

God's Pattern For Faithfulness In Ministry

faithful: 1. Of persons, their actions, etc. : Full of or characterized by faith; believing. 2. Firm in fidelity or allegiance to a person to whom one is bound by any tie; constant, loyal, true.

faithfulness: The quality of being faithful; a. Fidelity, loyalty [to a superior or friend]; trustworthiness, conscientiousness. b. Strict adherence to one's pledged word; honesty, sincerity.

- I. To what or whom are ministers to be faithful?
 - A. Ministers are called to be faithful ministers of Jesus Christ. **1CO 4:1-4.**
 1. steward: An official who controls the domestic affairs of a household, supervising the service of his master's table, directing the domestics, and regulating household expenditure; a major-domo.
 2. It is required (demanded) in stewards that a man be found faithful. It is to be the state of being or existence for ministers of Jesus Christ.
 - a. It is not required that a steward speak in tongues, be wealthy, poor, married, single, work an extra job, forbidden from working an extra job, etc.
 - b. He must be faithful to his Master, Jesus Christ, in all things pertaining to his calling as revealed in the Scripture.
 - c. He must be faithful in everyday matters, having a good report in general.
1TI 3:7.
 3. When it comes to a minister's faithfulness, it matters not how others judge it, or what his own opinion might be concerning it, the bottom line is that he answers not to men but to Jesus Christ.
 - B. Those that are called to be faithful ministers of Christ are enabled by Jesus Christ Himself. **1TI 1:11-12.**
 1. It is not natural ability or scholarly education that enables a man for this work but Jesus Christ. **ACT 4:13 c/w MAT 11:25.**
 2. Whatever one's education, if a man is a *bona-fide* minister of Jesus Christ, He enabled him.
 - C. Those thus enabled are rightly said to be a gift from Jesus Christ, given for the work of the ministry. **EPH 4:8, 11-12.**
 - D. NOTE: It is a ministry *for* the church and *to* the church, but ministers are called to be ministers *of* Jesus Christ. **COL 1:7; ROM 15:16.**
 1. In a monarchial system (and the church is a kingdom with a King), the Sovereign's minister may be called, for example, the Prime Minister *of* (insert nation here) but his charge is from his Sovereign to rule in his stead, administering his order.
 2. Christian ministers are ambassadors for Christ, speaking for Him, as workers together with Him. **2CO 5:20; 6:1; 1CO 3:9.**
 3. They are not ambassadors for some system or denomination.
 - E. The ministry they are given and for which they are enabled is a New Testament ministry. **2CO 3:5-8.**
 1. They do not sit in Moses' seat (**MAT 23:2**) but stand and proclaim Jesus Christ the Lord. **2CO 4:5-7.**
 2. They have a more glorious ministry than that of the letter of Moses' law, for they preach the knowledge of the glory of God as seen in Jesus Christ.
- II. Even though they are ministers of Jesus Christ, He is not Himself the pattern for their ministry.
 - A. He has a ministry, but it is an high-priestly ministry, not on earth but in heaven. **HEB 8:1-2.**

- B. Even His earthly ministry was not a pattern for Gentile ministers, for it was primarily to the nation of Israel. And it was a ministry of performing many miracles. **MAT 15:24 c/w 10:5-6; ROM 15:8.**
- C. The gospel went to the Gentiles primarily after His death, at which time the N.T. would be fully in force. **HEB 9:16-17; 10:9.**
- D. Because of an imposed judicial blindness upon the Jews, the gospel predominantly favored the Gentiles. **ROM 11:25.**
- III. Jesus Christ provided a man, an apostle and a minister, as an example and pattern for N.T. ministers.
- A. That man was the apostle Paul, the apostle to us Gentiles. **ROM 11:13.**
1. He wrote more than half of the N.T. (14 of 27 books).
 2. He wrote the three pastoral epistles, written not to churches, but to ministers.
 3. Where do we go to get instructions on a N.T. ministry and concerning N.T. churches? We go to the man who wrote about it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Paul is the one that writes to a minister and steward that he might know *how he oughtest to behave himself in the house of God which is the church of the living God.* **1TI 3:14-15.**
1. Where do stewards go to find out how to control and administer the affairs of God's house?
 - a. We go to the man who writes and tells us how we oughtest to behave ourselves in that house. When Paul says "oughtest," he's not leaving us stewards any latitude in our behavior.
 - b. ought: The general verb to express duty or obligation of any kind; strictly used of moral obligation, but also with various weaker shades of meaning, expressing what is befitting, proper, correct, advisable, or naturally expected.
 2. Paul is the one who sets forth the duties and obligations binding upon stewards. They had best do it Paul's way.
- C. Paul sets himself forward as the example for believers to follow. **1CO 4:14-16.**
1. **PHIL 4:9.** "Those things" is a very specific group of things that are required that the God of peace be with us. Omitting any of those things is fraught with risk.
 2. **PHIL 3:17.** Brethren are to be followers "together" (In one assembly, company, or body) of Paul. A church should be emphatically Pauline in doctrine and conduct.
 3. Pastors with churches are to follow Paul together.
 - a. Pastors are to feed the flock of God, take the oversight thereof, and be ensamples to the flock. **1PE 5:1-4.**
 - b. Even Peter, an apostle to the Jews (**GAL 2:8**), encouraged Jewish saints to regard Paul. **2PE 3:15-16.**
 4. Following Paul's example will keep a pastor and his flock from following the walk of those described in **PHIL 3:18-19.**
- D. NOTE: By following Paul we are not actually following Paul, for Paul's ways were not really Paul's ways but rather they were from Christ and in Christ. **1CO 11:1; 4:16-17.**
1. If a minister desires his ministry to be faithful in the Lord, he should be as Timothy, whose ministry brought believers into remembrance of Paul's ways (which be in Christ).
 2. That is why Paul could write the Philippians and say "...be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have US [Paul and Timothy, **PHIL 1:1**] for an ensample" (**PHIL 3:17**).
 3. Timothy's ministry was to bring brethren into remembrance of Paul's ways because

- Paul's ways were in Christ and of Christ.
4. Paul's ways were taught by him in every church, which means they all had a common creed and were to function the same way. We have his letters to those churches explaining his ways.
- E. If a minister wants his words and the form of them to be sound: he must go to Paul. **2TI 1:13.**
1. sound: In full accordance with fact, reason, or good sense; founded on true or well-established grounds; free from error, fallacy, or logical defect; good, strong, valid.
 2. If a minister wants his gospel to be the true gospel, he need only preach the gospel Paul preached because Paul got it directly from Christ. **GAL 1:6-12.**
 3. That is why Paul can say what he did in **ROM 2:16.**
 4. That makes the gospel according to Paul very important!
- F. If you want to know how the ministry is properly perpetuated, go to Paul.
1. Paul gives detailed qualifications for any man that might be considered for the ministry in his pastoral epistles. If they don't meet those qualifications, they should not be considered. **1TI 3:2.**
 2. Paul also instructs a pastor to teach pastors and what to teach them. **2TI 2:1-2.**
 3. "Thou" is very personal and puts the responsibility directly on the individual minister.
- G. If a man wants to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, he must put his brethren in remembrance of Paul's teachings. **1TI 4:6.**
1. This means that if he never explains all the visions in Ezekiel, he can still be a good minister of Jesus Christ.
 2. This also means that if he spends his whole time preaching on Ezekiel and ignores Paul, he won't be a good minister of Jesus Christ.
- H. You may say, "This is putting an awful lot of emphasis on Paul." Yes, for good reason, since the scriptures teach us to put a lot of emphasis on Paul.
1. "But there are some very difficult things to be understood in Paul's writings."
 2. We are in good company. An apostle himself, trained by Jesus, found that to be true. **2PE 3:15-18.**
 3. That doesn't mean, "Avoid Paul." If anything, it means spending more time learning Paul's doctrine and becoming sound in it (lest we wrest it to our own destruction).
 4. This does not mean we ignore the rest of the Bible. Paul taught:
 - a. "...preach THE WORD..." (**2TI 4:2**).
 - b. that all Scripture is profitable for the man of God. **2TI 3:16-17.**
 - c. that all Scripture was written for our learning and comfort. **ROM 15:4.**
 - d. "...all the counsel of God" (**ACT 20:27**).
 - (1) counsel: Interchange of opinions on a matter of procedure; consultation, deliberation. *to take counsel*: to consult, deliberate.
 - (2) He declared the divine counsel of the Godhead from exact personal revelation from Jesus Christ: no guessing, imagination, speculation, etc. **GAL 1:11-12; EPH 3:1-3 ct/w JOB 38:2.**
 - (3) He was personally informed of the counsel of God by Him Who is called "...Counsellor, The mighty God..." (**ISA 9:6**).
 - (4) He expertly declared Jesus from the Law and the Prophets. **ACT 28:23.**
 - (5) He expertly showed the weakness of Moses' Law which demanded something better: Christ. **GAL 3:10, 13; ROM 8:3; 10:4.**

- (6) He expertly showed the Law's temporary nature. **GAL 3:19.**
 - (7) He expertly showed the setting aside of aspects of the Law unique to Israel under the Law. **COL 2:16-17.**
 - (8) He expertly showed the superiority of Jesus Christ over Abraham, Moses, Levi, Aaron, angels, David, etc. Consider the **Book of Hebrews** and **ACT 13:36-37.**
 - (9) He is by far the best explainer and interpreter of circumcision, Moses' Law, the Levitical religion, the Prophets. **ROM 4:10-11; ACT 26:22; Hebrews.**
 - (10) Above all writers of Scripture, Paul declared the divine counsel concerning *predestination*. The word in any form only appears in Paul's writings. **ROM 8:29-30; EPH 1:5, 11.**
 - (11) Paul is the one who shows that the seed of Abraham is Christ. **GAL 3:16.**
 - (12) Paul gives the most and best information about the total natural depravity of Jews and Gentiles, salvation by grace, election, the doctrine of the remnant, the true Israel, inward circumcision, the church, the New Covenant, the Lord's supper, blood redemption, bodily resurrection, final judgment, and how to live godly in this present world in the liberty of Christ, patiently awaiting His return.
 - (13) He only restrained himself in what was unlawful to utter. **2CO 12:1-4.**
- e. All the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost for revelation and guidance into all truth (**JOH 14:26; 16:13**) but Paul received direct personal face-to-face revelation from the *post-Pentecost ascended and glorified* Christ. **1CO 9:1.**
- (1) He was truly "...as of one born out of due time" (**1CO 15:8**) for "...the times of the Gentiles..." (**LUK 21:24**).
 - (2) This special appointment of and face-to-face revelation to Paul by the ascended and glorified Christ for the sake of the Gentiles deserves our attention.
5. Ministers should approach the Scriptures and understand them through the knowledge given by revelation to Paul who is the apostle to us Gentiles.
- a. He it is that speaks to us. **EPH 3:1-11 c/w 2CO 12:7; ROM 11:13.**
 - b. N.T. Christianity primarily is not Petrine, but Pauline.

IV. What does faithfulness to Christ demand of ministers? Paul especially commands and exemplifies this.

A. Paul

1. valued the gospel more than personal interests. **1CO 9:22-23.**
2. desired that Christ be magnified in his body in life or death. **PHIL 1:20.**
3. had a deep, loving care of the sheep even when they did not reciprocate, never leaving them to wolves. **1TH 2:8; 2CO 2:4; 12:15; JOH 10:12-13.**
4. endured persecution, affliction and hardness. **2TI 2:3; 3:10-11; 4:5.**
5. preached with infirmity. **GAL 4:13.**
6. rejected welfare and pushed workfare. **2TH 3:6-12.**
7. had integrity. **1TH 2:3-5, 10.**
8. taught publicly and privately. **ACT 20:20.**
9. supported the weak. **ACT 20:35.**
10. prayed much. **COL 1:3, 9.**

- B. Faithfulness as ministers of Jesus Christ demands that they *renounce* (give up in a complete and formal manner) all dishonesty and faithfully manifest the truth they understand (at whatever the cost). **2CO 4:1-2.**
- C. God expects them to be faithful to what they know and understand to be truth. But God does not teach them to maintain an attitude that they know it all perfectly and can't learn more. **1CO 8:2.**
1. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (**PRO 4:18**). This includes pastors.
 2. Timothy was a faithful minister of Jesus Christ yet Paul instructs him to study to show himself approved unto God. **2TI 2:15.**
 - a. study: To apply the mind to the acquisition of learning, whether by means of books, observation, or experiment.
 - b. *Much study is a weariness to the flesh* (**ECC 12:12**), but an invigoration of the spirit and the understanding.
 3. One can be an eloquent man, be mighty in the Scriptures, be instructed in the way of the Lord, be fervent in the spirit, speak and teach diligently the things of the Lord, and yet not know or teach the way of God perfectly. **ACT 18:24-28.**
 - a. Apollos taught what he knew and thought to be the truth diligently, but not perfectly. But he was faithful to what he knew and understood to be truth.
 - b. He received instruction from a man and a woman (who were NOT co-pastors of a church) who took him unto them and taught him the way of God more perfectly. We all need to be perfected in that which is lacking in our faith. **1TH 3:10.**
 - c. He then preached more truth and was faithful to that.
 4. What do they do when they come to understand more truth? They change their thinking and act upon the truth they now understand and become faithful to that.
 5. Ministers are called to strive for sound doctrine, without corruptness in all areas of their teaching and example. **TIT 2:1, 7-8.**
 - a. sincerity: Freedom from falsification, adulteration, or alloy; purity, correctness. *Obs.* 2. Freedom from dissimulation or duplicity; honesty, straightforwardness.
 - b. All ministers will be tested at various times concerning things they hold to be truth, or may come to see further aspects of truth that they were ignorant of and will have to face the possibility that they may have to change some belief or practice.
 - c. Change to truth always has a cost.
 - d. But faithfulness to God requires faithfulness to truth above all else.
 - e. A man may be honestly mistaken but *when a man who is honestly mistaken hears the truth, he will either cease being mistaken or cease to be honest.*
 - f. In anything concerning truth, if we cease to be honest because of the cost, we can longer be considered faithful, for faithfulness includes honesty to the truth.
 - g. Warring a good warfare requires holding faith and a good conscience. **1TI 1:18-19.**
 6. Again, Paul is the example of faithfulness to the truth at whatever the cost. **1TI 1:12.**
 - a. Jesus Christ took Paul, enabled him, and put him into the ministry, for that He counted him faithful.
 - b. At the time of Paul's call to the ministry (which was on the Damascus road, **ACT 26:15-16**) Paul was not faithful in the sense of being full of faith and

believing in Jesus for he was blaspheming that name, persecuting His church, and in a state of unbelief. **1TI 1:13.**

- c. Paul was faithful in the sense of having a sincere allegiance and loyalty to his God, even though it was shrouded in ignorance. He was one of those zealous ignorant men, the likes of which he later prayed for. **ROM 10:1-2.**
- d. Paul was zealous toward God, although his zeal was misdirected. **ACT 22:3 c/w GAL 1:14.**
- e. Paul sincerely and honestly thought what he was doing was right. **ACT 26:9.**
- f. Paul did what he did in good conscience and that is why he could say what he did in **ACT 23:1.**
- g. Paul's response to the revelation of truth was "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (**ACT 9:6**), an appropriate response for every sinner. **ACT 2:37-38.**
- h. Paul could no longer claim ignorance of the truth, but when he understood it he obeyed it. **ACT 26:19.**
- i. Paul suffered the loss of all things for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. **PHIL 3:8.**
- j. And Paul was faithful until the end. **2TI 1:3; 4:6-8.**

V. May ministers and their flocks have grace to follow the pattern of faithfulness which God has left us in Paul.