries, greeters, focus groups, buildings, location, coffee, conveniences, and other comfort issues the driving concern in finding a church. It was all very fascinating.

After reading those articles, I seriously thought about titling this sermon, “Church Shopping: A Consumer’s Guide.” But I decided that it wasn’t very God-centered. Paul’s message here isn’t about how to attract new members to a church. No. His focus was on how to be faithful to God. And so I have titled the sermon, Marks of a Faithful Ministry. I think this passage boils down into five short verses the essence of a faithful ministry. There are other things (such as prayer) that we could have included, but they are at least implied in these twelve marks of a faithful ministry. Paul is a beautiful role model for elders. And uppermost in Paul’s mind was not, “How can we please as many people as possible? His question was, “How can I be totally obedient to the Lord in my ministry?”

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In fact, that's what he starts with in verse 19: "**Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not *disobedient to the heavenly vision.***" This passage is all about faithfulness and obedience to God. What should we aspire to be like as a church? What should church members expect in a church? You are never going to find a perfect church, but I think this passage provides a model of what ministers and churches should seek to be like. And men – you can apply some of these things as pastors of your own families. But at least pray that our church would continue to grow in all twelve marks.

### **I. A ministry called by God, not ego (v. 19)**

The first thing that we should want to know is if a ministry has truly been called by God. In verse 19 Paul says, "**Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not *disobedient to the heavenly vision.***" And the vision he is referring to was the call that we looked at last week. This ministry was not something that Paul just jumped into on his own initiative. He wasn't in it for the money, or the prestige, or the contacts. *God called him to it.* You don't just decide that the career of an apostle might be a good thing. And the Scripture says the same about churches – you don't just decide to start a church. There must be a call.

Of course, we must allow the *Scripture* to test that call, because there were false prophets who claimed they were called by God, but were not. And Scripture gave tests for such callings. Likewise, there were false apostles whom Paul said were not truly called to be apostles. And there have been preachers who ran when they were not sent. I'll just give you a couple of examples. I don't care how called a woman might claim to be as a pastor, the Bible clearly forbids women from being pastors. She might have a mega church, a huge following, have fascinating teaching, and even have some good results. I can dogmatically say that her ministry flows from her own ego or the call of man, but that it is not a call from God. Why? Because 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 lay out the qualifications for an elder, and one of those qualifications is that they be males. And Paul prefaces his remarks on elders with these words: "**I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.**" Now man's call might argue with God on that question, but such a ministry is missing one of the marks of a faithful ministry.

God wrote 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus to give us numerous tests by which we can evaluate the difference between the calling of God and the calling of man. And as you go through the qualifications of pastors in the bible, you begin to realize that a lot of what goes for ministry in American

does not flow from the calling of God, but from the calling of one's own ego. Can God still use people and ministries that miss out on one or more of these points? Yes He can. He is sovereign. He even used Balaam's donkey. But all ministries should strive to keep all twelve points. And I believe this is a fundamental one – without calling, you will lack the Spirit's power. Now if you are a father, I can assure you that you have been called to be a pastor of your sheep, and you better not be disobedient to your calling.

## II. A ministry obedient to God's vision, not man's (v. 19)

Of course, that's the second point. A second mark of a faithful ministry is that the ministry be *obedient* to call. It's not enough to be called, but then to engage in one's own kingdom building. When Paul said, "**I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,**" he implied that this could have been a constant temptation. He could have very easily drifted away from God's vision. It's possible for a Jonah to run from his calling. It's possible for a church to begin right, but then to deviate from God's call.

I was very good friends with one pastor who had a tremendous ministry in a small church. It was saturated with prayer, it engaged in discipleship, saw holiness emerging, and was God-centered. The church was growing, but not at the rate that the elders had hoped. So they got trained in a modern church-growth method and using their methods became a mega church. I feel sad to this day because while this man has a *business* that brings in the money, he has lost his God-centered ministry. I no longer see the passion for prayer, holiness, and true discipleship. I no longer see God's blessing on this ministry. It was a clear-cut case of abandoning God's vision, and adopting man's vision.

And while this is not a sermon about dads and moms, we can all ask ourselves a question about our other callings – "Am I following God's call or man's call when it comes to my ministry as a dad or as a mom. It is so easy to gradually slip away and be disobedient. May Paul's statement be one each of us can make for our own callings – "**I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.**"

### **III. A ministry committed to the message of the kingdom (v. 20a)**

#### **A. “declared” = *apanggelo* – a kingdom directive<sup>1</sup>**

The third mark of a faithful church ministry is that it is committed to having a kingdom message. The Greek word for “declared” is a special word for the message that a king would give, or that an envoy of a king would give to another kingdom. Though this involves the individuals of the kingdom, it is clearly an official call for all competitive kingdoms to submit to king Jesus. Let me define this word. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says, “...it is used for proclamations of kings, reports of envoys” with “much the same range of meaning as *anangeélloα*, but [apangelo] tends to be more official.” (TDNT) Another dictionary says of these two words: “They come from public life (the games and government); this suggests already that the gospel proclaims the rule of God.” Paul’s ministry involved a kingdom directive.

#### **B. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, nations = Great Commission**

##### **1. Individual (“to those”)**

And though Paul started preaching in Damascus, the way he words this verse makes clear that his ministry was a fulfillment of the Great Commission. The great commission has individual ramifications, yes, because God’s kingdom must come and His will must be done in our own individual lives.

##### **2. National (“then to the Gentiles” = “to the nations”)**

But the word for Gentiles is the same word in the Great Commission for “nations.” So this verse is saying that Paul’s message went to individuals throughout every territory and it also went to the nations. And this speech was being given to the rulers of this nation. It clearly had national implications.

I don’t have time to dig deep on every point, but let me briefly spell out what difference this would make. It means first that a faithful ministry

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<sup>1</sup> “...it is used for proclamations of kings, reports of envoys” with “much the same range of meaning as *anangeélloα*, but [apangelo] tends to be more official.” (TDNT) “the lordship of the divine Ruler is proclaimed” (NIDNTT) “The message of the OT and of rabbinic Judaism makes it quite clear that where the lordship of the divine Ruler is proclaimed, and his mighty deeds made known, no room is left for proclaiming the lordship of other gods.”

must be about God's rule over our lives. It's not just a ticket to heaven. It is His rule right now. Any ministry that makes the Lordship of Christ an option is not giving the kingdom directive that Paul was giving.

It means secondly that Paul's message is not just about grace; it is also about law. No law, no kingdom.

Thirdly, it means that we don't have to wait for the Second Coming for the power of the kingdom to back us up. If this is a kingdom directive, then there is the power of the King behind it. For example, Jesus said, "**if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.**" When the kingdom comes, there is the power to back up the King's directives. The power to cast out demons was kingdom power. Spiritual gifts were prophesied to be gifts of the kingdom. And wherever a kingdom ministry is advancing, there will be resourcing by the Holy Spirit and spiritual warfare against demons. If you are not gaining victory over the demonic, or if you are not even aware of the demonic at work in your life, it is evidence that your family doesn't have one of the marks of faithful ministry. Talk to me about it. According to the Gospels, Jesus has given every believer authority over all the power of the enemy. You don't need to come to Phil Kayser every time you have a problem with the demonic. In fact, I highly, highly, recommend that you read the updated version of William Gurnall's book, *the Christian in Complete Armour*. It's in three volumes, and in modern English. It is much easier to read than the original version, but is loaded with kingdom advice on how to take authority over the world, flesh, and the devil. But the Greek meaning of the declaration Paul brought indicates a clash of kingdoms.

Another example: there are ministries that deny that we are in the kingdom in any way. They deny that our message should deal with social issues. They don't deny that in the future Jesus will have lordship over every square inch of life, but they don't believe it is appropriate to bring Jesus into the public arena now. They advocate pluralism in the public arena. Well, think about it - you couldn't get a more public arena than what Paul was preaching in here, and yet Paul did not try to convince Agrippa of pluralism. Instead Paul tried to convince Agrippa to be "**altogether such as I am, except for these chains**" (v. 29). In other words, Paul wanted Agrippa to be every bit as Christian in his public office of king as Paul was in his own public office of apostle.

Kingdom ministries are comprehensive, they have long-term vision, are intent on capturing the seven leverage points of a society (that we looked

at some weeks ago), they glory in Christ's rule, they are concerned about issues in the present as well as eternity, they are not pietistic (though they long for more piety). Paul's ministry was a kingdom ministry.

#### IV. A ministry calling for repentance (v. 20b)

The fourth mark of a faithful ministry is that it is willing to call people to repentance. Verse 20 goes on to say, "**that they should repent.**" That *who* should repent? Everybody that he ministered to - individuals and nations. And I'll tell you, this is a controversial one.

But repentance is not a popular word in America. It doesn't help self-esteem; it's too laden with guilt; it's too negative for American feel-good religion; it's definitely not helpful when you are competing with feel-good churches. Try to market a ministry of repentance, and it won't get too far *unless* God brings revival. But that's the point – we only want to grow as God's *Spirit* brings growth. Any church that we build, the kingdom of hell can prevail against. But when Jesus builds the church, the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. That's the kind of ministry we want to be.

But if we are going to have Jesus build the ministry and not us, we have to start where Jesus did – repentance. In Mark 2:17 Jesus said that He came to earth to call sinners to repentance. The message of John was "**Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand**" (Matt 3:2). Repentance is an essential element of a kingdom message. In Matthew 4:17 Jesus gave the same message - "**Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" Here, Paul summarizes one side of his message as repentance. The word "repent" occurs 58 times in the New Testament.

But here is the encouraging part - repentance is constantly seen as the doorway to blessing. Repentance is the doorway to blessing. Satan will try to get you to believe that repentance is the sure way to misery, but it is the opposite. He knows that as long as you hold on to your sins and don't repent of them on a daily basis, you give his demons ground to work in you. When there is lack of repentance, you have no power over Satan, and your flesh will gain strength over your spirit day by day.

Roy Hession, who saw incredible revival in Africa, said,

We want to be very simple in this matter of Revival. Revival is just the life of the Lord Jesus poured into human hearts. Jesus is always victorious. In heaven they are praising Him all the time for His victory. Whatever may be our experience of failure and barrenness, He is never defeated. His power is boundless. And we on our part, have only to get into a right relationship with Him, and we shall see His power being demonstrated in our hearts and lives and service, and His victorious

life will fill us and overflow through us to others. And that is Revival in its essence.

If, however, we are to come into this right relationship with Him, the first thing we must learn is that our wills must be broken to His will. To be broken is the beginning of Revival. It is painful, it is humiliating, but it is the only way. It is being, “Not I, but Christ,” and a “C” is a bent I.

Any time our lives don’t match up with kingdom realities, God’s kingdom won’t budge. And you will butt your head against the walls of God’s kingdom to your own misery. God’s kingdom calls for *us* to align *our* values, actions, words, and vision to God’s kingdom. If you want the power of Paul’s ministry in your home, then daily embrace the lowly path of repentance. It is an essential mark of a faithful ministry.

## V. A ministry calling for faith in God not man (v. 20c)

Of course, since repentance and faith are flip sides of the same coin, wherever there is genuine repentance, there will be a turning to God. Let me make a quick contrast between penance and repentance. Penance is beating up on yourself in order to earn God’s favor. It’s trying to make partial payment. In contrast, genuine repentance realizes that we can never earn God’s favor. It turns from self-effort, casts our sins at the feet of the cross, and looks to Jesus in faith. And so Paul adds that they should “**turn to God.**” That’s faith.

Hebrews 6:1 says that repentance and faith are the foundation of the whole Christian life. He speaks of “**the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.**” You can’t go on until you have mastered these two on a daily basis. Where repentance learns to get rid of self-trust, self-effort, self-esteem, and anything else that is self-focused, faith learns to sign the checkbook of heaven and see God’s power come through for wisdom, healing, finances, and anything else that we need in life. Faith is the antithesis of legalism, because faith looks to God’s Word, not man’s rules. Faith is the antithesis of powerlessness because it is looking to God’s power, not our own power.

## VI. A ministry producing works consistent with repentance (v. 20d)

But because there are counterfeits of those two graces, Paul adds an interesting little phrase: “**and do works befitting repentance.**” Here’s how other translations render this: “prove their repentance by their deeds” (NIV), “do works giving evidence of repentance” (NAB), “performing deeds consistent with repentance” (NET), “performing deeds in keeping with their

repentance” (ESV). It doesn’t matter how you render the sentence, it becomes clear that without some degree of holiness, the repentance is bogus. And this is where we need to contrast repentance and remorse. Remorse is feeling badly about something, but repentance engages the mind, the emotions, and the will.

Now here’s the point: if all these kingdoms that Paul is bringing the kingdom directive to are truly repentant, they will submit to and serve King Jesus. Simon Kistemaker says, “To be precise, repentance denotes that the whole person with heart, mind, and soul is turned around from sin to service... [it] marks a moral and religious orientation to a new way of life.” (p. 901) He is saying that there can be no Sunday-go-to-meeting Christianity. He is saying that ministries that are designed to just make people feel comfortable in their rebellion are not being faithful to either God’s law or God’s grace. Individuals, families, churches, and nations must have *works* consistent with their repentance.

## VII. A ministry of antithesis

### *A. Paul’s ministry could not be ignored*

Which automatically leads to the next point – the seventh mark of a faithful ministry is that it has antithesis. In other words, it has a clear-cut line between God’s people and the world; between truth and falsehood; right and wrong. Paul’s kind of ministry was so different from his culture that it invited criticism and even persecution. Paul said, “**For these reasons** [in other words because of the marks of a faithful ministry – “for these reasons”] **the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.**” They would have left Paul alone if his ministry wasn’t different. But Paul was so insistent on calling every area of life into submission to king Jesus that his ministry couldn’t be ignored.

### *B. Paul’s ministry brought opposition (v. 21)*

Nowadays people shy away from a ministry if it is receiving the kind of opposition that Paul had. They assume that something must be wrong. But Jesus said,

**Blessed are you when men hate you,  
And when they exclude you,  
And revile you, and cast out your name as evil,  
For the Son of Man’s sake.**

He said that you are blessed. In John 15:19 Jesus said, “**If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the**



**world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”**

It is a mark against a ministry if the world thinks too highly of it. It is a mark against a ministry if it is never slandered. The best ministries I know of across America and in Africa are constantly on the receiving end of smear campaigns and pious diatribes. Some of these ministers like Peter Hammonds, and Mark Driscoll have received attacks on their lives. Now I am not saying that we should invite persecution. 1 Peter forbids that. But I am saying that we should have such an antithesis on what is right and wrong about this sin-sick world, that we become marked ministries.

Of course, that does not mean that a ministry is faithful if it is stewing in bitterness over all the attacks it has received. Nor should a ministry feel sorry for itself or be at all preoccupied about that. Notice that I said it was antithesis, not persecution per se that is a mark of faithfulness. But neither should we shy away from persecution if it comes.

### **VIII. A ministry that is empowered by God (v. 22a)**

The eighth mark of a faithful ministry is that it is empowered by God. Paul says, **“Therefore, having obtained help from God...”** He didn’t just have the right words; he also had the right kind of help; the right power. In 1 Corinthians 2:4 he said, **“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”** Is God backing up the ministry with His presence and power? If not, investigate what is hindering the power. There may be some blockage that Satan is bringing. 1 Corinthians 4:20 says, **“For the kingdom of God is not in word [only] but in power.”**

Let’s think about that: Is this ministry able to have joy in the midst of ruthless persecution? Is it able to be positive even when others are slandering the ministry? Is it able to declare a war of love upon those who abuse and hurt it? One of the ways you can tell if you have a ministry that is empowered by God is to read the Sermon on the Mount and mark every sentence that you fail on. I think one of the reasons Jesus gave that sermon was to break people of self-righteousness and show them that without God’s power they could not achieve even the most basic element of the kingdom.

The Pharisees thought that they were pretty good and that they had it made. But Christ’s sermon showed their powerlessness on point after point. For example, the Pharisees thought they were pretty good at loving their children and wives. Jesus blew them out of the water by insisting that unless they could love their enemies, and bless those who cursed them, they did not have evidence of Sonship. How are you different from the pagan? Pagans

can love their wives and children too. He then blew them out of the water on even family love when he talked to them about divorce. How do you gain a pure heart? How do you avoid ungodly anger? How do you avoid adultery in the heart? How do you love a wife who does not reciprocate? How do you go the second mile when a Roman soldier compels you to go one mile? How do you fast and do other sacrificial deeds without it getting to your pride and wanting everyone to know? How do you give radical forgiveness? How do you lay up treasures in heaven and completely break the idol of covetousness? How do you stop worrying about where your next meal will come from when you are unemployed? These are all impossible commands that Jesus was giving on the Sermon on the Mount, and yet with God, what is impossible becomes possible. Why? Because God empowers us. You can't keep the Sermon on the Mount apart from God's empowering grace. These and many other questions were used to help people to recognize the supernatural in their ministry, or the lack thereof.

And I think that is not only a mark of a faithful church, but a faithful family. Do we daily feed on God and find strength to do our ministry, or have we lost our strength by losing the joy of the Lord? Faithful ministries have learned how to be empowered by God moment by moment. If you fail on any of these marks, don't turn to effort. Turn to God. Cry out to God. An essential mark of the faith that we have already looked at is prayer.

### **IX. A ministry that stands fast (v. 22b)**

And point IX - they have also learned how to stand fast. Paul said, "**to this day I stand.**" He stood firm despite opposition from without and within. He stood fast despite the weariness and discouragement that he had already spoken of in 2 Corinthians. It's so easy to begin well, but finish poorly as Hezekiah did. Isaiah was given a ministry where God promised that very few people would listen to him or change their ways. Yet Isaiah faithfully continued to serve. Jeremiah's message was not too popular, yet he stood fast. Jesus ministry was great at the beginning, attracting huge crowds, but as people reacted negatively to his teaching, most of His disciples stopped following Him. Yet He stood fast. And here Paul says, "**to this day I stand.**" We need to be able to say the same no matter how difficult things get. Things might be difficult in your marriage, but a mark of a faithful home ministry is standing fast.

I think of Wilberforce who persevered in his fight against the abominable slave trade that involved murder, kidnapping, and horrible indecencies to slaves. One night in the early 1790's after another defeat in

his 10 year battle, he was tired and frustrated. As he leafed through his Bible, a small piece of paper fell out and fluttered to the ground. It was a letter that John Wesley had written to him shortly before he died. It said,

Unless the divine power has raised you up... I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that (abominable practice of slavery), which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might.<sup>1</sup>

And I would say the same to you in your ministries. But I especially found his first sentence telling – “Unless the divine power has raised you up... I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise.” Standing fast is a mark of a faithful ministry that *God Himself* has called. And under times of persecution a lot of the “Rice Christians” and “Rice Ministries” will compromise, fall away, or submit to the world.

### **X. A ministry that reaches out to small and great (v. 22b)**

A tenth mark is a willingness to reach out to both small and great. Paul characterized his ministry as “**witnessing both to small and great.**” Last week we spent quite a bit of time looking at this, so I will skip over this point. But where the life of God is, it should produce more life.

### **XI. A ministry implementing the Old Testament (v. 22c)**

The eleventh mark of a faithful ministry is a willingness to implement the Old Testament. Look at the last phrase in verse 22 – “**saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come.**” What was Paul’s Bible in the first few years? It wasn’t the New Testament. For the first seven years of Paul’s ministry (and the first ten years since Christ’s resurrection) the only Bible that the church had was the Old Testament. Everything they taught about the New Covenant kingdom was proved from the Old Testament. IN Acts 17 the Bereans were praised for checking out everything Paul said from the Old Testament to see if it was true. It would be another five years before the second and third New Testament books would be written. It would be another four years before Galatians would be written. This means that at most, Paul had four New Testament books to work with in the first sixteen years of his ministry. To

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<sup>1</sup> *Daily Bread*, June 16, 1989.

speak of a New Testament Christianity is ludicrous. Paul knew nothing of that.

In this verse Paul says that even after the majority of New Testament books had been written, he had not taught anything that wasn't already in the Old Testament. So the question might naturally come, "Why do we have the New Testament then?" The answer is that the New Testament is a clarification of the Old Testament, a convincing statement that Old Testament prophecies had been fulfilled, and the giving of the example of Christ – the first example of human obedience that was perfect. Revelation also brings a covenant lawsuit against Israel and the early church for violating God's Word.

One rule of Reformation teaching was that the New is in the Old concealed and the Old is in the New revealed. In fact, in Deuteronomy God said that no more laws could be added to what He would give to Moses. The Pentateuch is a complete moral code. The rest of the Old Testament books and the New Testament do not add a single new moral law to the Pentateuch. They amplify and explain, but they do not add. Some people might object – "But Jesus said, "A *new commandment* I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you." But what is new about that command is not that we should love one another. The Old Testament commanded that too. The Old Testament even commanded us to love our enemies. What is new is the phrase, "as I have loved you." For the first time in history the world has a perfect example of love in a human. This is why 1 John 2:7-8 calls it an old commandment that they had from the beginning and yet it is also a new commandment. When Paul wrote 2 Timothy 3:16-17 he told Timothy that the Old Testament Scriptures that Timothy had been brought up on were sufficient to make the man of God complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

I've written a book that shows how even baptism is simply a refinement and carryover of Old Testament baptism. And you do not understand baptism if you ignore the Old Testament. We must not pit the New Testament against the Old Testament like many ministries do. In chapter 24:14 Paul said, "**believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.**" Many ministries cannot say that. And I think many ministries misinterpret Paul's epistles as if Paul did not believe this.

This is a major failing in American ministries and we should pray that God would remedy it. It is my prayer that churches across this nation would have such a burden to have answers for the problems that are plaguing our

nation that they would become like Ezra – experts who understand the law of God thoroughly and know how to apply it to new situations. God has given us marvelous blueprints in the Old Testament. We need to learn how to apply them to individuals, families, churches, and culture. Yes we teach the New Testament as the Word of God, but in doing so we can say with Paul in verse 22 – **“saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come.”**

## **XII. A ministry committed to proclaiming a Messianic kingdom worldview (v. 23)**

### ***A. The sufferings of the cross***

The last mark of a faithful ministry is that it is committed to everything Jesus stood for; it is committed to proclaiming a Messianic kingdom worldview. Verse 23 says, **“that the Christ [that’s just the Greek word for Messiah – “that the Christ”] would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.”**

The Jews found the cross offensive. They wanted a political Messiah who would deliver them from Rome. They wanted power, and they were offended by this apparent display of weakness. They weren’t interested in a savior from sin who would then demand their unconditional surrender. But the cross is at the heart of a faithful ministry. Any labors that do not flow from the cross are hay, wood, and stubble.

### ***B. The power of the resurrection***

On the other hand, the Greeks found the idea of a *resurrection* offensive. They wanted to escape from the physical world. They despised the physical world. But Christ’s intent was to invade the physical world and transform it. Greeks found that just as offensive as the Jews found the cross offensive. But Christ is interested in our bodies. In fact, He will eventually make a new heavens and a new earth. As the hymn, “Joy to the World” words it, Christ grace goes far as the curse is found.

And His work won’t be finished until our very bodies and this very creation will be one day glorified. Notice that Jesus is simply the **“first to rise from the dead”** implying that there would be others who would experience a similar resurrection. Anyone who explains away either Christ’s past resurrection or our future resurrection, or says that they are two different kinds of resurrection has an unfaithful ministry.

### ***C. The advancing light of the kingdom***

And if the cross answers the problem of everything that Adam lost through the curse, the power of the resurrection answers the question of *how* it is possible to transform this sin-sick world. The light of Christ's kingdom *is invading* planet earth and scattering the darkness. It is a supernatural answer to the natural problems of earth. Nothing less than supernatural light is sufficient.

It does involve human action, but notice that it is primarily through proclamation that Jesus intends to work. Paul says to “***proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.***” It's a proclaimed answer; a worldview answer. What is desperately needed in America is not a conservative pagan president, or conservative pagan congressmen. What is needed is a new mighty proclamation of a comprehensive kingdom worldview that stands as a compelling alternative to the failed plans of the humanists.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion let me say that until Christians stop borrowing from the wisdom of pagan experts and start looking to the wisdom of the God who made all things, we will not make progress in America. And yet so many ministries are embarrassed by what they find in the Bible. I'm shocked by how many pastors are embarrassed by what the Bible says about family, role relationships, women in leadership, economics, civics, and a host of other areas. We are in desperate need of another Reformation.

Ministries routinely substitute the bandaid of psychology for the robust transformation that comes through Spirit-led discipleship. Why? They routinely substitute the fads of business marketing and business leadership methods for the wonderful methods that Christ use to train twelve disciples, who in turn trained a few, who in turn trained a few, and turned the world upside down. Why do we think we can do better than Jesus?

It made me laugh when a megachurch pastor asked if he could go with one of my friends to teach top Chinese leaders in China about church growth. My friend asked him something to the following effect: “Hmmm. Do you want to teach church growth to the leader whose church went from zero to 6 million in ten years? Or the leader who went from 100 to over one million? Or the leaders who have hundreds of thousands in their church movement?” His point was that this guy just wanted a forum so that he could advance his ministry in this country. He was on an ego trip. And my friend bluntly said, “You are not needed for church growth in China. The Spirit is

doing it without you.” We are in a mess, yet we have experts exporting their expert mess to China and other countries.

The modern church has substituted the world’s wisdom for the light of Christ’s kingdom on so many areas: feminism, homosexuality, dating, socialism, evangelistic methods, developmental psychology, government schools, government health care, and host of other things. It’s no wonder that the humanists dominate. *We want* them to lead us. That’s the problem. We have abandoned the heavenly vision that Jesus has given to the church.

I don’t say this to belittle and tear down. I do this to urge you to pray these twelve marks of a faithful ministry into every church of this nation, into every family of this nation, and into every other ministry of this nation. I want the American church to prosper. I love the church of America. But we don’t need more ministries; we need more faithful ministries who will be used by *God* to advance *His* agendas.

And if our own church is to prosper in our desires to plant churches, we too must cling to God’s grace to spare us from disobedience to God’s heavenly calling. We need to pray these twelve marks into our own congregation. How do *we* measure up? I think we still need to grow. We still need to press into our upward calling in Christ Jesus. May we persevere in being committed to all twelve marks. Make it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen.

I charge you to not be disobedient to your heavenly calling, and that you pray these twelve marks into the ministries of America. May His kingdom come more and more; may His will be done more and more on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

## Marks of a Faithful Ministry

### Acts 26:19-23

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 8-23-2009

Introduction – church shopping

- I. A ministry called by God, not ego (v. 19)
- II. A ministry obedient to God’s vision, not man’s (v. 19)
- III. A ministry committed to the message of the kingdom (v. 20a)
  - A. “declared” = *apanggelo* – a kingdom directive<sup>1</sup>
  - B. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, nations = Great Commission
    1. Individual (“to those”)
    2. National (“then to the Gentiles” = “to the nations”)
- IV. A ministry calling for repentance (v. 20b)
- V. A ministry calling for faith in God not man (v. 20c)
- VI. A ministry producing works consistent with repentance (v. 20d)
- VII. A ministry of antithesis
  - A. Paul’s ministry could not be ignored
  - B. Paul’s ministry brought opposition (v. 21)
- VIII. A ministry that is empowered by God (v. 22a)
- IX. A ministry that stands fast (v. 22b)
- X. A ministry that reaches out to small and great (v. 22b)
- XI. A ministry implementing the Old Testament (v. 22c)
- XII. A ministry committed to proclaiming a Messianic kingdom worldview (v. 23)
  - A. The sufferings of the cross
  - B. The power of the resurrection
  - C. The advancing light of the kingdom

Conclusion

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<sup>1</sup> “...it is used for proclamations of kings, reports of envoys” with “much the same range of meaning as *anangeélloα*, but [*apanggelo*] tends to be more official.” (TDNT) “the lordship of the divine Ruler is proclaimed” (NIDNTT) “The message of the OT and of rabbinic Judaism makes it quite clear that where the lordship of the divine Ruler is proclaimed, and his mighty deeds made known, no room is left for proclaiming the lordship of other gods.”