

The Dark Side of a Preachers Life

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon emphasizes the qualities and trials that real preachers endure, focusing on the example of George Mueller and the challenges faced by true ministers of the Gospel. It highlights the importance of endurance, self-sacrifice, and faithfulness in the midst of opposition and trials, showcasing the character of genuine preachers who labor, watch, fast, and persevere for the sake of the Gospel.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:4, Mark 6:31, Psalms 127:2, Revelation 2:2, Acts 20:24, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Endurance in Ministry", "Faithfulness Amid Trials"

Description

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Transcript

I want you to turn here this morning to 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 again for our third and final message, I think, but you never do know, on approved preachers, I was only going to preach one message on this, but it's suddenly in the message turned into three, and this is a scripture, never think these are spontaneous messages. This scripture, especially of 2nd Corinthians chapter 6, verse 4, I would say is a verse that has weighed on me heavily for at least three decades. This scripture I have thought on and considered it, never preached on it, never once, and yet it weighs on me.

I meditate, I think on it, I ponder, I live it out, I prove it, I put it into my lifestyle. That's what I've done for 30 years before I ever put it on my lips to preach to you. Woe unto the preachers that fill our pulpits in this hour that preach things that they know nothing about, they have never lived, never buy a book from a young preacher, never buy books from men who have not mature experience.

A man shouldn't print a book or publish a book or even stand in a pulpit until he's proved it and lived it and walked it out. You know why it's so, so empty? And so a scripture like this, don't think I'm preaching a theology, I'm preaching what I have lived and breathed and put into practice in ministry way before I even attempt to preach it or to exhort you on it. But reading from 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and reading from verse 1 here, we then, speaking of preachers or those in the ministry, as workers together with him, and I want you to mark that so carefully, a real preacher is a worker together with him or with God.

Beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain, for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succored thee. Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation, giving no offense in anything, let the ministry be not blamed, but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God. Behold, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you, Lord God, for what you're doing in our midst, Lord God. We want real, genuine, Lord God, preachers that have character.

Lord God, we're asking of you, Lord God, that even in this nation of Ireland, that again, that you'd restore unto the villages and the towns and the cities. Lord God, the nations of the world, those countries and cities we pray for. Lord God, those online who listen to us.

Lord God, again, that you'd raise up shepherds after your own heart. Lord God, this is a work of God, not a work of man. They can't be trained in a theological school or a Bible college.

But, oh God, it's you that grants to the body of Christ men after your own heart. And, oh God, we're asking of you, in this desolate, bankrupt apostate age, that you'd again raise up many shepherds, that you'd multiply shepherds upon the hills of Israel, that we'd see them come from the highways and the byways. Lord God, that we'd see them again rise up to lead your flock back to pure streams and the green pastures.

Lord God, we're asking of you, our hearts are burdened, that again, that you'd bring a restoration in your church of true, godly character, of a genuine, pure message. Lord God, of the reality and the power of a living Christ in the pulpit. Lord God, we ask that you bless your word this morning, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Part three, approved preachers. Our preachers who can stand and prove to you that they have the right, no more than that, that they have the character, the qualifications, the heart attitude, the mind, the action.

All of these things and much more, to actually approve to you or to commend to you that they're real preachers. We have already dealt with this in two messages and I want to come to the final message. It says again in 2 Corinthians 6 and 4, but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.

What a big task to approve yourself or to commend yourself that you're a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. That a preacher will have to stand and say, I can prove to you that I've got all the qualifications. I can prove to you from my life, my character, private, personal, inward, outward, I can actually prove that I'm a God called preacher.

That as a preacher, I'm a servant of God. I can show you by how I've lived my life, how I've preached, how I've served in the church, that I'm not a servant of man. I'm not self-serving.

This isn't all about me and my ministry, but I'm actually a servant of God. What a remarkable thing. You know, he goes further in verse 1 and he says, we preachers, those in the ministry are workers together

with him.

It doesn't say God works with us and I think a lot of ministries like that. It is God has to mould around us. We are the ministry.

We are the preacher. We are the ones doing this. Paul doesn't write that.

He says, we are workers together with him. You know what that means? It is his message. It is his church.

It is his work. It is his labour. What we're doing is coming along and we're joining ourselves.

We labour with him. You know what? Let me tell you. You that aspire to ministry are in ministry.

God was here before you. He'll be here long after you. God buries his work, men, but he carries on the work.

You know what? He's been doing this a whole lot longer than you or I or anyone in the body of Christ. He'll just bury you and carry on without blinking. That's God's work.

The ministry is God's work. And so Paul says a true preacher is a worker, a labourer, someone who joins himself to God and joins God's work. He doesn't create this.

He doesn't create the message. He doesn't decide how to run the church. He doesn't decide what the church looks like.

He doesn't decide what a preacher is to be in his life or attitude. All that is settled 2,000 years ago. The word of God gives us all of that.

A preacher who does not align himself with this is not a preacher. You cannot tell God or tell the church what your marriage is to be. Away with these foolish men who have filled the pulpit.

One of those top men I see has recovered again, grown a beard, make himself look a bit more mature. He's got a bit greyer along the way. Last time I seen him he was being thrown out of his church.

One of the most popular ministries in America and the Western world. Everyone reading his books. Everyone watching his messages.

Sure you could only watch him once and tell there's something seriously wrong. He went and taught on the Song of Solomon. And he said, well, this is all about me and my wife.

We relax with a bottle of wine. This is all to help us in our marriage. I want to tell you, men like that are dangerous.

They are self-serving. They are not working with Christ or for Christ. They're not servants.

And yet he's made a comeback. And now everyone is posting his snippets of preaching. Have you forgotten what sort of man this is? Yes, with a reputation.

Have you forgotten he got put out because of his handling of money and power in this church? Does no one care about these things? And so Paul says, we are workers together with him, with God, with the Lord. Do you think we've got a right to mold us or I have a right to create a ministry and this is my style of

church? God help us. We have no rights to do that.

And so Paul stands and says, but in all things, every single area, preacher, you've got no right to be a preacher if you don't want every area of your life scrutinized. Your marriage, your attitude towards money, how you conduct yourself on your time off. You think that your life isn't to be an open book? You better go to a different occupation.

Paul says, in all things, in every area, I can improve myself or command myself or gather up all of the evidence together and present it to you to show I am a real preacher. Ambitious men are dangerous in the church, ambitious for fame, ambitious for notoriety, ambitious to get in the pulpit. Any young man covets this pulpit, you're disqualified from ministry.

Those that come into the church, they're saved a year and they want to be preachers. You haven't even got a clue what the ministry is about. That's why the Bible forbids you to be a preacher or to be allowed in leadership in the church.

You're not even allowed to be. I don't even have the right to give you a position because scripture forbids a novice to be in leadership in the church. What has happened all over the church? You old timers, you all need to move out.

We're the young generation. We're bringing in young people, teenagers, the young 20 year old pastor with slick hair. I've got nothing wrong with slick hair.

I've got nothing to slick. I'm running out of anything to slick these days. It's getting worse.

But I'm telling you, when we move in the youth church or you get older ones in, we're just going to hand it over to the young. You don't even know what the church is. You're denying scripture and you're damaging the church of Christ.

And so these three messages are called the preachers. Not all preachers, many will not listen, but to those that desire God. As we said in the past two messages, Paul here gives seven verses packed with facts, contrasts, evidence, or proof to show he is a genuine minister or servant of Jesus Christ and also a preacher.

In those seven verses, he gives 28 distinct things. I don't think this is the only list in the Bible. It's not this only one list.

Paul's great at giving lists. I love them. They're easy to preach from.

You just go through all the points. He loves to list things very clearly, concisely, and he heaps them one on top of each other. He is no problem.

In a space of seven sentences, people can speak for an hour and they say nothing. Not Paul. In seven verses, a minute, he says so much, it'll take you a lifetime to work out.

And so he gives 28 distinct points. Remember in part one, we looked at the nine couplets or 18 things that he contrasts in the pastor's life. That was part one.

The contrasts of a preacher's life. They could be known yet unknown, and yet they carry this together. In part two, we looked at the nine positives of the ministry or last week, the substantial blessings of a

preacher's life.

Nine positive are good things. This week, I'm going to give you 10 as we close. And I'm giving you the 10 negatives of ministry.

These are the things preachers don't tell you about. They say, come in the ministry, stand and preach. You really think that's what preaching is all about? You think that's the qualification of a preacher? Is your ability to expound the text? I haven't found once where it says that, but I have found other certain qualifications.

And so here this morning, I'm going to give you these 10. And I called this the dark side of a preacher's life. The dark side of a preacher's life.

Let me give you the backdrop of why Paul listed these 28 things. Let me give you a sit rep or a situation report on the city of Corinth. The reasons why he gave these 28 points, the contrasts, the positives, the negatives, why did he give all of these? He's actually, when he writes this in the great city of Ephesus, raising up a remarkable church.

And he's writing to the church of Corinth. Remember Corinth? He stayed in Corinth two years and raised up a large, remarkable church. Now he's moved on to Ephesus.

And he's in Ephesus. This is about the mid-fifties of the first century. And it is Titus who takes the letter of 2 Corinthians and delivers it to the church of Corinth.

Why did Paul commend himself? Listen very carefully. Why did Paul, when at other times he said it wouldn't be good to do that, to boost on yourself or talk about yourself, why here does he begin to talk very deeply about himself and his trials and his troubles? Why is he writing to Corinth in this way and commending himself to a church that he raised up? He saw them born again, baptised in water, filled with the Holy Ghost, operating in the nine gifts of the Spirit. He established them.

He raised them up and left the functioning church. Why now is he feeling he has to commend himself? This is the reason. A small, vicious anti-Paul group had arisen in the church of Corinth.

When certain men newly arrived into the church in Corinth and they began to exalt themselves, promote themselves, boost on themselves, their ministry, their eloquence, their gifts, their calling, and they began to affect some people in the church at Corinth. And you know what? These men were opposed to Paul. They accused Paul of being a false apostle, not like the twelve Jerusalem apostles.

They began to critique his letters. They critiqued his preaching, his style, his manner of preaching. They even critiqued his appearance and they said he didn't really look like much.

They began to question everything about Paul, his character. They questioned his authority and they even began to say he's got a pruneness to change his mind. They even began to say he's a liar.

He tells lies and he writes lies when he writes to you as a church. They were basically saying Paul is changeable. He's untrustworthy.

He is untruthful. You can't rely on him. In 2 Corinthians, when you read this letter, Paul's dealing with two groups.

At times, many times, he's encouraging, exhorting, pleading with the real body of Christ. But then at other times he becomes very pointed, very brash. You know why? He's dealing with rebels.

He's dealing with certain men who have come into the church and they're causing real problems in a church that he has raised up. In chapter 11, he calls these men who have come in and are influencing a church he raised up, that he prayed for, he laboured for, he preached to. He now calls them false apostles, deceitful workers, basically calling them servants of Satan.

Remember he said, I'm a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are servants of Satan. And he says they transform themselves as ministers or servants of righteousness.

So these men have been sent into Corinth to preach, have been sent by Satan, but they make themselves look like ministers of righteousness. We're bringing a message of righteousness. He also says they preach a different gospel, one totally unlike mine.

They preach another Jesus, not the Jesus I preach. They minister another spirit, not the real Holy Spirit that I have. And they boast commending themselves, lifting themselves up as if they had no faults or imperfection.

They are proud of their Jewish heritage. They are men of the Spirit. This is what they claimed.

They're pneumatics, basically meaning spiritual people. They believed in miracles. They claimed the use of miracles, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, power, eloquence.

And they actually said Paul cannot speak with eloquence like we do. We get the best insight in this letter, 2 Corinthians, the best insight to Paul in his trials of any other book or area in the entire Bible. You see Paul to be most personal in 2 Corinthians.

He is intimate. He is open hearted. He bears his heart.

And we read that in 2 Corinthians 2 and 4 that this letter was a letter of tears, literally. Listen to what he said at the beginning of this letter, 2 verse 4. And so Paul in 2 Corinthians opens his heart. See in this message I'm finishing.

I've given you the positives. I've given you the contrast. Now I'm giving you the negatives.

And in 2 Corinthians Paul opens up throughout the entire letter the negatives, the trials and the troubles he went through more than anywhere else. I would exhort you when you leave here, maybe tonight, maybe some other time, study 3 chapters in this book. Study chapter 4, chapter 11 and chapter 6. And you will see what Paul suffered with his trials and his troubles in a remarkable way.

And so last week for the sake of Brother Seuss' mummy, we dealt with the substantial blessings of a preacher, 9 in number. Now we come to 10 points on the dark side of a preacher's life. You see there is a dark side, but that doesn't make me draw back from ministry.

This is a vital part of ministry. Let me go further. I'm going to give you 10 negatives of being in the ministry.

And I wonder if you still want to be in ministry after I finish. But see these 10 points, they're not just telling you about 10 negatives. Paul is holding forth these 10 points, 10 dark things about ministry that prove that he's a real preacher.

These 10 dark things prove, so he holds them forth gladly as evidence that he's a real preacher. They're not just dark things, they're not just negatives, they are proof or evidence to show he's a preacher. Why is it there's an utter absence amongst preachers and ministers today sharing with you about their personal trials? I maybe tend to go the other way, because throughout my entire life it's been absent that preachers talk about their trials.

And so I have tried, and I don't want to go too far that way, because there's wonderful things in ministry. But the reason I do this is because I'm a student and have been from my youth of the Apostle Paul. So that's what I think of ministry.

Most people in ministry, I don't have a clue what they're talking about or how they conduct themselves. It's foreign to me, but the Apostle Paul, he's a close, intimate friend of mine. And when I see him at the portals of heaven one of these days, it's going to be like meeting an old friend.

He's helped me a lot. And so my message, the dark side of a preacher's side, or the dark side of ministry, about 35 or 40 years ago, Sandy Thompson, a man who preached, I got baptized in the Holy Ghost under his hands, under his ministry, in one of his meetings. I got called to the ministry in the midst of those meetings and his preaching.

He was a godly, godly man. I've got an old audio cassette at home called The Consequence of Being God's Servant, or The Dark Side of Ministry. You want to know where I got the seed thought for this? I got it from him 35 or 40 years ago.

And you know what? I went and looked out that old audio yesterday. I went, I know I've got it somewhere, but I've got like about 5,000 audio cassettes. But the Lord led me straight to it.

Literally, it was the second tape I picked up. And here is it. I knew I had it somewhere.

And I began to listen to it yesterday afternoon. And I began to weep and to weep and to weep. I thank God that there's men like that.

And that was very unusual in my entire lifetime, that I could look back to that man, a man of God, Sandy Thompson, a man filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I've seen him operating the gifts like few men in my entire lifetime. He saw miracles.

He saw the power of God. He knew what it was to be led of God and used of God. And so, saints of God, I want to give you these 10 points.

The first four in this list are generalities defining every dark trial in Paul's life. Every dark trial. Patience and afflictions and necessities and distresses.

He lists four things that you could say cover his entire life, all the troubles and the trials he went through. These are general. The next three are very specific.

And we're going to get into specifics. But let me show you that a preacher ought to be able to stand forth and say, when I look back over my entire ministry, those four things have marked my life. You see, I worry about a preacher who hasn't been in the fire.

And I understand a younger preacher has this ahead of him. I understand that. You see, there was a day when Joseph had a pure heart.

He lived to 17 years old. He had dreams and visions from God. He walked with God.

He was blessed of God. But he's never been in the fire. He is a real vessel.

A God-forged vessel. But oh boy, Joseph, what you don't realize, you're just about to be put in the fire. And you know what? God's going to leave you there 23 years before he can even use you.

You know, he done the same with King David. The young shepherd boy, 17 years old, Samuel the prophet, comes looking for me, prophesies over me. Man, he anointed me with oil.

The Holy Spirit came on me. I get songs of worship to the Lord. God inspires me.

I killed Goliath. You're not ready for ministry, David. Do you know what? You can kill a Goliath and be the most noted individual in the nation, but I'm just about to put you in the Bible school.

You know what it is? Rejection. And King Saul, the man with the power and position, for years is going to chase you with a spear, trying to kill you. And when you get to the point, you go, God, what are you doing with me? What point is there even in me living? Here I am in the cave of Dullam.

Something has gone wrong here. I used to be the most popular. I killed Goliath.

And now I'm hiding in a cave, running from my life. What went wrong? Nothing went wrong. God is getting you ready for ministry.

Any volunteers for ministry here this morning, we'll make an appeal and altar call at then. And if you're a volunteer for ministry, well, I'll pray that God prepares you for ministry. Let me deal with these 10 points.

Number one, patience. Now that's different than what we dealt with before, long suffering. Remember, long suffering was the hard attitude.

It was a good thing that amid suffering, you keep your joy. This word patience is different. It's the word endurance.

It means to stay under the weight of something. Stay in your position. It means in the Arab when troubles and trials and hard things, dark things come or things you don't understand, you just keep standing in the position.

Never move when it gets dark. Never make your decisions in the day of trial. Never ever do that.

Wait until you're back in the daylight again. Wait until you're rejoicing in the Lord again. Never ever move or make a decision when all is dark around you.

That's what patience is. Patience isn't sitting back with your arms folded, waiting on God doing something. Oh no, it's more.

It is endurance. It's when everything is forcing you to move. All the pressure is on you to change direction.

Everything comes against you to stop you preaching. And believe me, I know what I'm talking about. When everything resists you being in the ministry, you just keep enduring.

You stay the course. It takes submission to the will of God. It takes discipline in your mind, your emotions, your body.

It's telling your body, you are going to get up. You know, on Friday night, I think it's the first time in the history of this church, I didn't want to come to meeting. I was so, so tired.

And I come so, so close to just messaging the brothers and saying, I'm not going to make it tonight. I am right in the midst of it. Not because I want to rest, but because so much is going on.

I'm getting so much done. But then I know there's a brother who needs anointed with oil, who's going to stand in this altar. And I go, I'm going to the prayer meeting.

Saints of God, I'm talking about building this into your life. This is one of the evidence that you're a preacher. This is one of the proofs that you're called to the ministry.

If you don't do this, you're not ready for ministry. You're not fitting for ministry. I'm tired.

I'm weary. The pressure is on me. I'm not going to do the song.

I'm not going to do the music. I'm not going to do the soup. I'm not going to do whatever in this church.

You don't know what I'm going through. Well, fine, that's okay. But a preacher doesn't have that right.

When I wake up early in the morning on Sunday, and I go, I'm not sure I can do this. You know what a real preacher does? I'm going to endure. I'm going to be in my position.

I'm going to play my part. And so Paul can show forth and commend himself. I am a real preacher.

See, I don't believe false preachers are like this. Everything has to be good. The crowd has to be for them.

Everything has to be working smoothly for them to operate. But a real preacher, he has seen, he has known, he has marked that when everything is against him, he's still in his position. He will not move from that.

You see, he would not move, he would not normally stay on this course, Paul the Apostle, or endure these things, but he's a preacher. Because he's called of God, and God put him there, and he's a preacher, these troubles come because of preaching the word. And you know what he says? I've got to stay in my position.

In Acts 20, 24, Paul says, and this was at a time where every church he went to, every town, those who operated in the gifts would prophesy and say, Paul, do you know you're on your way to Jerusalem? Do you know that bonds and afflictions abide you, or wait for you in Jerusalem? Do you know you're heading, you're going to be chained? Imagine going every church I went to preaching, and here comes someone again. Brother Keith, chains are awaiting you, troubles, heartache, everything's going to be black when you get to Jerusalem. I think I would change direction.

I'm not going to Jerusalem. But do you know what the Apostle Paul, listen to what he says, none of these things move me. Some years ago when I read that, I went, Paul is a superman.

He is superhuman. Here are trials facing him, and he says, none of these things move me. I go, I'm not of that caliber.

I'm a preacher, but I go, I know how my fears arise, and my thoughts, and I worry about things, and I get worried about suffering, or opposition, or someone betraying me. I would move. And here I am saying, how can he not be moved? Because I thought that was his thoughts and his emotions.

But it doesn't say that. Do you know what it means? I never move from my course. Do you know Paul got scared at times? Do you know Paul feared at times? Do you know Paul got bowed down with anxiety at times? Do you know at times Paul thought, I wonder if I'm even going to survive this? But do you know what he done? He kept in his position.

That is actually patience. It's not that you're not scared inside, or don't even get tempted to give up, but you actually say, I'm going to stay the course. I'm going to keep going forward in the will of God.

Notice something that says, much patience. Not patience, but much. That means many diverse or different kinds of patience, at many different times.

Much patience is the mark of a real preacher. He has a great ability to stick, no matter what comes against him, he is still in his position preaching. I say by the grace of God, because I know my past, by God's grace, no matter what happens, I don't care what happens in society or my life, you're going to find me here faithfully preaching the word of God.

The Greek word for patience was used of the ability of a plant to live, survive, and then thrive under very hard circumstances. My plants at home have been given the hardest task of all. They're left in my hands.

I want to tell you, if anything survives in our garden, or inside my house, those plants, I'm going, you have fallen into a sore trowel. Some of them are perishing. Some of them are still growing.

I'm going, that is some patient plant. Because under my hands, either over-watering it, under-watering it, never feeding it, neglecting it, staring at it with dismay, and yet those plants still thrive or survive. I'm amazed at them.

They are very patient plants with this owner. Do you know it says in Hebrews 12 and 2, it uses the same word, patience, of the Lord Jesus Christ, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross. That's patience.

It wasn't easy to endure the cross. Do you think, do you know it says in the Bible, he set his face as a flint towards Jerusalem. Do you know why? There's a cross.

There's a Judas. There's suffering. There's rejection.

There's shame. The Lord Jesus had to set his face as a flint. This is patience.

Do you think that's easy or comes naturally? Do you know why he's doing that? For the joy set before him. What's the joy? You're the joy. You're going to get saved.

You're going to get redeemed. That's what a preacher has to do. He has to set himself.

He has to endure. That's the first quality Paul holds forth. You see, not many preachers today are going to hold forth patience.

Oh, I'll give you the history of my patience over the years, and this is evidence I'm a real preacher. I've never heard it in my entire life. Preachers don't do this.

Look at the miracles. Look at the churches. Look at the souls.

Look at the books I've written. What about patience? Do you know that when everything was against me, I just kept enduring for the joy that was set before me? Number two, in afflictions. This word afflictions, again, generally of his life and career, ministry.

It's the word phlepsis. It's the word used in Matthew 24 concerning the great tribulation. No greater word could be used for the great tribulation than phlepsis or afflictions.

And Paul here says it's not only what's going to happen in tribulation, it's one of the qualities of a real servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, of a real preacher. The word means, of course, tribulation, troubles, intense pressure, to be afflicted, to be crowded in on every side, to experience anguish and distress. That's what afflictions are.

And Paul gives us a second thing here. Afflictions is the mark of a real preacher. He can hold forth and show you when he was afflicted.

You say, I don't believe it's possible to be a preacher called of God and to serve him for a long time. I can tell you Hannah's getting worried right now as I speak. Do you know what? I know God preserves and protects.

He'll never put you where you cannot endure. But I want to assure you, in this hour and generation, you will not be called to the ministry and serve God effectually without somewhere in that journey you're going to face afflictions. You don't create these.

You don't say, well, I don't have many attacks, not many Judas's, not much betrayal, not many scars on my back, so let's go look for it. You don't do that. You don't pray to be qualified by afflictions.

You don't ask God for it. But like Joseph, David, Moses, Paul, Peter, James, and John, God does that work. You come as a vessel, as a servant.

But do you know what? Along the way, there's going to be afflictions. Many people leave the ministry because they say, they spoke about me wrongly. They didn't treat me right.

Somebody hurt me. I can remember being at a conference in Scotland, many preachers there. And someone stood up and they said, I believe I've got a word from the Lord.

It was all preachers there. And they said, I've got a word from the Lord. There's a preacher here.

And he's been hurt. A word from the Lord, a prophecy. And I looked at my friend and we burst out laughing together.

And we said, that wouldn't take much of a prophecy. And that didn't take much insight. I go, if there's any preacher here who hasn't been hurt, please make yourself known, and we'll tell you you mustn't be called to the ministry, or you're very young in the ministry.

Do you know what this word affliction, thipsies, also means? It means to be squeezed beyond measure. It means to be crushed. The word is used of what you do to grapes, to get wine out of it, or to olives, to get olive oil out of it.

You don't get olive oil or wine without squeezing the grapes. This is thipsies. So I believe with a real preacher, you will not get quality anointing, quality wine, quality ministry until they're squeezed.

Yes, you may have knowledge. Yes, you may have a pure heart. Yes, you may have a real call.

But do you know what? God is gonna allow afflictions to come in around. You know why? Because what comes out of you then will be a very beautiful, pure ministry, squeezed beyond measure. The third thing, in necessities, I approve myself, or show you I'm a real preacher in necessities.

You say, show me a man under pressure, and I'll show you the real man. Anyone can stand here and preach, anyone. And you say, what a preacher.

No, no, no, no, no. I wanna see him in patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses. Then I'll tell you if he's a real preacher.

Don't show me the man in the pulpit. I wanna see him squeezed. I wanna see his nerves squeezed.

I wanna see his face squeezed. I wanna see his ministry squeezed. Then I'll tell you what sort of preacher he is.

Some, they get a rough Sunday, and they wish they were on a holiday. Is that all you can sustain? You're not up to much. In necessities, you know this word necessities.

You know what the Greek means. It means to have your arm bent up your back. It means to be forced, compulsion, to be in a situation of no choice, where things come into your life, where you're being driven in a certain direction.

There is a compulsion. All the things around you are compelling you to go in a certain direction. And so, you know a real preacher.

Can you be a preacher when you're being forced in a direction because of the ministry, because of the call of God, because of serving God? You are being driven. Why not just step out of it all? Well, then I wouldn't be a good servant. Don't you realize I'm in a position.

I don't like to be forced with my hand up my back, being driven. I don't like that. But do you know why I'm here? Because I love the church.

I love people. I'm preaching the truth. I hate apostasy.

That's why I'm here. If I remove myself, who's going to take up the pulpits, liars, game players, and all of the rest? The fourth thing he mentions, in distress. The word distress means to be in a room, but not a spacious room, a very narrow room.

That's where you serve God. It's narrow, confined, limited, restricted. It's a tight space on every side.

Because you're serving God, you come into areas where you can't even breathe. The word means you do not have what you need for the task, to be in a straight. When you have done, when you have done all,

you can't even stand or turn.

Because of preaching, you're in a situation where you can't even turn around. This is the room that ministry has put you in. Now I'll tell you if you're a preacher or not.

You know, some men, they'll go, this is too small for me, too narrow, too hard. God has something greater for me. You can't be faithful there.

You're good for nothing, I want to tell you. This situation seems impossible. It seems hopeless.

There is no escape. It's useless to be here. Saints of God, it almost feels like Limerick, where when I look back over the nine years of this church, we had many of these things.

But you know what, you've got a preacher with joy, with gladness, with faith, who stands and preaches the word of God. It's real Saints of God. That's the first four.

These are generalities of ministry. And he says in these four things, I've commended, I've shown you, I'm a real preacher. In these very things, this is evidence that I'm called of God and I'm a servant of God.

He then gives another three, which are specific examples. Now let's move into clear specifics. Let me give you three examples, as Paul does in verse five.

In stripes. So here's Paul getting more clear. In stripes.

Do you know what stripes were? Being whipped as a legal thing. In other words, the law, the police, the forces, the political influence of the day. You've broken the law, you get whipped.

Paul also says in chapter 11, 23, in stripes above measure. Do you know what above measure means? It means excessively. It's real overkill.

You know, if you looked at Paul, you'd be saying, are you serious? How many times did you get whipped? Listen to what he says. Of the Jews, five times received I 40 stripes, save one. In other words, five individual times.

And that's only up until the time he writes this. I'm sure he had more. Five distinct times in my life.

Would you like to be whipped 39 times once in your life? The way they used to do it. Where your back is left plied, bleeding, ripped up. Just once would be enough for me.

I would never get rid of those scars. But imagine five times where they've whipped your back. That's why when Paul went to prison, and the guards or the soldiers saw his back, they said, you must be a wicked, vile man.

No, I'm a preacher of the gospel. Saying to God, why are there so few preachers with scars on their back? Do you know why? They don't put themselves in danger's way for the truth of God. They don't defend the truth.

They don't stand for righteousness. They don't guard the church. And so they don't have scars.

But look at Paul. He is a real godly preacher. And he had an excessive amount of stripes on his back.

The other day, I listed for Facebook, just for friends, just a few things. Candice, because she's by my side, what she had to endure. You know, a very good friend that knew me going back 35 years, he wrote to me.

He says, I didn't know all of that. And he says, are you sure? Why would they do this to you? And why would, he says, this is like a thriller that you'd watch on television. I wrote back to him and said, believe me, our life has felt like some MI5 detective movie.

One of the classic ones. It wouldn't even compare. Those movies wouldn't compare with the stories I can tell you.

And I said, I only listed a few things, the sanitized version for public consumption. But do you know what Paul is saying here? In stripes above measure. It's excessive.

It's overkill. It's unbelievable. You, a preacher, you got whipped five times, 39 times each, and your back is left like that? Think of all the false accusations and the law of the land.

But yet, do you know what? Not one of these is mentioned in the book of Acts. Not one of those five weapons of Paul the apostle. Not one.

That means the book of Acts is a very condensed version of all that happens. He also goes on to say in chapter 11, Thrice was I beaten with rods. And he tells you many other things.

Only one of those beatings is mentioned in the book of Acts. So you have a preacher who, when you've got these super apostles, he's not a real preacher. He's not an apostle.

He's not a man of God. His character is none. He's a liar.

Paul says, you know what? Look at my back. You want to know if I'm a real apostle, a real preacher, a real man of God? Just come and look at this back. I can give you the history for preaching the word, for living righteously, for planting churches.

If I go to them, where are your scars? You know, I got to a point as a single guy in my early 30s, I prayed and I said, this is the wife I want. Send me a lady with scars on her back. That's why I began to pray.

Send me a lady. I knew what I was talking about because I went to come into this ministry. I don't need to plunge some innocent, naive girl into this.

I want a lady with scars on her back, and that's who God sent me. The sixth thing here, Paul mentions, is imprisonment. He's being very specific now.

You want to know the details. You see, you may ask, why did I talk about the troubles? I, Keith Malcolmson, have gone through a ministry because it's a biblical principle that's been lost from today. I'm tired of the ministry, the smiling ministry that gives you hints on how to have your best life here.

You know what? If you're going to live for God as the church, you're going to suffer, and very soon this church will be plunged into suffering, believe me. The Western church is going to be plunged into suffering. You know what they're going to say at that point? The real Christians are the counterfeit.

In peacetime, everybody can smile and look good in a church. But when it gets tested, you're going to see who really loves Jesus. You care about yourself and your comfort and your welfare.

You don't even believe in eternal issues. You will sell Christ like Judas did for a kiss. We're going to see it.

So Paul says imprisonment. When you read about Paul, he was in the prison of Philippi. Remember how he got beaten when he was there? Then in Jerusalem, in Caesarea, and again two spans of imprisonment in the city of Rome.

In the midst of that, he was chained to soldiers. He was confined, restricted, unable to go and preach. But do you know what beautiful letters come out of those confinements? He wrote Ephesians.

He wrote Philippians. He wrote Colossians. He wrote Philemon.

And he also wrote 2 Timothy. All of these letters came out of his imprisonment. You know who Paul is? He's a real preacher.

One of the greatest stories in world history, Pilgrim's Progress, written by John Bunyan. You know where he wrote it? In a prison in Bedford in England. You know, one of his children got born and died and he never got to see his child.

You know what they said? Just stop preaching the gospel. Promise us you won't preach and you can walk out free. In fact, they didn't even lock the door on him because he was such a man of integrity.

They knew he wouldn't go home. He wouldn't leave the prison cell. So they didn't even lock the door.

12 years in a prison in Bedford. But he wrote Pilgrim's Progress. The best-selling book in the English language outside of the Bible is that book, written in a prison cell.

Stop preaching, you can go free. I can't do that. I've got to preach.

I'm called to preach. I'm born to preach. Where are the preachers in this hour? Give us a generation of preachers who preach like this again.

And you know what? We will see fruit come out of it. Letters, books, ministry, truth, conversions. I prayed for a long time for a prison ministry in Limerick and Ireland.

It's never happened so far. But one of these days I will get there. I told Ian many years ago.

It was the wrong thing to do, telling Ian when he come in the door. He come from a different background than mine of ill repute, if he doesn't mind me saying it. And I'm telling him as a squeaky clean preacher, you will live long enough to see a preacher like me in prison.

He says, it'll never happen. It'll never happen. Then I thought, what a stupid thing to tell someone.

Christians don't even believe this. Never mind someone coming in off that street. Because it's ridiculous.

It's ridiculous to think. But you know, a real preacher, he may not be put in a physical prison, but there are prisons that he's going to face along this way. Number seven, tumults.

That means instability, civil disorder. Commotion. Confusion.

Riots. Disturbing the peace. Surely no preacher would stir up such events as that.

See, it shows how little Christians know whenever they see a history of trials, troubles, afflictions, false accusation. And they go, what have you done to cause all this? You must be a vile person. No, I tell the truth.

I love. I walk with God. I wouldn't misuse anyone.

Come on. Are you telling me all these things happen to you and you're a squeaky clean nice guy? I used to get into the pulpit in this church some years ago and I'd tell you, I'd exhort you, I'd say, honestly, I'm really a nice guy. Honestly, I'm telling you.

Don't misunderstand me. Because sometimes in the trials and the troubles, you go, it doesn't make any sense. Do you realize you've got these riots mentioned in the book of Acts? In Acts 13, there's a riot surrounding Paul.

And in Acts 14. And in Acts 16. And in Acts 17.

All different ones. And in Acts 18. And in Acts 19.

And in Acts 21. And in Acts 22. And again in Acts 23.

Riots. You know what Paul said? You'll see, I prove I'm a preacher amidst riots. Leonard Ravenhill, he said, every real preacher ought to have a revival or a riot.

If you don't either offend the tares or stir and revive the sheep, there's something wrong. A preacher that doesn't get any reaction. You see, God help me, I'd burn the building down rather than have you fall asleep on me.

Spiritually, I'm talking about. You're either going to hate me or love me. I'm either going to get you saved and go to heaven.

Or you're going to have to jump over my body to get to the lake of fire. One or the other. But you won't be indifferent to me.

You're going to know I believe this. Whether you believe it or not is another thing. But you will know that this preacher loves you and believes what he's preaching.

And so we move on to the last three points here. They're self-inflicted. Remember, I've given you four generality of all his trials.

Three specifics. Stripes, imprisonments, tumults. But let me finish here with three things.

They're self-inflicted. In other words, these aren't things done to him like imprisonments and stripes. Not at all.

These are three things because he's a real preacher. He endures, but he didn't have to. He chose to.

He put himself in those situations. But if he hadn't have done these three things, he's not a real preacher. But he didn't have to.

It was his choice, his responsibility. And because he'd done these three, it just shows me he was a real preacher. What are they? Labors, watchings, and fastings.

It says in labors, what does the word labors mean? To work to the point of physical weariness, or tiredness, or exhaustion. Do you know you can be in the will of God in ministry and you're so exhausted you'll collapse into bed. You won't even hear anything because you're preaching.

You're serving God. You're studying. You know what Paul says in chapter 11? One of the things he lists in these lists, care of all the churches.

The word care means to be utterly distracted from the normal things of life. Paul had the care, the burden of the churches, the elders, the believers, and he was utterly distracted. He couldn't even look after himself.

And so one of the things Paul lists here is labors. When you look at my life of ministry, I have labored to the point of exhaustion. See, ministry is not a holiday.

Ministry is not the easiest life. I can suggest many other things you'd want to do rather than this. And remember, Paul also, in order to provide for himself, he worked with his hands often during the day.

He worked making tents during the day, and then he would preach every single night at Corinth, or in Ephesus, or somewhere else. What about these prosperity preachers that are buying planes? Why not compare them to a real preacher? He's just listed his stripes. I've never heard Copeland talk about his trials.

Never. Or Kenneth Hagen, or Joyce Meyer. She talks about breaking one of her nails.

That's a trial to her. Or people might persecute her if she talks about tattoos. Saints of God, I'm telling you, it's an abomination.

It's utterly unrelated to biblical ministry. Paul says, I labored until I was weary, I was tired, I was exhausted. I'm preaching every night, but I love to do it.

I delight to do it. Many years ago, I met a certain kind of Christian in the church, and they smugly and smartly said, Well, eagles only fly 10% of the time, moving their wings. The other 90% is where the eagle just coasts on the wind, and the thermal heat, and all of the rest.

No effort for 90% of the time. I think ministry should be like that. I heard it.

30 years ago, I heard it. And as a young guy, I'm working this out going, Huh? And I thought, and I thought, then I would go to my Bible. This is what I'm doing at 22 years old.

You know what, I hear all these things, but I read my Bible, and I go, Hold on, Revelation 2 and 3, Christ is commending those in the church who labor, who labor to the point of exhaustion. And yet, these smart alecks are saying, Oh, we never get stressed. We're never tired.

We're never weary. In fact, if you're tired, it shows you're not in the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not anointing you. You're not experiencing anointing.

What a load of rubbish. Saints of God, stick with the Bible. And so Paul shows us here, and here, listen to me very carefully.

Very important what I'm about to say. I'm not commending wearing out your body. If I've got one fault, one and only one fault with Thomas Walsh, and I don't mean the little boy sitting down here.

I'm talking about Thomas Walsh, the great Methodist preacher who preached in this city. I've got one fault with him. He wore out his body through excessiveness.

Going to bed late, rising early, over-fasting. Added to that was being beaten up for the Gospel. He couldn't help that.

Trials, riding his horse in winter. But those who knew him best said he was excessive. He would be exhausted.

But he says, I've got to study the Bible tonight. He would spend two hours in Greek and Hebrew before going to bed. Yet he's exhausted.

I'm not commending that. I wouldn't. He was a great man, but he was a young man, and he should have learned.

He needed someone to educate him a bit better. Listen to what Jesus says in Mark 6, 31. And he said unto them, the disciples, come ye yourselves apart into a desert place.

Someone once said, if you don't come apart, you will come apart. Do you hear me? So even Jesus at the height of ministry, when everyone's being healed and ministered to, and there's a crowd of 10,000, he tells them, come apart into a desert place and rest a while. The word rest means repose, relax, refresh.

For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure, which means free time, so much as to eat. So Christ commends leisure. You've got to have days.

You've got to have times, short, brief, organized times where you shut down, you refresh, you relax. And there's no one needs to hear that more than me at this present time, I want to tell you. But here's Paul as a preacher saying, in laboring, I can look at my life.

I'm not lazy. I'm not living off the ministry. I'm not a lounge.

I am laboring hard. This is harder than any work in that local church, I want to tell you. Then he says, in watchings.

The word watchings means losing out on sleep because of preaching, because of ministry. In chapter 11, 27, Paul says, in watchings often. And elsewhere he says, watching at night, which means he's missing out on his nighttime sleep.

I like my sleep. I get very little sleep, but I like my sleep. I enjoy my sleep.

Sleep is necessary. It's a biblical thing. It says in Psalm 127, 2, it is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of sorrows.

For so he giveth his beloved sleep. You mustn't burn the candle at both ends. You could be staying up late at night and you're destroying your body.

Physically you will get worn out. Why not set a time? Why not have an hour where everything gets shut down? I'm not on my phone. I'm not awake.

I'm not reading. And again, I need to hear this as much as anyone in this room in these days. But you know what? All through the years, I would go to bed at night and I'm lying there, lights off, 10.30, kind of set the time.

I'd be reading. Is the light going off yet? I'd put it off within about 10 seconds. I allowed her life and her wisdom to affect me.

I'm still lying there at 11. I'm worried. I'm concerned about people in this room.

I'm praying. I can't sleep. I know I'm not going to sleep.

So I gently, quietly try to slip out and go to the living room where I'm going to pray and labour and wrestle over the Word of God. Candice would come through about 6 o'clock and I'd be lying on the floor or lying on the sofa in the living room. Maybe went to bed about 5 o'clock because I'm wrestling.

I'm labouring. See, a preacher that never loses a night of sleep, maybe he's not called to the ministry. Why is it you can lie in your bed at night and not be disturbed? How is it you can go to bed? You've got to have sleep.

You've got to have regular altar. You've got to rest your body. You've got to be fresh.

Tenth and lastly, in fastings. Do you realise Paul listed this in these 10 things? Amidst the 28 to show, I am a real preacher. His fasting.

Today you've got preachers, they definitely do not fast. It's not a weekly part of their life. And please let me remind you, labours, watchings and fastings, these are self-inflicted.

The sleeplessness, getting up, praying instead of sleeping, losing out on sleep, losing out on food. That's your choice. Nobody is forcing this on you.

It's not because you don't have any food or have money. It's because you make a choice. I would rather not eat for the sake of the ministry.

I've got to come away from food. I've got to fast and pray. Paul also says in chapter 11, 27, and I've got to say this because a lot of people in the church today say that fasting here was because he didn't have anything so he didn't eat.

That is not true. In chapter 11, 27, listen to what it says. In hunger and thirst, in fasting often, he's given a list.

Yes, hunger is doing without food. That was one of the trials. But also fasting.

Fasting is not the same as hunger. It's two different things. And so Paul is saying here, in the midst of my preaching ministry, I'm giving you evidence because see these super apostles, these false teachers, they do not fast.

They are not fasting in the will of God. But you have Paul here fasting as a part of being a preacher, proving himself. And I'd actually say, if a preacher does not fast, they're not fit for the ministry.

They ought to leave the ministry because if you cannot deny the table, deny food, come away from it, or control appetites, you need to ask yourself why. Why is that? It's not a small thing because that whole area

of appetite shows your ability to control those natural senses. And so you have this qualification of a preacher that he actually walks these things out.

Saints of God, let me close here this morning with this series, three part. As we've had this in Ron Disordination Service, I've got a high view of ministry, a high view of preaching, a high view of the pulpit. I've got a high view of all things including the body of Christ.

I respect them. I don't highly acclaim men and titles and reputations, but the ministry, when you're buffeted, in troubles, persecuted, when you're preaching truth, I think very highly of. You may have heard of George Muller, the great man of faith.

Do you know how most know about him? Some almost, this is all they know about him, that in 1836, George Muller opened his own home to 26 orphans. By the following year, they had 81 orphans in three houses. He was a man of faith.

He prayed in, never asked for a penny, never, never made appeals, never sent letters. If he had a financial need, he got on his knees and prayed. That's a man of faith.

Not the prosperity preacher who says, give me your money. I'm an apostle of faith. Rubbish.

George Muller was a real apostle. By 1870, 34 years later, he had five homes with 2,000 children. By the end of his life, he looked after 10,000 orphans.

You may know that about him. Do you? Do you know that about him? Or you may know another fact about him. Later in his life, in 1875, he really started his international ministry.

For the last 17 years of his life, he would make trips worldwide, sometimes away for one year or two years at a time. And he visited 42 countries. 17 years up until he died at the age of 92 in 1898.

And he traveled internationally. Maybe you know about that. But you definitely don't know the next part, which I'm going to close with.

George Muller, this man of faith, came to Ireland. Powers Court in Dublin in 1833 to a conference. It was a prophetic teaching conference with great men, all ministers, a couple of hundred of them there.

And they would begin to sit and talk what the Bible taught. There was not only Muller, there was men like B.W. Newton. You don't even know who he is.

One of the great writers and teachers of church history. And no one online will probably even know who he is. But there was another man, you may know about him, G. N. Darby, who was an Anglican Church of Ireland minister in Inisceri, County Wicklow.

He was at that conference in 1833 with George Muller and other men around the table. And he started to bring four strange teachings. One of them called dispensationalism, which no one had even heard of up until then.

That there's different dispensation. He's the one that started to teach that you go back to law during the tribulation if you want to get saved. He created it.

He began to teach the ruin of the church and the impossibility of its recovery. It's ruined. It can never be recovered.

He said that eldership and deacons had been done away with. He baptized infants. He began to say that Matthew was a book for the Jews, not for the church.

And later, he began to excommunicate other genuine Christians. This man, J.N. Darby, he'd become a worldwide force in bringing in teachings that affected the whole body of Christ. But do you know what he also done? In 1842, Darby in Switzerland began to cause a great division in all the churches.

There was a great national divide in good churches amongst brethren all because of that one man. He began teaching extreme things. Then he came to England, to Newton's church in Plymouth, and he began accusing them falsely, drawing people out of his church.

Then he split his church, then had them thrown out, then took over, and he created the Plymouth Brethren, which began to grow. There were a thousand churches grew up in and around Britain, across England, even to Limerick. There was churches connected with them.

This man, guess what he started to do? At this point, George Mueller is an elder with a man called Craig in Bristol in England. And you know what Darby said to Mueller and Craig? He said, I've excommunicated Newton's church, and you're associating with him. If you don't stop, I'm going to excommunicate you as a church.

And this was the beginning of Darby excommunicating George Mueller. And right across Britain, a thousand churches began to speak bad of George Mueller. Good, genuine Christians, because of what Darby said, they ostracized him.

And Darby later in his life called those godly men, George Mueller, called him a blasphemer against Christ. You know what I'm telling you? You don't even know who George Mueller is. I'm talking about a man I've read about and I've studied, going through years of persecution, losing hundreds of friends, being mocked, falsely accused, ridiculed, rejected.

And you only know him as the man who raised orphans. I'm telling you, he was a true minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because he raised orphans? Oh no.

Because he traveled the world before he died? Oh no. I look at his character, purity of heart. I see a godly, godly man who endured suffering from those within the church and yet he stayed in his position and he had patience and he finished his course.

Stand with me here this morning. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Father, we pray that as we close this message, this gathering, we need godly preachers again.

Saints of God, pray with me. Begin to cry out and ask the Lord. We need preachers again in the church.

I am tired of the faults that has come in. We need real, godly preachers. We need this character to be in us because we are going to see the fire come.

We're going to see suffering come to the church again. And we need a generation of real preachers. We need God-forged vessels again who are going to stand.

They're not going to turn. They're not going to stop preaching. But they're going to lay down their lives.

They're going to prove themselves that they are called of God, that they're anointed by the Holy Spirit of God. We need real preachers that are going to stand and shine in one of the darkest hours of any generation. Lord God, we're asking you as a church, make us faithful unto the end.

Make us to endure in the darkness of night. Make us to stand as preachers in this church. Make us to be faithful no matter what happens around us.

Lord God, no matter what it means, what the price is, what the cost, help us to be good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, that your name might be glorified. We love you, Lord Jesus. We praise you.

We magnify you. And we ask for your glory again in Jesus' mighty name.

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