

Well let's take our Bibles and turn to Titus chapter 1, verses 1-4. A couple of weeks ago we started this series on Titus, we did an overview of the book, its date, its occasion, its purpose. We've called the series Doing Good. That's one of the themes of Titus. Because remember, Jesus has died that He might purify for Himself a special people, zealous for good works. Jesus wants you and I as Christians to have a civilizing influence in our communities. He wants us to have a gospel impact in our communities. He wants us to live out what we profess with our mouths. We need to do good wherever we are. And we're going to start to work our way through this letter and we're going to only begin to look at verses 1-4 we're going to spill over into next week. This is a message I've entitled The Work of the Word. The Work of the Word.

Stand as we read God's Word together, Titus chapter 1, verses 1-4. We stand because we want to honor the fact we're about to hear from God and handle his very holy Word. "Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgement of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested his word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior. To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior." So reads God's Word, you may be seated. I like the story of the coat shop in Nottingham, England and a notice that was posted on the window.

Here's what the notice read. "We have been established for over 100 years and we have been pleasing and displeasing customers every since. We have made money and lost money, suffered the effects of coal nationalization, coal rationing, government control and bad creditors. We have been cussed at and discussed, messed up, lied to, held up, robbed and swindled. The only reason we stay in business is to see what happens next." Well I've got a question for you this morning. What's your business? Why do you exist? For what purpose were you born? I don't know if you've discovered this, but the great purpose in life is to discover your purpose in life. The greatest tragedy in life is not dying young, and that would be a tragedy, but the greatest tragedy in life is not dying young. I'll tell you what it is, it's dying before you've started to live God's purpose for you.

It's dying before you've realized why you were born, why God created you, why you were put on planet Earth in the first place. James Merritt would remind us there are three kinds of people. There are those who live according to no purpose in life, those who live according to the wrong purpose in life, and those who live according to the right purpose in life. Think about that. There are some people this morning maybe among us or listening to us or you know, that are living according to no life purpose. They drift. They coast. They go to school, they get a job, they switch jobs, they find a spouse, they switch spouses, they move from house to house, place to place, they retire, then they die without ever knowing why they were here, without ever living to a singular purpose and passion. They just simply existed. Then there's those who live according to the wrong life purpose.

They are super achievers. They've got a resume. They've got some wins in their column. They've climbed the ladder of success, financially, politically, socially. But do you know what they've come to discover too late in life, that their ladder is propped up against the wrong wall. They didn't seek God's kingdom first. They didn't live for something that outlasts this life. And then there are those who live for the right life purpose, those who, like David, served their generation by the will of God. They are those who know why they were created. They realize that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Two men were walking one day together and one said to the other, "Do you know the secret of

success?" Which the other guy said, "No, what is it?" To which his friend replied, "I can't tell you. It's a secret."

Well it is no secret. It is no secret. I'll tell you what success is. Again, this is a quote from James Merritt, a Southern Baptist pastor. He says this, "The secret to success in life is discovering what God wants you to be and do and then giving your best at being it and doing it." That's good. You need to write that down. "The secret to success in life is discovering what God wants me to be and do and then giving my best to doing it and being it." Now I've said all that because when we come to Titus chapter 1, verses 1-4, Paul knows why he was born. Paul understands what he was created to do. Paul tells us what his passion and purpose in life is here. What you have in verses one to four is one of the clearest representations of Paul's mission and ministry in life you'll find anywhere in the New Testament.

It's a single long complicated sentence in the Greek, but at the heart of it is Paul telling you what he gives himself to each and every day and each and every moment. Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth that accords with godliness in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began but has in due time manifested his Word through preaching," now listen, "which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior. This what I'm about. You know what my passion in life is, it's bringing people to faith in Christ through the preaching of the Word which was given to me as an entrustment, as a stewardship by God himself." Can I condense the meaning of these opening verses.

Paul is saying this, "The proclamation of the gospel gives my life meaning. And I love to preach the gospel because it gives other people's lives meaning. Do you realize that God has existed in eternity, has promised a church, a body of people to his Son, and he has revealed that plan in time, and he has given me that message and I now preach it wherever I go. And you know what, it brings the elect to faith through an acknowledgement of the truth. And it not only brings them to faith, it produces change in their lives that accord with godliness. That's my passion. That's my purpose." And so I want to drill down on that this morning and next Sunday morning, the work of the Word. That's the work that Paul gives himself to, preaching the Word, which changes lives.

Now let me put it in its context. We have called this series Doing Good. And every pericope or every section we work through in this little letter, I'm going to connect it to that idea of doing good. So here's the first connection. Verses one through four would remind us that doing good is the product of the work of the Word. Write that down. Doing good is the product of the work of the Word. It is the Word of God preached and believed upon that produces faith. It is the Word that offers hope. It is the Word that promotes godliness. The work of the Word. So I want to say four things here in the opening verses. We'll cover just a couple this morning, pick it up the next Sunday. The priority of preaching, the press of preaching, the power of preaching, the procession of preaching.

Now you might say, "I'm not preacher. You know what, why did I come this morning?" Well, because preachers have an important role in your life. And you have an important role to keep preachers accountable to God's mission statement for them. And there's other stuff in this passage that has direct relationship to each and every one of us. So don't be tuning me out. That'd be very rude this morning. Not only rude but disobedient. So here's the deal. Let's look at number one, the priority of preaching. The priority of preaching. Where do I get that thought? Well if you run your eye over verses one through four, you're going to see that while it's jam packed with personal biography.

Paul tells us, "You know what, I've become a servant slave of Jesus Christ. I've been sent by him out into the world as an apostle. There came a day when God laid on me this calling to preach his Word and following his command." There's personal biography. Secondly, there's theological substance. Paul will talk about faith, the doctrine of election. He'll talk about the notion of truth. He'll talk about godliness as a behavior. He'll talk about the hope of eternal life. He'll talk about the fact that God has spoken out of eternity into history. This passage has got personal biography, this passage has got theological substance, but this passage has got one apostolic activity. Did you notice it? Paul says that God has manifested his Word through preaching and that's been given to me to do by the commandment of God.

That's a priority. Because there's only one thing mentioned here. Paul singles out one thing. Do you think he did that on purpose? I do. Do you think that was intentional? Absolutely. Paul wants to convey that preaching the Word that God has spoken out of eternity and into time through the apostles and the prophets and his own Son who has spoken in the last days, God is going to use the preaching of the Word as the central force in his plan in evangelism and the pivotal force in the life of the church and its discipleship. Remember, Jesus Christ died, Titus 2:14, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works. What brings out about Jesus died with a design. Jesus died with a purpose, to indeed establish a people redeemed, saved, purified, and zealous about good works.

What brings it about? How is that realized in history? By preaching. By the gospel being manifest through exposition and preaching. That's what makes preaching so pivotal. And here's another thing, not only does Paul underscore this one activity, the Word preached, when we look at verses five through nine in a few weeks, we're going to see that the one activity a godly man or a church leader needs to give himself to is what? The preaching of the Word. After telling us the kind of man he is, he's blameless, husband of one wife, he's got faithful children, he's not quick tempered, he's not given to wine, he's not violent. That's what he is. Paul then says, here's what he does, "He holds fast the faithful word as it is being taught, and he's able to teach it to others."

Not only does Paul single out preaching as the one indispensable thing he gives himself to, he lets us know that anybody that claims to be a leader in the church worth his salt will be a preacher and an expositor of the Word. You know what, remember what we said, Titus is part of pastoral epistles. Timothy and Titus were written to young pastors, so to speak, and there's a great theme that is laced throughout these letters, it's the preaching of the Word of God. And in I Timothy 3, verse 2, "The elder must be able to teach." In I Timothy 5, verse 7, "Those leaders who are worthy of double honor materially are those who give themselves to the Word and doctrine." When Paul writes to Timothy in chapter two of his second letter he says, "Timothy, give yourself to diligent study, that you might be workman who need not be ashamed."

A workman in the Word doing the work of the Word because it's the Word that produces faith. It's the Word that brings hope. It's the Word that brings about godly lives. When he's signing off, when the shadow of death casts itself over Paul he realizes he's writing perhaps his last paragraph. Think about that, when Paul is about to write his last paragraph he says, "Timothy, preach the Word. You must preach the Word. It's indispensable in the life of the church. It's what the world needs from the church." Now listen, preaching and teaching is not done by pastors alone. We thank God that our Protestant forefathers rediscovered the priesthood of the believer and said, "You know what, you don't need to be a Catholic priest to serve the Lord. We're done with clergy."

"The church can serve itself. Each Christian is gifted by God and can serve the church in some capacity." The priesthood of all believers, a wonderful doctrine. And you know what, that priesthood has worked out in that mum and dad can teach their children the Word of God. We're going to see in Titus 2, older women will teach younger women. We're going to see older men will teach younger men. Oh we're thankful. It would be a sad day in the life of the church if the Priscillas and Aquilas stopped discipling young preachers for future ministry. Oh, we can all teach to some capacity. But here's where the pastor is different. Preaching and teaching is his life's work, his major indispensable contribution to the church. And you know what, you and I need to hear that today. In a day when preaching is considered outdated, something that belongs to the age of the horse and buggy.

Some have disparaged preaching by describing it as a monologue to the mute. In a day when church leaders see themselves as entrepreneurs, creative communicators but not preachers, theologians, or expositors. In a day when the pulpit has been replaced by stools, by guitar stands, when the sermon is being shortened because people want to be entertained by singers, not educated by teachers, we need to see the priority of preaching. We need to remind ourselves that for Paul, he knew what his business was in life was to preach. The gospel that had been entrusted to him that will bring about the faith of the elect, that will bring hope to the despairing, that will produce godliness in the ungodly. And he says, "Hey Titus, as you appoint elders in every city, you make sure these men are able, capable preachers of the Word."

Don't you see that in the book of Acts? I mean we've said this before but I'm going to slot it in because it plays into what I'm talking about. You go to the book of Acts and you see the growth of the church, and we want to know how do you grow a church? How do you see God move in your midst? Well it's clear, you preach the Word. Acts 6, verse 7, "The Word of God kept spreading." Act 12:24, "The Word of God continued to grow and be multiplied." Acts 13:49, "And the Word of God was spread throughout the region." Acts 19:20, "The Word of the Lord was growing." Do you get the impression that the Word of God had something to do with the growth of the early church? I do. It was pulpits set on fire of God that impacted that ancient world and produced the church. In fact someone has said rightly, and it's a good way to understand, the book of Acts is a series of sermons stitched together by narrative.

In fact, if you reread the book of Acts with new eyes, look at it, there's sermon after sermon after sermon with little interludes of narrative that tell you how you go from this sermon in this place to this sermon in that place. It's the Word of God spreading. And I'd say to you, if you read church history beyond the book of Acts you'll see that the demise of the church has always corresponded to the decline in preaching. Weak churches are the product of anemic preaching. Conversely, church history shows that the revival of the church has always been matched with the return to preaching, a revival in preaching. God typically shows up when the pulpit returns to the center of the church's life. Classic example, the reformation. Just this week I've been reading about The Glory and Beauty of the Reformation by Joel Beeke.

It's a series of sermons that were preached to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, because the Protestant Reformation was based upon this idea of Sola Scriptura. It's a Latin phrase. It means the Word of God alone. Because as they looked at the Catholic Church, as they looked at the medieval church, the authority of God's Word had been replaced by the authority of popes and prelates and priests. Church tradition now was considered equal to the Word of God. There was very little preaching going on in the churches of the medieval church. It was a sacramental church. It was an altar. It was about bells and smells. It was about rituals and things to do. In fact, if you read Martin Luther, as he looks back on the medieval church, here's what he'll say, "God's Word is not proclaimed.

There is only reading and singing in the churches because God's Word has been suppressed. Many unchristian inventions and lies have sneaked into the service of reading, singing and preaching, and they are horrible to see."

And so he writes his thesis, 99 Theses, 99 ways in which the church can get back to the Word of God and reform. He wanted to reform the church from within, but the pope and the Catholic church was having none of it, and so they put a price on his head. And you know what, Martin Luther reformed the church on the outside and established reforming churches based on the gospel, based on the authority of God's Word. And many of our forefathers and sisters lost their lives simply on this principle alone. William Tyndale who translated the Bible into English lost his life for simply doing that. So the next time you lift this book in English, you remember that a man and many like him paid with their lives so we could read it because he believed in Sola Scriptura. In fact there's a great story related to William Tyndale that he ended up in the house of a Sir John Walsh.

He ended up in a discussion with a high ranking Catholic cleric and he was talking about the need to return to the Word of God, put the Word of God in the hands of the people. The cleric responded by saying he would rather have the pope's laws than those of the Word of God. Here's what Tyndale said in response, and it would ultimately later cost him life when the Catholic church burned him and scattered his ashes across a river. He said this. "I defy the pope and all his laws. If God spare my life e'er many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plow to know more of the Word of God than you do." That's what drove the Protestant Reformation. Let's get the Word of God into the hands of the people of God. And as they read it may God himself put it into the hearts of the people, because the Word of God produces faith.

The Word of God brings the hope of eternal life. The Word of God changes ungodliness into godliness. In fact Luther when he was asked to explain the spread of the Reformation in the early days in Germany he said, "I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word, otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor even afflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing, the Word of God did everything." Paul would say the same thing. And that's why he would have us remember, he would have Titus remember, he'd have the churches at Crete remember that preaching is the priority. And if it is, can I just suggest some things and then we'll move on. Number one, we should expect pastors to be preachers. I hear people describe church leaders, and often way down the list is their passion for preaching.

"Ah, they're so loving and they're forward thinking and they're visionary and they're great leaders." And all of that's good. I'm not dishing that. But first and foremost, a leader in the church is a preacher, an expositor, a theologian student of the Word of God, and you should expect that from pastors. And you know what, if they don't deliver that, then don't sit under them. Don't sit under them. Don't go to their churches. Doesn't matter how good the music is, doesn't matter how good you know what, all kinds of things are, maybe the children's ministry is top notch in terms of facilities and looks and fun. But if you want to go to a Biblical church you make sure it starts with a pastor who's a preacher. And he's living it and he's preaching it. Number two, demand that the teaching of Scripture be the main thing in the meetings of the church.

If the Word of God is the main thing when the church gathers, it ought to be the main thing. And the Word of God should have some role in every meeting of God's people. Number three, you need to order your week around the public preaching of the Bible. If the preaching of God's Word is as important as we say, that heaven and hell hang in the balance because of it, if angels watch and demons listen to the

preaching of God's Word, if God's glory is bound up in the gospel and the furtherance of the name and fame of his Son, is there anything more important in your calendar than being able to sit under God's men who can preach the Word of God to you, which will produce life in you. Anything more important than that? I don't think so. Now does your week reflect that? Does your commitment to attend church reflect that? I hope so.

Because we should expect pastors to be preachers, we should demand the teaching of Scripture in the meetings of the church, we should order our week to the public preaching of the Bible, and we should prepare our hearts to hear it. Not come late. Not come drowsy. But come with an appetite to hear it, understand it, write it down, think it through, work it out. Look, the main thing in life is to keep the main thing the main thing. And that sounds easy but it's actually quite hard. The main thing in life is to keep the main thing the main thing. And Paul's saying here in the fact that he just emphasizes one thing, preaching is the main thing. And when you pick a new pastor and you anoint and appoint an elder over a church, preaching's the main thing. Keep the main thing the main thing. Let's move on. The press of preaching. This is where we'll kind of make a start, pick it up next week. The priority of preaching, next the press of preaching.

What do I mean by the word press? The obligation, the weightiness, the seriousness that's attached to the act of preaching and the things that surround it. Paul had that perspective. Paul understood that God had committed to him, verse three, the Word that God had spoken out of eternity and into time, that had been committed to him according to the commandment of God. He felt that obligation, he understood he was a man under orders. He had a burden to bear. In fact, I don't know have you ever noticed when you read your Old Testament and the prophets, there's a phrase that I came across many, many years ago that has stayed with me and come back to me with a certain freshness this week. In Malachi 1:1, in Nahum 1:1, in Habakkuk 1:1, you'll read this kind of phrase. "And the burden of the Word of the Lord came to." The burden of the Word of the Lord came to. Malachi, Nahum, Habakkuk. That's powerful, isn't it?

That the Word of the Lord and the preaching of the Word of the Lord is a burden. It's an obligation. It's a weight. Paul carries that idea doesn't he, I Corinthians 9:16. Woe is me if I preach not the gospel. Now listen to his words. "For necessity," listen, "has been laid on me. It's like a weight has been put on me, a burden or a responsibility has been put on me to preach the gospel and I feel it. I realize that if I don't preach the gospel, the church withers. If I don't preach the gospel, people die in the world without hope. I feel it." So here's what I'd say to every young man, every aspiring preacher and to us all in general, the pulpit is no place for fools, comics, or triflers. The man who has no burden for souls, the glory of God, the health of the church, the evangelism of the world, the man who has no burden for that has no business being in the pulpit, because if there's no burden there can be no blessing.

The apostle preached under divine commission and divine compulsion. Paul, a bondservant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, who was given the Word by the commandment of the Savior. Well you never go wrong with Spurgeon, right? Here's what Spurgeon said about Malachi 1, verse 1, the burden of the Word of the Lord. "The prophets of old were no triflers. The servants of God mean business. They do not play at preaching, but they plead with man. They do not talk for talk's sake. They persuade for Jesus' sake. They are not sent into the world to tickle men's ears or to put on a display of elocution or to quote poetry. Theirs is an errand of life or death to immortal souls. They have something to say which so presses upon them that they must say it. The servants of God have no feathers in their caps, they have burdens in their hearts." It's true.

In fact the biographer of the great New England preacher, Phillip Brooks said this, that immediately before going into the pulpit, "he appeared like one burdened with a message from God." Every pastor needs to mount the stairs and stand behind a pulpit with that sense or give that impression. He is a man burdened with a message from God. Now there are three things that play into this press or this burden or this obligation, what I call the press of servanthood, the press of Scripture and the press of stewardship. We'll leave the Scripture and the stewardship ideas till next time. Let's look at the press of servanthood. What do I mean by that? Here's what I mean. Paul's preaching came out of a context of submission. He understood the weight of the commission that had been given to him and he bowed to it in submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ over his life.

Look at how he describes himself. Paul, a bondservant of God. That's too weak. I think you're aware ... Maybe if you've got a good translation it has been translated slave because that's the true meaning. The Greek word is doulos, slave. Now our English translations for the most part historically and typically have watered the word down out of embarrassment because of the connotation that comes with slavery, the brutality, the cruelty. Why would one call oneself a slave of Jesus Christ. That just doesn't sound right, but it is right. Paul is saying, "I'm a slave to Jesus Christ. And if he has commissioned me to preach the Word I'm going to preach it, wherever, whatever, however, regardless of the cost." Because he understood he had been bought. Slaves are bought and owned. Do you realize that that's exactly what Jesus did on the cross. Again go back to Titus 2, verse 14, "Who gave himself for us that he might redeem ... "

That's a slave word, redeem is to be bought to freedom, or to be bought from slavery, "Who gives himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself a people zealous for good works." What about I Corinthians 6, verse 19, Paul says, "Hey, the body's not for sex, the body's for the Lord. Don't be giving yourself to that which is outside of God's will. Don't you be attaching Jesus Christ to a prostitute because you're indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Don't you be bringing Jesus into your sin of immorality. Do you not realize, the body's not for sex, and it's not just for food. It's for the Lord." And he says this, "Your body has been bought. It's not your own. It's been bought with a price." So the implication is clear and plain. The press of servanthood played into the press of preaching. He was a servant, and you know what, if God had called him to be a preacher, that's what he was willing to do because Paul, like every Christian, was purchased, owned, and bought by Jesus Christ.

He was subject to another's will. He had no plans of his own. He was a man under orders. In fact, when you go to Titus 2, verse 9, Paul will directly speak to Christians who were slaves in the Roman Empire and here's what he says, "I exhort bondservants," but the word is doulos, "I exhort the slaves to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, but pilfering, stealing, but showing all good fidelity. Slaves, do what the master says in all things." They don't talk back. They don't question. They don't negotiate. They surrender. They serve. And that's what we're called to do. And here's the thing I want to remind you. I understand where the translators were coming from. The idea of slavery becomes abhorrent, doesn't it, and do we want to attach that to the glory of the Lord Jesus? But here's why we should not be afraid to embrace the idea of doulos or slavery in Christ.

Because our master's not cruel. He's good. See for slaves some of them lived under harsh masters. Peter will talk about this, what do you do if your master is harsh and cruel. And there were owners who did not recognize the dignity of a human life and used their slaves as chattel and tools. But that's not our master. Do you realize our master became a slave? You say, "Pastor, what do you mean?" Well Philippians 2:7 says that he became in the likeness of man in the form of a servant. It's the same word

doulos. Do you realize that our Lord Jesus made himself a slave to the will of the Father. As a Son he learned obedience. He became obedient even to death upon a cross. But remember, he died on that cross for us. He became a slave to the will of the Father for us so we might know freedom that the Damocles sword of God's wrath would be lifted from our head. That's our master.

He became a slave to the will of God to free us. Is it a hard thing for us to give up our freedom for him? Paul says, "No. I'm a bondservant and apostle of the Lord Jesus." Our Lord Jesus is not a slave driver or a harsh master. He's a good master and I'll tell you, when he asks us to submit to his will, you need to remember, according to Romans 12, verses 1-2, that his will is good, pleasurable, and acceptable. God's will for us is always good. That doesn't mean it's always easy. It doesn't mean that. In fact H.B Charles, a great African American preacher from Atlanta was speaking at Shepherd's Conference this week and he said this, "That the will of God is the safest place to be in the world, but the will of God may not take you to a safe place." That's good. Let me say that again, "The will of God is the safest place to be in the world, but the will of God may not take you to a safe place."

But the will of God is good. And our master has shown us the way. And he doesn't ask us to do what he himself hasn't done. And we need to embrace that. There's a story that comes out of the Civil War of a Northerner who comes South. He wants to free a slave. And he goes to one of the slave markets and he buys himself a slave. His eye is drawn to a 13 year old girl. And he pays the price and he purchases her and she walks off with him. And once he's at a safe place he turns to her and he said, "You're free. You're free. I've bought you. You're free." She says, "What do you mean I'm free? Free to go anywhere I want?" "Yes, free to go anywhere you want." "You mean free to do whatever I want?" "Yes, free to do whatever you want." "Free to be with who I want?" "Yes, free to be with who you want."

And she looks that man in the face, understands his love and his kindness and says, "I want to go with you." The Lord Jesus has redeemed us from every lawless deed for the purpose of purifying to himself a people zealous for good works. And when you and I bow the knee to his lordship we look into the face of the one who has freed us, because he became a slave to the will of the Father and you know what the only proper answer to him is, "Wherever you go I go. Whatever you do I do." And I want to continue this thought for a few moments because Paul not only talks about being a bondservant or a slave of God, but an apostle of Jesus Christ. Look at chapter 1, verse 1. He's adding. He's not taking away, he's simply adding, "I am a servant. I am a slave. And since I'm willing to do whatever he wants, he's actually sent me as an apostle out into the world."

Now he's using the word apostle here in a technical sense. The Greek word carries the idea of someone who's a messenger or someone who is sent. In the technical sense, and Paul fits into this, an apostle was one of the 12 that followed the Lord Jesus bar Judas and he was replaced by Matthias, who had also been with Jesus and had seen the risen Savior. An apostle was a leader handpicked by Christ, who was part of the foundation of the church, the 12 that would establish the church and appoint elders in every city. Although Paul comes late and technically wasn't with Jesus, he did encounter Jesus on the road to Damascus. He met the risen Christ and God called him to be an apostle and commissioned him, commanded him, and sent him out into the world and Paul's acknowledging that here.

"I'm a slave of God and I'm one sent by Jesus Christ. The Word that God has spoke from eternity into history, manifested his Word, he has given it to me. I've preached it because he has commanded me to do that." So an apostle is someone commissioned by Christ, and one who has witnessed the risen Savior. Now we join those two thoughts together, here's what we've got. The apostle Paul was a sent servant of God who had committed himself and the best part of his life to the service of the Word of God. I want to

say that again because that's what's being taught here. Listen, Paul was a sent servant of God who spent the better part of his life in service to the Word of God. He was conquered by grace, called by a sovereign God and commanded by the Savior to preach the Word. He actually acknowledges that in other places. In II Timothy chapter one, verses 8-12 he talks about the fact that he's not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.

And he tells Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of him, a prisoner. He talks about the fact that God saves us and calls us with a holy calling. He talks about God's purpose for our lives. He talks about how before time began, the gospel was established in the mind of God and appeared to us in Jesus Christ, all kind of similar language to Titus 1, verses 1-4. Now listen to this, verse 11, "To which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." Paul was appointed, called. We read in I Timothy 1, verse 12 that God put him into the ministry. And it got me thinking, we need to pray for men, appointed by God, selected by the Spirit of God, equipped by the Spirit of God for the good of his church, that these men who are sent servants of God, who spend the better part of their life in the service of the Word of God, that God would raise up a generation of those men.

He did it in the life of Paul. Paul poured in the life of Timothy and Titus. Timothy and Titus are going to pick other men to indeed become elders who are able to teach the Word. So for the time that remains, for a few minutes, I want to talk through that issue of a definite call. And to some degree I have limited my target this morning for the last few minutes to young men or other men, who I pray God is stirring up with a definite call to the ministry of the Word. The church needs sent servants who are in the service of the Word like Paul. But you've got a question this morning, "You know what pastor, what does that look like? What is a definite call? I've done some soul searching, what would that look like in my life?" Well this should be a sermon in itself, and I do believe we have a sermon I did at our men's breakfast on the call to the ministry that you can get from our media table.

But here's some things to think about. I've come up with several words that will just become triggers that'll help us think this through. Number one compulsion. If God's calling you, you'll know a compulsion. I Timothy 3, verse 1, "If any man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good thing." That first Greek word carries the idea of passion, ambition, desire. You want it. You crave it. It's something that grows and captures you and all you can think about, "I want to do this." It's compelling. And a man that's called to the ministry of the Word will have an all consuming desire to preach it, study it, defend it, know it. That's why Spurgeon says if you can do anything else, do it. What's the implication? Because if you're called to God you won't be able to do anything else but preach.

If you can do anything else but preach, you're not called to preach, because the man that's called of God is a man who can't do anything but preach. He hears the commandment, he answers the call. That's why Spurgeon elsewhere said, "If God calls you to be a pastor or a preacher, don't stoop to be a king." Number two, character. Number two, character. I Timothy 3:2-7, or Titus 1:5-9, while he will eventually get to what a pastor ought to do, that is he ought to teach and be able to teach, he spends most of his time on character, what that person is. Because what we are, and the quality of that reality determines the quality of what we do. It's crazy in our culture that we divorce what a person is from what they do. And we don't hold them accountable for a lack of integrity, for a lack of honesty.

But in the Bible you can't do that. You can't do that in the ministry. What you are gives you permission to do what you're called to do. That's why Robert Murray M'Cheyne, the great Scottish Presbyterian pastor said, "My people's greatest need is my personal holiness." It's true. The man called to the

ministry will be a man of God. Not perfect, he'll be growing in grace himself, but he will be a man of God. Number three, commitment. Commitment. He'll be a man who gives himself to hard work. The ministry doesn't need loafers or ne'er do wells. The ministry of the Word, which is the Word, the eternal God has spoken in time, this Word will change lives for all of eternity. Think about the burden and the weight that it is. That deserves the best kind of men who will work hard in the service to the Word which does its work.

That's why we read II Timothy 2:15, Be diligent, a workman that need not be ashamed. I Timothy 5:7, Those who are worthy of double honor are those who labor in word and doctrine. I try to remind myself when I'm in my study, I think of men in our congregation or whoever, linemen, construction workers, men who give themselves to physical hard work. Now I might be sitting in a nice room with air conditioning, my wife might deliver me a cup of tea every hour or two, but I'm there to be a workman who works as hard as a lineman, construction worker, man working in a factory, because that's what the men of God do. They're hard workers. They're not slouches. Compulsion, character, commitment, competency. I Timothy 3, verse 2, or Titus 1, verse 9. They are to be able to teach. I mean, we want men who want to do it, but we want men who can do it.

Able, that means they're skillful at it. They're excellent. That doesn't mean they won't grow in it. It doesn't need that they can't go to seminary and get better at it, but they better go into seminary with that gift of the Holy Spirit before they go to seminary. Because theological degrees don't defer giftedness. That's something the Holy Spirit produces. Ephesians 4, pastors, teachers are gifts of the risen Lord. And once they know that gift, once they establish that gift, it's good to go and get it polished, good to go and get it honed, but they better be competent already. I think it was Haddon Robinson who said something like, "If God has given you the gift of preaching, he will give others the gift of listening." As in, if you preach and nobody wants to listen, you ain't got it. Competency. Conviction. Titus 1, verse 9, "Holding fast the faithful Word as has been taught."

That means they're theological. They love doctrine. They read. They study. They love church history. They want to know that they are preaching and defending the faith once delivered to the saints. They have got convictions. They don't get up into the pulpit and maybe say something, or give their people five views, none of which they're sure about. Nah, these are men of conviction and theological clarity. Here's another one, confirmation. II Timothy 1, verses 6-7, Timothy was taking his foot off the accelerator, Paul says "Hold on a minute son. You need to stir this gift up, this gift that was recognized and set apart by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." What does that mean? It means at some point in Timothy's life he sensed a call to the ministry. There was a compulsion. There was character, there was commitment, there was competency, there was conviction. And the church recognized that in him.

And then there was confirmation. Elders, presbytery, presbyters, elders in the church laid hands on him and recognized him before the church as a man called of God. What's the point of that? The point is that you can have all the desires you want, and you can give yourself to this, but others better see what you're seeing, and others better confirm what you think. You don't appoint yourself to the ministry, the church does that. And you need to submit yourself, a young man or whatever, to elders and let them examine you and weigh your motives and look at your life and hear your preaching. Now they'll understand that there's always going to be room to grow. They're not looking for perfection, they're looking for direction. But it will be confirmed.

I don't say this to draw attention to myself, but it's just part of my story. When I was feeling called of God and sensing the stirring of God, I told my mum and dad, I'm thinking about giving up my job in the aircraft factory I worked in and going to the Irish Baptist College and getting trained for the ministry. Well you know, mums are always easy. She says, "Son, that would be great." I love that. You can never do anything wrong in your mother's sight so hey go ahead and do it. My dad was a little bit more judicious. He says, "Well, you know what, you probably need to talk to the elders of the church. In fact he said, you should talk to Joe Law." Well Joe Law was a revered elder in our church. He was a rather straight laced man, kind of put a very sober exterior out. If you were kind of young in the church you kind of feared him.

As you walked by him you put your head down. "There's Mr. Law, who is the law." But he was a godly man, a good man. My dad said, "You need to go and see Joe Law." So I plucked up the courage. I called Mr. Law, went down to his house. Now Joe Law was a riveter at the Harland and Wolff Shipyard in Belfast where the Titanic was built. He was as hard as the rivets he put in those ships. So I went in, a little fear and trepidation. He was actually sitting on a seat. His foot was up because he had broken his ankle. It was in a cast. And so I kind of stuttered out, "Mr. Law, I talked to my mum and dad and my dad thought it would be good for me to run this by you, but I think God's calling me to the ministry. What say you?" And to my utter surprise, little bit of emotion, nothing I'd ever seen. Maybe a tear formed in the corner of his eye, literally.

And he says, "Philip, I've been waiting for this day. I've been praying. I've watched you. I knew this day was coming." I don't say that to draw attention to myself. I only say that, at that moment I was like floating on air. Mr. Law was my best friend because he had just confirmed, a godly man, a leader in the church, a man that my father honored and said, "You know what, you can't go until Joe gives you the thumbs up." But he did. Because that's the way it ought to be, confirmation from godly men. And finally, conversion. Conversion. I Corinthians 9:19-22 Paul talks about winning some, so God had certainly used him to lead people to Jesus. And then he talks about that he might win some more. He adjusts his lifestyle to adapt to the culture without selling out. And he's just got a passion to see more people saved because he's already seen people saved, because ministers of the gospel see people saved.

There's an effectiveness to what they do. Proverbs says, "Gift makes room for itself." You know what, if God is calling you, I'm not going to put a number on it, but right over your shoulder should be 10 year old boys, 13 year old girls, people you've worked with, people you know who's lives have been changed through your preaching, through your life. You got to be effective. You've got to have a track record of making spiritual impact in people's life. There's got to be fruit. If it's a life owned of God, if it's a life gifted by the Spirit, there's got to be fruit. In fact, every time I come home from preaching in my early days, my father would always say the same thing, and I appreciated him for it. He'd always say, "Philip, did anybody get saved?" He wants to know. "If God's owning you son, and we recognize the sovereignty of God and the providence of God and all of that, but if a man's called and equipped, isn't lives going to be changed?"

Maybe not every single sermon, but there's going to be conversion and impact. Philip, did anybody get saved? Any good man of God needs to be able to answer that in the affirmative across time. As the team comes up, let me finish with this story by Donald Grey Barnhouse, great preacher. In his commentary on Romans he talks about a backwoods preacher who wasn't very eloquent, wasn't very educated, but boy when he preached, he hit the mark. God's hand was on him. Lives were changed through him. And on one occasion he was listening to a young man preach. He was educated. He was eloquent. But something was missing. The blessing and benediction of God was missing. And when the sermon was

done, that old backwoods preacher went up to that young sophisticated preacher and said to him, "Young man, was you sent, or did you just went?" Was you sent or did you just went? We need to know we're sent.

Sent servants of God who give the better part of their lives in service to the Word of God, because it's the Word of God that does the work, that brings the elect to faith, that brings them to acknowledge the truth, that moves them from ungodliness to godliness, that gives them hope of eternal life in a despairing world. Father, thank you for your Word. We pray that it will do its work in our lives today. We pray indeed that we would embrace it. May we be as a church committed to the priority of preaching. May faithful men, effective expositors, powerful preachers, stand behind this pulpit week in and week out, because as we read in church history, as we read our Bibles, revival comes with a revival in preaching, and a revival in the hearts of the preacher.

Lord help us indeed to give ourselves to slavery to Jesus Christ because he's a good master. He's bought us. He owns us. May we just hand him a blank piece of paper today with our signature at the bottom and just let him tell us what we need to do. And Lord we pray for young men and men in this church who are being stirred up about the possible call to the ministry. Confirm it in their lives. May they go through this checklist and see that indeed God is indeed calling them. And may they answer the call. May they say, "Here Lord am I. Send me." For we pray and ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.