

Identifying a Man of God

1 Timothy 6:11-14

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Well, as I mentioned a little bit earlier, this, of course, is the 4th of July weekend, and many of our people are gone, and we're right in the middle of a series in the Gospel of Luke. Most important part of that series is the final section of Luke 10, and I didn't wanna get into that, because it's critical to everything we've been learning for the last three or four weeks. I didn't wanna to get into it with everybody gone.

So it was basically suggested that I preach to you on a text in 1 Timothy chapter 6, and so I'm going to do this. This might typically be a text that I would choose to preach at a pastor's conference. And in fact I don't think I've ever preached on this text here in this church, except when we were going through the epistle of 1 Timothy many, many years ago. And that was in a very different context and maybe a very different structure.

First Timothy chapter 6 verses 11 and following. This is a very definitive text, and if I were to draw your attention to any one part of it as an introduction, I would draw your attention to verse 11 and a phrase, actually the second phrase in the verse, "You man of God. You man of God." It was about 14 years ago that I preached a message on this text in the Superdome in New Orleans to 25,000 pastors at Southern Baptist Convention. That particular message ended up in all kinds of printed forms and distributed in many, many places, including as a...as an article in a certain study Bible. It, particularly, I think struck a note among those pastors and sort of generated a life of its own. And maybe that's why some of our men here felt that it would be good for me to share it with you.

But, as I say, it's...it's the kind of message you would give to pastors. But, for you, I think it'll be helpful, so you can hold my feet to the fire, and you know what to expect, both in terms of the role of the pastors who serve you here in this church and, for that matter, in any church anywhere.

When I was a young boy and first felt the call to preach, my dad encouraged me to be a man of God. That was a great phrase and left an indelible impression upon my mind. Be a man of God. And that desire that my dad had for me has really been my desire through all the years of my...my ministry. When young men contemplating seminary ask me what makes the Master's Seminary unique...that's the seminary we have right here on our campus...I always say we are totally committed to producing a man of God. This marvelous term has become something of a passion for me.

I...I was having lunch here on the campus one day with Otis Chandler, who...famous Chandler family for which the Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles is named...owner of the Los Angeles Times and a number of other newspapers. And he said to me that particular day at lunch...he said, "You have a lot of influence. You have many people who listen to you here at the church and on radio. Why don't you ever...ever give your opinion?" was his question about the issues of our day.

And I said to him, "Do you really need another opinion? As a journalist, as a newspaper owner, as a television network station owner, do you really need another opinion?"

"Well," he said, "come to think of it, may not be that important."

I said, "Well, I don't live or exist to give my opinion. I'm God's man, and my responsibility is to speak for Him." So I offered myself to write a regular column in the LA Times and tell everybody what God says about everything, but I was never taken up on that offer.

I am God's man, and anyone who's called to this ministry is God's man. The man who personally belongs to God. That is a really interesting term, man of God. It may, at first, seem as something of a generic term. But, in fact, it is not. There's only one person in the New Testament who's called man of God, and that is Timothy. And he is called that here. But it is extended a little beyond Timothy, because, later on in Paul's writing to Timothy, 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16, he says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

And there's the phrase "man of God" again. Paul says, "Timothy, you are God's man." And then later, he says, "God's man is made complete by his knowledge and faithfulness to Scripture." It is the Scripture that is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, training, and righteousness. And since that is the man of God's responsibility, he cannot be complete...he cannot be equipped without the Word of God. So if you want to ask, "What is the primary responsibility of the man of God?" It is to proclaim the Word of God. And the better the man of God understands the Word of God, the better able he is to reprove, rebuke, exhort, train. The better he is able to fulfill his calling and be adequate for every good work.

This term "man of God," however, is very frequently used in the Old Testament. Paul is borrowing it from his knowledge of the Old Testament. It was first used of Moses who spoke for God. He was the man of God. It was used of the angelic messenger sent by God to announce Sampson's birth. It was used to describe a prophet who spoke for God to Eli, the high priest, predicting severe judgment on Eli's wicked family. Man of God is used to describe Samuel, who spoke again the divine Word of God. Man of God is used of Elijah, and it's used of Elisha, and it's used to David. It's used of Igdaliah, who were also prophets of the Old Testament. In fact, it's used 70 times in the Old Testament, always refers to an official spokesman for God. Someone whose duty and responsibility is to come from God and speak God's Word. It was the official title for the messenger who proclaimed the Word of God. In that sense, it is a technical term. A technical term.

In the New Testament, I said, it's used twice of Timothy, who was a pastor and a man of God. Men of God then are an elite group, an elite line of men whose lives are listed above worldly enterprises. Whose lives are lifted above worldly achievement, worldly success, worldly goals, worldly objectives, to be devoted to one great eternal and divine matter, and that is the dissemination of the truth of God.

A man of God belongs to a spiritual order with which things temporal and things transitory and things perishing have no permanent relationship. He's not just a pastor. He's not just a leader. He's not just an organizer. He's not a manager. He is a man of God. And anyone who is called to preach, anyone

who is called to...to pastor the people of God or to evangelize the lost is a man of God. He is like those mentioned in 2 Peter 1:21, "Men moved by the Holy Spirit who speak from God."

This simplifies and clarifies the role of a pastor, which, of course, today, is in utter confusion and chaos. You would think the qualifications today for a pastor would be the same as those for the Price is Right or some other quiz show. He is sometimes entertainer, sometimes charmer. But the Biblical pattern is that he is a man moved by the Holy Spirit who speaks for God. And when he opens his mouth, the Word of God comes out. Not his insights and not his opinions.

So here we find in 1 Timothy 6, Timothy called you men of God. That is very defining, very defining. What are the identifying marks of a man of God? They are in the surrounding passage. Four characteristics are mandated to Timothy and to us if we are to bear the title man of God. And, by the way, I might add as a footnote, this does not lower the standard for all the rest of you, but rather it elevates the standard for us in order that we might set an example that can draw you up. When a pastor is a man of God, he then sets the standard for the people to follow. When the man of God is fully equipped, when the man of God is adequate for every good work, when the work of the Word of God has demonstrated itself through the life and preaching of the man of God, then the standard is visibly clear for all to see and to follow, because, as we are called to Christ-likeness, the ultimate man of God, so are you.

1 Corinthians 11, Paul said, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ." But how can people come to Christ-likeness? How can the congregation be men and women of God if the pastor is not the man of God that they can follow? So Paul writing to young Timothy. Timothy, remember, had a very difficult task. He was trying to sort out the mess in the church at Ephesus. Paul had left him there. There were false teachers there. Sin was rampant. There was a lack of sanctification there. There was persecution on the outside, which was causing Christians to be ashamed to declare their faith in Christ. There was doctrinal confusion. People were abandoning the truth. They were abandoning Paul. It was a very troubled church.

As we learn later, it had a path that would lead it into the book of Revelation where it would be addressed as the church that had left its first love. Timothy is left there with a formidable task. Penetrate the culture, very pagan and very hostile to Christianity. Clean out the false leadership in the church. Purify the church. Bring the truth back and make it the pillar and ground to the truth again. Study to be approved of God or work, we need not to be ashamed. Rightly dividing the word of truth and then take that word of truth and use it to teach and reprove and rebuke and exhort and train and build the church. So he's addressing himself to Timothy and saying, "You man of God." And just the phrase alone would remind Timothy of his duty.

But Paul points out four things that mark a man of God. Four things that mark a man of God. Number one, the man of God is known by what he flees from. The man of God is known by what he flees from. Notice verse 11, "But flee from these things, you man of God." Flee. This is a Greek verb, fuagay, from which we get fugitive. It is a vivid one. It is in the present. It means keep on fleeing. You are a fugitive. You are on the run. Your whole life as a man of God, you are on the run. It pictures one running from a plague. That's how the word would be used. Or running from poisonous snakes, having come across them in their den in a field. Or running from a pursuing, attacking enemy. You are on the run. The man of God is known by his fleeing.

Back in the 1st chapter verse 4, we find some of the things that we have to flee as a man of God. He

says, "Don't pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, giving rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God, which is by faith." In other words, run away from error and false religion and philosophies and heresies that corrupt the truth. And you're running, verse 5, toward "A goal, and the goal is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Unlike some who stray from these things and have turned aside to fruitless discussions." You flee from error. You flee from worldly philosophy.

Chapter 4 verse 7, "Have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women." Silly, foolish fables rather than the truth. "Rather discipline yourself for godliness." You're always running. You're running from error. You're running from human folly. 2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee from youthful lusts." You're running from that, as well. And back in 1 Timothy 6, look at verse 20. "Avoid worldly, empty chatter, the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge' - which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith." Stay away from liberalism. Stay away from those who assault the Scripture. Stay away from attacks on God's authoritative Word.

We are running men. We are fleeing all the time from error. But that's not all. We're fleeing from lust and sin. But that's not all. Look here, verse 11, "Flee from these things." And we have to ask the question, "What are these things?" Well, obviously, it's what come before. Go back to verse 5. "Depraved men...in verse 5...who are deprived of the truth, false teachers, suppose that godliness is a means of gain." People who are false teachers are always in it for the money. "But godliness...verse 6...actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment." You never pursue money. You pursue godliness. You pursue money, you're never content. You pursue godliness, you get contentment.

We don't pursue gain. Why? "We brought nothing into the world...verse 7...can't take anything out of it, either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who wanna get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root all sorts of evil, and some, by longing for it, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many a pang." You show me a man in the ministry who goes after money, and I'll show you a compromiser, and I'll show you someone who can be bought. And I'll show you some who lacks contentment and whose pursuit of money never gives him enough. And I'll show you someone who will fall into harmful desires and maybe ruin and destruction.

Those who love money will change their theology, wander away from the faith and suffer the pain that comes, often inflicted by God Himself as discipline to those who are disobedient to the truth, and who know better. So when he says in verse 11, "Flee from these things," you know exactly what he's talking about. Flee from the love of money. Flee from being in ministry for money, for gain. Flee all the evils and all the vices associated with loving money. Flee greed and all its attendant evils. The strong motivating desire for money and what money can buy...comfort and ease. The man of God runs from that. Not toward it. My heart is always broken when I see someone in ministry running toward money. That is the characteristic sin of false teachers. It corrupts. It causes compromise, and even defection from the truth. They make merchandise of people. They do what they do, Peter says, for filthy lucre, for dirty money. From Balaam to Judas, they run the pages of Scripture, these money-grubbing false teachers and defectors. From the false prophets of Israel who were greedy dogs that never had enough and were consumed with gaining personal wealth, to the covetous prophets and priests of Jeremiah's day who are condemned by God through that prophet.

So the prophets at Ezekiel's time, who could be bought, literally, for a handful of barley or some pieces of bread, to the preachers who preached for money and the unruly and empty talkers and deceivers of Crete and everywhere else in the New Testament world, who subverted whole households teaching for money. They've all been perverted, prostituting the gift and calling of God for personal gain. From Amy Semple McPherson to Jim Bakker to Benny Hinn to all the rest in between and more to come, the love of money has perverted many.

Paul said, "We are not like many. We are not con men. We are not hucksters of the Word of God for money." The word corrupters is used there. Peddling the Word of God, kapaylos, con men, hucksters. The materialistic condition of the church in America, obviously, is clearly seen in the fact that it wasn't the opulent, indulgent, Midas-like gold touch, the grandiose self-indulgence and consuming drive for comfort and pleasure from every material item imaginable that scandalizes American evangelicalism. It's just the sex that gets people thrown out, if even that anymore.

God hated the materialistic lust and still does as much as the sexual lust. There's just so much of that. You say, "Well, you look like you're dressed pretty well." Thank you. My wife takes good care of me. For many years, I said to the elders here, I said, "I don't want more money. I don't want any more money." And every time they would say, "We wanna give you more money," I'd say, "I don't want more money. Don't give me anymore money." Finally, one of the elders said, "We're gonna give it to anyway, because we wanna see what you do with what you don't need." That's fair enough, isn't it? That's fair enough.

Here, we have such corruption in the church today that the money-hungry preachers have now developed a prosperity Gospel to justify their greed. I reject that doctrine of demons, that Jesus wants, even provides for all Christians to be rich. Jesus said, "Take no thought for what you eat or drink or what you wear. I'll take care of that. You seek, first...what?...the Kingdom. Paul says, "I've coveted no man's gold or silver or apparel." Acts 20. He said, "I never wanna make the Gospel chargeable." 1 Corinthians 9. He worked with his hands to provide a living for himself and everybody who was traveling with him. I'm not saying you can't be blessed. I'm saying you can't pursue that. You pursue the Kingdom, and all these things are added, and it is God who has blessed us with all things richly to be enjoyed. It's at his discretion. He gives them, we hold them very lightly. They're not ours. They're really his, and everything that I have and everything that you have is a test. It's a test. It's a test of what we really love. You may be a preacher. You may be a pastor, but no man who prostitutes the call of God for personal gain could ever be called a man of God. A man of God is known by what he flees from, and he flees from all the things related to the love of money.

Secondly, a man of God is known by what he follows after. Not just flees from, but follows after. You're running away, but you're running toward something. Notice, again, verse 11, "But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue...or better, follow after...righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness." We are running. We're running away from one thing and running toward something else. Our whole life is a...is a sprint, you might say. We are fugitives from all that is evil. Running fast toward all that is righteous.

And, again, here is a present tense verb. Continuous action. Continually running from. Continually running toward. This is a life-long pursuit. Proverbs 15:9 says, "The Lord loves them that pursue righteousness." Not success, not fame, not size, not popularity, not esteem, not reputation. We are running after righteousness. And six words are here, righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Righteousness is doing right on the outside. We pursue right

conduct. Godliness...is right on the inside. That's motivation. That's the heart. Do you pursue what's right on the outside, and you cultivate what's right on the inside. Your motives, your desires, your heart, then your behavior.

You pursue faith. Actually, this means confident trust in God for everything. You literally put your life and ministry and everything you have in God's hands, and you trust Him. You live under His glorious, beneficent, gracious sovereignty. You pursue love. What is that? Selflessness. Willful sacrifice...you're characterized by perseverance. That is endurance in trial and difficulty and trouble and persecution and suffering. And the word gentleness is actually the word meekness or humility. I mean it couldn't be any more clear. Are you a man of God? You are if, having been called, you are faithful to the proclamation of the Word of God, and all the while you are running as fast as you can away from the love of money and all the vices that go with it. And you are running as fast as you can toward these things: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and humility.

The goal of my life is not primarily related to the size of the church. It's not primarily related to the structure of the church. It's not primarily related to some ambitious agenda that I have. I haven't created something in my own mind that I want to attain to. If you talked to me at the beginning of my ministry, the middle of my ministry, or now in these years in my ministry, and you ask me what my goal and objective was in my life, my goal and objective would be the same through all these years, and that would be to run from the things that corrupt me and run toward the things that purify me...so that I might be a vessel unto honor fit for the Master's use because I am His. I am God's man.

This is the pursuit of a godly heart. This is a pursuit of a godly righteous life. In Psalm 50 verses 16 and 17 it says, "To the wicked God says, 'What right have you to tell of My statutes?'" To a wicked man, God says, "Who do you think you are opening your mouth and speaking My Word? What right have you...he says...to take My covenant into your mouth, for you hate discipline, and you cast My Words behind you." That's some strong indictment, isn't it? "You stand up, and you speak of My statutes? You take My covenant? You talk about My gracious provision for salvation? You put those words in your mouth? And you hate discipline? And you cast My Words behind you? You're wicked...God says."

Psalm 101:6 says, "He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me. He who practices deceit shall not." So the man of God is known by what he flees from and what he follows after. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "I beat my body to bring it into subjection." Literally uses the word translated buffet in the English, but it means to strike with a fist in the face. I give a knockout punch to my body to bring it into subjection, literally to knock it out. To KO my human desire, lest in preaching to others I myself would be disqualified. I have to...I have to be a running man. I have to pursue these things...And people will feel the power of a godly life. Preaching puts the nails of truth in, but example pounds them deep...John Owen wrote, "A minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouth of the public, but what he is in secret before Almighty God, that he is and no more. No more."

I remember years ago reading a...kind of a striking story in Irish history. There is a badge of barony in the history of...of Ireland called the Red Hand of O'Neill. The O'Neill's, an ancient Irish family, and the Red Hand of O'Neill is the...the symbol of the O'Neill family. They...they got that sort of badge of barony in the most bizarre way. There was a time when an expedition to Ireland was allowed before it was fully settled. And the provision was made by those who had the authority that the first hand on the land possessed the land. One of the men was O'Neill, from whom, by the way, descended the

princes of Ulster, now Northern Ireland, which is Protestant today. He was rowing as furiously as he could trying to get there and to claim the land. But another boat took the lead, and he fell behind. And the historian writes, and I quote, "With a grim look of mingled wrath and triumph at the rival boat, the strong-minded, iron-nerved O'Neill dropped the oars, seized a battle ax, chopped off one of his hands...hopefully not his throwing hand. I guess not...and threw it onshore so his hand was there first." You say, "That's pretty drastic action." Got that right.

Jesus says something like that when He says, "If your right hand...offends you...what?...cut it off. If your right eye offends you, pluck it out." People would do that in the pursuit of land. What drastic action would you take in the pursuit of holiness? Essentially what Jesus said. You have to deal dramatically. You have to deal drastically with sin. You can't even be a pastor and can't even be a man of God unless you're blameless and above reproach. God helps, you know, along the way, brings trials into your life. My life, I mean in the process of...of shaping my life, you know, you go through all kinds of things. Patricia's terrible accident...some years ago, and my son, one time with a brain tumor and all the issues of life that come and go. My own illnesses on occasion and struggles with people in the church. The Lord brings in enough trials to keep purging you. Criticism, persecution, hostility...rejection, defection...God does His part to humble us, to run stakes through our otherwise proud human flesh to keep us running after holiness.

Spurgeon, in his inimitable way, said it like this, "A graceless pastor is a blind man elected to a professorship of optics, philosophizing about light and vision, while he himself is absolutely in the dark. He is a dumb man, elevated to the chair of music, a deaf man fluent on harmonies and symphonies. He is a mole professing to educate eagles. Such is a graceless pastor." Now, you may be a preacher. You may even be a pastor, but if you're not running after holiness, you're not a man of God.

Thirdly, the man of God is known by what he flees from, what he follows after, and, thirdly, what he fights for. Verse 12, "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." The man of God is a fighter. He is a boxer, a wrestler, a soldier, a battler, a protagonist. He is engaged in relentless war. 2 Timothy 2, the Apostle Paul says that, "He suffers hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, disentangled in the affairs of everyday life. He pleases the One who enlisted him to be a soldier." We battle the kingdom of darkness which yields its ground very reluctantly. We face many adversaries, and, as we have been saying in the last few weeks, we know that the enemy of our souls hates what we do.

We remember last Sunday when the 70 came back, remember, and they were rejoicing that even the evil spirits were subject to them as they invaded the kingdom of darkness with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and set the prisoners of hell free. We battle the kingdom of darkness. We fight. We're fighters. Fight is agonizomai, from which we get, obviously, agonize. It describes a level of concentration, and a level of effort, coupled with discipline and conviction that lead to success. We agonize the agon. We fight the fight, the spiritual conflict.

If you...I don't know if you're interested in boxing. It's a...it's far...it's the sort of last most barbaric holdover from the past where you pound people's brains senseless. It's amazing with all of the things that people scream about in our society...don't eat potato chips and things like that...that somebody doesn't rise up and call a halt to people bashing each other's brains in on purpose. But as brutal as it is, boxers fight with leather gloves padded to cushion the blow. You should know that, in the days of

the New Testament, Greek boxers had fur-lined gloves. There was just a little fur and leather, no padding. They were made generally of ox hide. And stitched into the glove at the knuckles was lead and iron. When Paul talks about fighting the good fight, he's talking about some serious action. And in a Greek boxing match, the loser had his eyes gouged out as emblematic of his failure.

Boxing, to us, is not what it was then. It was a death/life struggle. Serious conflict from which you could emerge dead or lifetime blind. I just don't think the church understands that. I...I met with the pastor of the largest seeker friendly church, and he said to me, "You know what your problem is MacArthur? You need to lighten up." And I smiled. I said, "It's really hard to do in the middle of war." Fight the good fight. It is a good fight, isn't it? It's a noble fight. To fight against the kingdom of darkness with the truth. The only weapon we have is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, right?

And I think that's one of the serious problems today, is people aren't taking the battle as seriously as they have to take it. And He helps us with that. "Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you are called." What does that phrase mean? He simply means this: Get a grip on the fact that you're dealing with eternal issues. How can you treat the ministry shallow...in shallow terms? How can you treat it trivially? This is war, and eternity is at stake. "You knew that...He says in verse 12...when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. You knew that when you confessed Christ, when we were all there gathered." He's probably referring to His ordination when the elders laid hands on Him and set Him apart from the ministry. "You confessed at that time that this was a matter of eternal issues. You're not just slapping people around with some puffy gloves here. This is a life and death matter. Get a grip on it."

Lighten up! What kind of a statement is that? A man of God is called to eternal issues. Having confessed Jesus Christ as Lord, he publicly commits himself to a battle over eternal issues. As long as he lives, he fights the good fight, the noble fight for the souls of men against the kingdom of darkness and against the world, the flesh, and the devil. That's why he has to be sober-minded. That's why he has to be cut off from this world, 'cause the battle is so critical. A man of God is marked by what he flees from, follows after, and fights for.

Fourthly, a man of God is marked by what he is faithful to. By what he is faithful to. In verses 13 and 14 we read this, "I charge you in the presence of God...here is a serious preliminary...I charge you in the presence of God...he's saying I...that's the word command actually...I command you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things...he reminds him that God is the source of all life...to which you were called...the same life that you were called to back in verse 12...I call you...I charge you...I command you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and has given you eternal life, and I command you before Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate."

I'm telling you, He...this is really a strong preamble to the command. "I command you before the God who gives life to everyone and has given you life and eternal life on top of it, I charge you in front of Christ Jesus, who when He stood before Pontius Pilate never equivocated, never compromised." When Pilate said, "Are you a king?" He said, "I am." Jesus stood His ground when it was tough. He held to the truth, and I charge you before a faithful God and a faithful Christ Jesus, verse 14, "Keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." You be faithful to the commandment.

What is the commandment? The command is simply this, "Keep the commandment." What commandment? A thoughtful exegesis of this term will lead you to understand that the commandment is all revealed Scripture. All revealed Scripture. The man of God is faithful to the truth. He is faithful to the truth. He understands the spiritual war. He understands that the kingdom of darkness yields its captives very reluctantly. He understands that it's a lifelong battle, that it's not always comfortable, that you disconnect from the world, that you pay the price of sacrifice of being a soldier, that you're gonna get wounded in the fray, that it's not all gonna be fun. But he is faithful to the truth as Jesus was standing before Pilate, knowing that if He affirmed that He was a king, He was gonna be executed.

Paul was certainly that, and here he's calling on Timothy to do the same. Solemnly commanding him before God who gives life and takes it, before God who gave him his eternal life, before Jesus Christ who, under the most unbelievable, unimaginable, incomprehensible duress, never wandered in His adherence to the Word of God. And he calls upon Timothy to guard the Word until the end of the age.

We go back to what we see later in chapter 6, as I read a week or so ago, verse 20, "Guard what has been entrusted to you." It's a guardianship here. 2 Timothy 1:13 and 14, "Retain the standard of sound words. Hold onto the sound words." Verse 14, 2 Timothy 1:14, "Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us the treasure which has been entrusted to you." That's the Scripture.

What do you look for in a pastor? Not how interesting, not how clever, not how short his sermons are, not how popular he is, not how cute he is, not how slick he is. How well does he guard the truth? How faithful to the truth is he? How skilled in an understanding of the truth? How...strong in the proclamation of that truth? You may be a pastor, but if you do not guard the truth, you're not a man of God. This is a lifelong responsibility.

A young preacher came to Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse, great Philadelphia theologian and preacher, and said, "Dr. Barnhouse...he said...I'd give the world if I knew the Bible like you do." He said, "Good, because that's exactly what it'll cost you."

This is all we live for, is to know the Word and to make it known. The man of God, called by God, given one responsibility, to proclaim His truth. To do it, he must flee the things that corrupt. He must follow after...the issues that lead to holiness. He must fight his whole life long, and he must be faithful to the truth to the end of the age.

The typical church service, somebody said, is like a merry-go-round. Crowded with people sitting down in a seat they had to pay for, controlled by a man who has nothing to say. There's a lot of music, lots of motion up and down, some good feelings, but, unfortunately, you get off exactly where you got on. How sad.

I wanna close with a brief illustration. Turn to 1 Kings 13. There's more to be said about this, but always run into that clock. This'll be just a quick look. In 1 Kings 13, there is a man of God, and we're introduced to this man of God in this chapter. The first ten verses, he's an obedient man of God. He does exactly what he's told to do. You see him referred to as the man of God in this first ten verses, and he's a faithful man. You can see the phrase, for example, in verse 6, where he's called "the man of God." The man of God. He's a prophet, and he's faithful.

Down in verse 11 to 19, the man of God is not faithful. He disobeys the Lord. You can read the account yourself. He starts out faithful. He's told to give a message. God says, "Here's the message." And...and the man of God is told to be faithful to that message from God. But he caves in. He compromises in verses 11 to 19. We'll pick it up in verse 20. "Now it came about, as they were sitting down at the table, the Word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back; and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, 'Because you have disobeyed the command of the Lord, you have not observed the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you.'"

Here's a man of God who was disobedient. "But you have done exactly what I told you not to do. You returned. You ate bread. You drank water in the place of which He said to you, 'Eat no bread and drink no water.' Because of that, your body shall not come to the grave of your fathers." You're not gonna die a natural death. "It came about after he'd eaten bread and after he'd drunk, he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back...and here goes the man of God...When he had gone...verse 24...a lion met him on the way and killed him. His body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body."

Why does it say that? It's just a photograph to never forget. Here's the man of God lying dead, a donkey on one side, and a lion on the other. What a photograph. Freeze frame that. In verse 26, "When the prophet who brought him back from the way heard it, he said, 'It is the man of God, who disobeyed the command of the Lord; therefore the Lord has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the Word of the Lord which He spoke to him.'"

Being a man of God can be very precarious...very precarious. Strong judgment falls upon an unfaithful man of God.

Now, this isn't part of the sermon, but listen to this. Here are some suggestions...for a preacher. Fling him into his office, tear the office sign from the door, and nail up a sign, "Study." Take him off the mailing list. Lock him up with his books and his Bible. Slam him down on his knees before texts and broken hearts and the lives of a superficial flock and a holy God. Force him to be the one man in the community who knows about God. Throw him into the ring to box with God until he learns how short his arms are. Engage him to wrestle with God all night long, and let him come out only when he's bruised and beaten into being a blessing. Shut his mouth forever spouting remarks. Stop his tongue forever tripping lightly over every nonessential. Require him to have something to say before he dares break the silence, and bend his knees in the lonesome valley of suffering. Burn his eyes with weary study. Wreck his emotional poise with worry over his life before God. Make him exchange his pious stance for a humble walk with God and man. Make him spend and be spent for the glory of God. Rip out his telephone. Amen. Burn up his ecclesiastical success sheets. Put water in this gas tank. Give him a Bible, and tie him to the pulpit, and make him preach the Word of the Living God. Test him. Quiz him. Examine him. Humiliate him for his ignorance of things divine. Shame him for his good comprehension of finances, game scores, and politics. Laugh at his frustrated effort to play psychiatrist.

Form a choir and raise a chant and haunt him with it night and day. Sir, we would see Jesus. And when, at last, he does enter the pulpit, ask him if he has a Word from God. If he doesn't, then dismiss him. Tell him you can read the morning paper. You can digest the television commentaries. You can think through the day's superficial problems. You can manage the community's weary fund

drives. You can bless assorted baked potatoes and green beans ad infinitum better than he can. Command him not to come back until he's read and reread, written and rewritten, until he can stand up worn and forlorn and say, "Thus says the Lord." Break him across the board of his ill-gotten popularity. Smack him hard with his own prestige. Corner him with questions about God. Cover him with demands for celestial wisdom, and give him no escape until he's back against the wall of the Word. Sit down before him and listen to the only word he has left, God's Word. Let him be totally ignorant of the down-street gossip, but give him a chapter, and order him to walk around it, camp on it, sup with it, and come at last to speak it backward and forward until all he says rings with the truth of eternity.

And when he's burned out by the flaming Word, when he's consumed at last by the fiery grace blazing through him, when he's privileged to translate that truth of God to man, and finally transferred from earth to Heaven, then bear him away gently, and blow a muted trumpet, and lay him down softly, and place a two-edged sword on his coffin, and raise the tomb triumphant, for he was a brave soldier of the Word. And ere he died, he had become a man of God.

Let's pray. Father, this to which we are called is a mighty calling of which we are incapable. Who is adequate for these things? But we thank You. We thank You that, in Your grace, You've called us. In Your grace, You've kept us. By Your grace, You've empowered us to this task. Many, though all the centuries, who stand in that long line of men of God, we pray, O God, that you'll raise up many more. Many more. Our time so desperately needs them. We pray that all of us, as a church family, would be having the privilege of living under the example of such devotion to the Lord and to the truth. That our own lives are profoundly enriched. And, together, we become ever increasingly conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. In whose name we pray. Amen.

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