

The Cost of Being a Prophet

by Walter Beuttler

Walter Beuttler explores the profound cost of being a prophet, emphasizing the necessity of sacrifice and the dangers of self-interest in ministry.

Scripture: Psalm 40:8, Matthew 19:16, Matthew 19:29, Luke 6:20, John 4:34

Topics: "Prophetic Ministry", "Surrendering To God"

Description

Walter Beuttler preaches about the cost of being a prophet, emphasizing the need to surrender all earthly attachments and desires to follow God wholeheartedly. He reflects on the story of the rich young ruler who couldn't let go of his possessions to follow Jesus, highlighting the importance of prioritizing God above all else. Beuttler discusses the distinction between true prophets, who focus on God's will and ministry, and false prophets, who seek self-interest and recognition. He encourages aspiring prophets to embrace suffering, rejection, and selflessness in ministry, reminding them of the eternal rewards promised by God for those who forsake everything for His sake.

Transcript

The cost of being a prophet is our line of thought this morning.

"Behold, one came (Mark says, one came running) and said to him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said to him, Why call you Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God; but if you will enter into life, keep the commandments. He said to him, Which? Jesus said, You shall do no murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness."

"Honor your father and your mother; and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said to Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet? Jesus said to him, If you will be perfect, go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me. (In the same story in Mark, Jesus added, Come, take up your cross and follow Me. Matthew does not record it, but Mark does. What one forgets another remembers) But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions."

"Then said Jesus to His disciples, Verily I say to you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed,

saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said to them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

"Then answered Peter and said to him, Behold we have forsaken all, and followed You; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said to them, Verily I say to you, That you which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

"And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, (or automobiles, or TV sets, everything) for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." Matthew 19:16-30

I want to consider the question of Peter, "What shall we have therefore?" When Peter went to Bible school, he was among those whose hand went most frequently into the air, either by way of protest or by way of some question. Do not criticize Peter. He was all right. I wish I was as all right as he was.

He asked, "What are we going to get out of this business of following you, of being a prophet, of being a sent-forth one, of being in the ministry." He had been watching this young man, and Peter saw that this young man had so many good qualities and yet missed it. A lot of people have good qualities and yet miss it.

In the Mark account, Peter saw this young man running after Jesus. Obviously he was earnest. Certainly he wanted to know the way to eternal life, and he was eager to have an answer, so he ran. It says that he knelt. This rich young ruler came running, not hesitating, but eager, and he knelt before the Lord in public. There were other people standing there. He did not mind kneeling in the dust, or praying in public.

There he knelt and said, "Good Master." He recognized Christ; he recognized His qualities. He called Him good. He recognized His authority. He called Him Sovereign, Good Master. Then he asked a question, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So Jesus told him. In all self-confidence and no doubt with a certain satisfaction written all over his face, he said, "Master, all these things have I kept from my youth, what lack I yet?" It is as though he were saying, "Lord, I have met every requirement. There is not a single thing that stands in my way." When he said, What lack I yet, he did not think that he lacked anything. It was as though he were saying, "There is nothing else, so I qualify." Then came the thunderbolt out of the sky, "There is one thing, you are running and you are eager; you have everything to your credit." He made 100% all the way through. And Jesus comes along with that great surprise.

"There is only one thing." I have kept so many things, one more will not mean much." But it did. "Sell what you have, and give it to the poor." Then we are told, he was sad at that saying and went away grieved. He walked away. We can just about picture this young man walking off, his head down, he just had received one great stroke from that Good Master.

He refused to sell out for God. Now I am just leading up to what I am going to say. This is the background. Sell what you have. I am going to come to ministry. This thing of following the Lord, especially when we are called to the prophetic office, and I speak of that now in the broad sense of the term. This involves a selling out.

Selling our homes, our jobs, our wife, our children, our cars, our everything. Now I do not mean literally getting rid of them. That would be something else again. But what Jesus was really implying here was that no natural claim, no earthly possession, no kind of a relationship or attachment to things, or person, can be allowed to stand between us and the call of God, if we are indeed to follow Him. This was the rock-bottom thing that Jesus is touching. That everything we are and possess, and aspire to, in the natural has to be subservient, and has to be subordinated to the claim of the Master. "Take up your cross and follow Me."

Peter took all of that in and when he heard Jesus say, "Young man, you're tops. I'll tell you what you do. You sell out and use the proceeds to feed the poor." This makes me almost shudder, because I know what it means. We feed the poor only in the measure in which we sell out for God and use that to feed them. Shall I say, the proceeds of our sell, of our sacrifice, of our consecration, of our leaving behind, the proceeds of that is what makes your ministry to the spiritually hungry.

It scared Peter when Jesus said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to get into the kingdom." I will not dwell on this, except to say there is a principle here. This does not mean that a millionaire has less of a chance to be saved than the pauper as far as God is concerned, but if his millions possess him, and mean more to him than the claims of the Master, then they are his hindrance. But they do not have to be. It is his attitude and his attachments that is the reason. God often finds it necessary to strip some of His people of earthly things because of the danger of attachment to the extent where that thing becomes a snare although it is legitimate and right in itself.

And Peter watched. Peter had a long ways to go yet in sanctification he was hung up, crucified upside down for the Master. He had quite a bit to go, but at least, he went. So being still attached to some of the things of the earth that is readily seen by his attitude and the disciples' attitude in regard to position and the like. They said, "Who is going to be the greatest?"

Now in near consternation, he said, "Master, if that's what it's going to cost, what are we going to get out of this? If a man cannot have anything, where is our pay, where is our profit, where are the benefits? What shall we have therefore?"

So we go into the ministry. "What shall we have therefore?" This question brings us right up to a crucial point, namely the danger of self-interest in the ministry and how this thing applies to all of us, but especially to those of us who are about to begin, or hope to begin, an area of ministry. The great danger of being overthrown and defeated and coming short of the purpose of God because of the insidiousness and the element of self-interest which increasingly encroaches upon the effectiveness of the ministry of many men and women today.

"What shall we have therefore?" Here is the fork in the road, a dividing line between, what I would call for convenience sake, the difference between true prophets and false prophets. You will find the division is made along lines of self-interest and self-preservation. Bear in mind, when I use the term "prophet," I use the term broadly, simply meaning one called of God to declare His message in the power of the Spirit of God.

We will come to this dividing of the ways, although the direction of this starts sooner. Some begin to become a prophet, whose primary aim and guiding principle is self-interest and self-preservation. Others again crystallize more into a calling and into a ministry that is diametrically opposed to the principle of self-interest and self-preservation. No matter what they get out of it, they're going to go through.

"What shall we have therefore?" Let us look at these two categories of prophets. Luke 6 is a passage we are well acquainted with. When you stand back and look at the entire chapter from the point that I shall read in prospective, you will discover that the Lord has an underlying thought. Shall I say, He has a common denominator, which takes you from verse 20 right down to the end of the chapter to a topic that seems to be altogether incongruous with what the section begins with.

The section starts with prophets, and it ends with a house falling down. Ordinarily, we think they are two different topics, but they are not. The underlying thought in the mind of Jesus has to do with prophets, even when it goes right down to the end of the chapter and talks about the two houses. The two categories of prophets that will inevitably be found in one or the other category are finally likened by the Master to two houses.

Here is the kind of a prophet who, first of all, considers his self-interest and self-preservation. He wants to get all he can out of the ministry for himself. And not only that, in order to get all he can for himself and for his self, he so compromises and modifies his ministry in order to insure his self-interest. And shall we say, "Of that kind of a prophet, the world has plenty." We are reading from Luke 6:

"Woe to you that are rich! For you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full! For you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now! For you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets." Luke 6:14-26

"Woe unto you that are rich!" I will never forget. One of our graduates was shocked beyond measure. He went to one of the healing campaigns. The healing evangelist said to him when they were comparing their cars, his Cadillac's and this little fellow's old jalopy. The evangelist said to him, "Why don't you get into the healing business? Look at the car I am driving."

The boy spoke to me. He wanted to know if there was anything to this thing. Unfortunately there is. Your Master was in the healing business too, but He drove a donkey. Do not despise the healing ministry because of it. Your Master was in it, except instead of taking one of those Egyptian steeds, He used a donkey. (These horses were looked upon as prize animals all over the then known world.) So do not quit because of it.

"Woe to you that are rich!" And I am not thinking only in terms of money. Woe unto you that have your rewards, your pay now. Jesus is talking about prophets. Like the preacher who said, and I have heard him say it, "I will never eat a hamburger. I am a child of a king! I eat T-bone steak. I am entitled to something better." Perhaps so, but not now.

Our Master was not only the child of a king, He was King, and He had to say, "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has a Beauty Rest mattress. He has nowhere to lay his head." How we can rationalize ourselves out of the cross and its meaning in our lives! I heard one man say, "We are God's people. We should live in the best houses, have the most expensive cars, have the best clothes, have the best food," and all the fools said, "Amen." One fool always finds a bigger one to admire him.

"Woe unto you that are rich," for you have received your consolation. You have all the pay you will ever receive. That is what Jesus said. If you work for your own satisfaction now, you have all that you have coming. I would like to have something else coming at the end.

"What shall we have therefore?" Is the criteria what we get out of ministry, or is it what He gets out of it, and what it means to Him. "Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation," your reward. You already have all the pay that is coming to you. There will be nothing left when payday really comes.

"Woe unto you that are full!" (You can get there if you know how to work it). "For ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now!" That does not mean that you cannot laugh once in awhile. It means that there is a total absence of the meaning of the cross in your own life. All they have now is feasting and banqueting, fun here and fun there, a good time in the ministry.

Woe unto you that are full! For ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep." A day of sorrow will come. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" When everyone pats you on the back, when everybody is pleased with your preaching, when nobody has any fault to find. Jesus said, "You better look out, you're in a bad spot." How come? That is what they did to the false prophets.

The false prophets were honored; they were respected. The true prophets were sent down into the dungeon because they told the people the truth. There is a danger of working for God for popularity, for being approved by men, for winning their approbation, for being a good fellow, well-liked all around. "What shall we have therefore?" Is that what we are after? Some were.

"Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets." Popularity, to be without criticism or what have you, is no mark of perfection, no evidence that all is well. "The servant is not greater than his Master." If you and I follow our Master, we can expect what He got. That's precisely what Jesus told His disciples.

"And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples and said, Blessed be you poor; for yours is the kingdom of God." Luke 6:20

Here was the whole multitude, and Jesus looked upon His disciples and said, "Blessed be you poor; for yours is the kingdom of God." This poverty is not necessarily only having a few cents in our pockets. There is a poverty beyond this. You might be poor of friends, poor in many respects, poor in spirit, as well as poor literally. The prophet of God is poor. I do not mean he does not have an acceptable income. He has to take what the other prophets do not have to take. When he goes to meetings, he sits by himself. When there is a special dinner, he is not invited. Who wants him? He does not follow the line, or cooperate.

"Blessed are you that hunger now; for you shall be filled. Blessed are you that weep now; for you shall laugh." Luke 6:21

You may feel that people do not understand, and do not want to understand, so you hunger. If there is no power, make a lot of noise. But not the true prophet, he goes on hungry. You hunger for fellowship and they turn the other way. You hunger for many things, but there's no response. What is it? It is the prophet's calling.

I thought the prophet's calling was to get up and say, "Behold thus saith the Lord, I say unto you." Well, there is more to it than that. You have a gnawing hunger in your heart that will not leave you, but you go on hungering and ministering and following your Master. Do you remember Jeremiah, when he wrote in Lamentations, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?" How this man must have felt! There he sat.

And you think this will not your way? "Blessed are ye poor." There is a banquet coming for you, recognition will be coming for you. Not now, but it will come. Remember how they derided your Master in His own locality, among His own people, those who knew Him best, who had received Him first. It prompted the exclamation of Jesus; No prophet is without honor, save in his own country.

More than once, you will have to think back to the Master for your own self-preservation in the things of God. The servant is not greater than his master." What they did to Him, they will do to you. No prophet is without honor, save in his own country. "Oh! Is that the reason?" So you say in your heart, "Hallelujah! At least I'm privileged to be like Jesus in this respect also." If you don't, it will kill you.

Jesus said this would happen, "The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you. What they have done to Me, they will do to you, so expect it as a matter of course." This will save you. Therefore, you must accept this as a necessary consequence. And I would almost say a necessary attribute, certainly an earmark, of being a prophet of the Lord.

There is a statement in John 7 where after Jesus ministered, it says, "Every man went to his own home." Unfortunately there is a chapter division right there. Then in the next chapter it says, "and He went to the Mount of Olives." It is too bad they put a chapter break between that thought. Here, He had ministered, and they went to their comfortable homes, so He went out to the Mount of Olives. Nobody said, "By the way Jesus, where are You going to sleep tonight?" "And the servant is not greater than the Master."

"And shall reproach you." I was ministering one year in Paris on the anger of God and some brother there said, "Brother, the preachers sure took objection with you." I asked, "On what grounds?" He said, "You ought to preach the love of God not the anger of God. What we need is love." I was distressed over it because he was one of the leaders. A lady was my interpreter and she tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Brother Beuttler, don't you worry. There's a reason why he is afraid of God's anger." She told me what the reason was so I didn't worry anymore.

"Why call you Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings, and does them, I will show you to whom he is like; He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house (All that hatred, all that venom, all those comments, all those attitudes and what have you, when they beat into your soul like a raging torrent), and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock." Luke 6:46-48

One evangelist for entertaining for a week walks out with a \$500 some offering, and you come along with a Word of God. He talks ten minutes, and you minister an hour and a half under the anointing of the Spirit and are given \$25. Then you discover the offering was double, but they cut it in two. They have done this to me, because I couldn't play a ukulele.

And you say, "What is this? Why that man has not done anything but spend a week of entertainment, and I have spent my days waiting on God in prayer and know I had a message from God. Look at the reward I get!" Rather, look at the reward that is coming.

In the Midwest I had a weekend. When it was all over they handed me a check. One of the deacons said, "Brother Beuttler, would you mind telling me how much you got?" I do not remember what it was, but I told him. He almost hit the ceiling. He said, "The pastor is up to his old tricks. He takes a love offering and keeps half for himself." If you know what you should know, it cannot shake your house, for it is built upon a

rock, and you will stand.

"And could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock." How many houses have gone down under the onslaught of the sufferings of the prophets because they did not understand that that was a part of their ministry, something that comes along by the very nature of the ministry?

They could not shake it down. Some of you will be shaken, but if you build your ministry on the teachings of your Master, and remember that "the servant is not greater than his Master," and not let that thing eat the innards out of you, you may shake, but you will stand, for it is "founded upon a rock."

"But he that hears, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6:49

You get offended and begin to feel sorry for yourself, but, unless you recover quickly, there is a chance that the house will collapse. Then you have a pile of pieces on your hands. Finally, in order to avoid such a collapse in ministry, let me suggest to you briefly 5 things. Of course you could join the majority, and be all right for now, but we are not considering that.

1) Recognition of the Lord as sovereign.

Luke 6:46 again: "Why call you Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" That is in connection with these two houses. They were the same kind of a house and were subjected to the same kind of a test, but they had a different fate. If we are going to stand up under the vehement onslaught that will come, one basic requisite is the recognition of the Lord as sovereign. This involves the surrender of our own sovereignty to His.

2) Recognition of the purpose of our ministry.

Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." The purpose of our ministry is not to be ministered to, nor pampered, nor praised, not to be complimented, not to be recognized, but to minister. If you take the other view, it will kill you. You have to say, "My calling is to give, to give, to give. What they give me is none of my business. My business is to give."

Then you will not be like the preacher I told about who came to a meeting and sat next to me and almost wore the seat of his pants out, trying to get recognition. I was sitting in the back with him. He came in after me and sat down and kept saying, "Amen, Hallelujah, Glory, Hallelujah."

Finally he got mad and said, "He knows me. He knows I belong up there. This is not my seat, my seat is up on the platform." After awhile he got up and walked out. He did not get recognition, as he did not deserve it. The purpose of our coming is not to be recognized, but to give. Jesus came to minister, not to be ministered to.

3) Delight to do the will of God.

Psalms 40:8 speaking of Jesus, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within My heart." Delight to do the will of God, which involves an inner delight even in the things that hurt us, that people do to us, because it is the will of God. Not that He makes them do it, but that they will do it and that is a part of the

price of our ministry. So you delight, especially since they did the same thing to your Master. You can go to Jesus and say, "Now I know how it felt." Well how do you know? Because of how it affected you.

4) Making the will of God our meat, our sustenance.

Again in John 4:34 it says, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Jesus lived, as it were, on the will of God. He ate it. It was His meat. And if it is the will of God that we suffer for His sake, then we eat it and say, "Hallelujah! That's part of the thing that I'm to eat by His grace." That way we will not turn sour.

5) The reward of a hundredfold satisfaction of a satisfied God.

Finally and lastly, back to our text, Matthew 19:29. Recall the question of Peter, "What shall we have therefore?" Jesus answered them, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

"Shall receive an hundredfold." In another Gospel it makes it clear this hundredfold is in this present time, in this life an hundredfold. In other words Jesus said to Peter, "I will tell you what you get out of this. You will get a hundredfold."

Jesus did not mean that you will be given a hundred houses, a hundred brethren, a hundred sisters, a hundred fathers, a hundred mothers, a hundred wives, a hundred children. Jesus said this, but what did He mean?

What shall we have therefore in this life? Listen, an hundredfold - in other words - a hundred times more satisfaction than houses, lands, wife, and children or automobiles could give us. Namely, our reward is the manifold satisfaction of a satisfied and satisfying God. What shall we have therefore in this life? The manifold satisfaction of a satisfying and satisfied God, and that's worth more than anything else.

"Our Father, this is indeed a serious matter. We realize that it makes one think and perhaps pause, if not hesitate, but You do not want us to step carelessly into the ministry thinking that every earthly desire is going to be satisfied.

Rather, You would want us to calculate, to take into account the cost, and there make a deliberate, intelligent, thoughtful decision to follow a course which will either take us down on the bandwagon of popularity, or a course that will take us in the blood-stained, tear-stained path of the prophets of old.

You want us to decide whether to go down that popular road where the way is paved where so many things are in our favor in a natural way, or whether You still want us to choose that tear-stained path with so many thorns, so stony, so steep, so difficult, so exhausting, so demanding, so narrow, so alone, and so long.

You did not keep Your disciples in the dark. You laid the issue before them, as You do this morning, but we would pray that our faith shall not fail. That on the last day of our service with this class, some shall be induced to decide and re-decide to cast their lot with the prophets of old unto an eternal reward in Christ Jesus our Lord in Whose Name we ask Thee. Amen."

Think it over and make your decision.

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