

The Marks Of True Ministry

Colossians 1:23-29

Pastor John Miller

Complete in Christ: A Study in Colossians

The Marks of True Ministry-7

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Pastor John Miller" une 11, 2017

I want to read verses 23 to 29. Follow with me as I read our text.

Paul says, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel..."—notice that, "hope of the Gospel"—"...which you have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I, Paul, am made a minister..."—there's our theme—"...who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God; even the mystery, which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach..."—referring to Christ—"...warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."

I heard that there is a Pentagon official who has a sign on his desk that reads: "The secrecy of my job does not permit me to know what I'm doing." You know, with all the stuff going on in the government today, that's not hard to believe. I laughed when I heard that and thought that a lot of ministers could have a similar sign on their desk that would read: "The sacredness of my job does not permit me to know what I'm doing." You know a lot of ministers don't know what a minister is supposed to be and what a minister is supposed to do. So what is a minister to be and do? My response to that is the Bible. I believe that the Bible is the owner's manual that God has given to the church. Whatever the Bible says the pastor or minister is to be and is to do, that's what he is to be and is to do.

But we are called to be ministers. Notice that twice Paul says, once in verse 23, "I, Paul, am made a minister; and then the second time in verse 25, "whereof I am made a minister." Paul knew what God had called him to be, and Paul knew what God had called him to do; that is, to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to be a faithful steward over that which God had entrusted to him.

I want to look at this passage and draw from it four marks of true ministry. They are not only

true of me as a pastor or so-called “minister,” but they are also true of you, because I believe every minister of this church is to be a minister.

By the way, the word “minister” is the word “servant.” The idea that the minister is above the church is not Biblical. The minister is beneath the church; he is to be serving the church. How does he serve the church? By giving them God’s Word. By building them up. By warning them. By admonishing them. By instructing them. By praying for them. By being an example for them. The minister is to build them up in Christ.

I also want to point out that in the context at this point in Colossians, Paul continues the theme of the preeminence of Christ. Christ is to have preeminence in our ministries. All four of these characteristics of a true minister actually have Christ at the center. We are to have a Christ-centered ministry, a Christ-centered church. It’s all about Jesus Christ. He is to have preeminence.

Quality number one of a true ministry is in verse 23. It is that a true minister shares the Gospel of Christ. Paul says, “...be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel...”—there is our point —“...which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I, Paul, am made a minister.” Paul was made a minister for the purpose of preaching “the hope of the Gospel.”

The word “Gospel” literally means “good news.” I point this out that it is not “good views” but “good news.” Not good opinions, not good ideas, not good philosophy but “good news.” It’s based upon the historical truth of the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension and exaltation of Jesus Christ. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.” That’s good news. And that’s the good news that we are to preach and we are to publish.

Paul talked about the good news in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. One of the greatest, encapsulated descriptions of the Gospel is that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” And “He was buried.” Why does he say that? So we know he really died. And “He rose again... according to the Scriptures.” So it’s the death, burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. You take out any of those elements, and you don’t have the Gospel. The Gospel is necessary because we are sinners—that’s bad news. The good news is that even though we have sinned, and “The wages of sin is death” and “The soul that sinned shall surely die,” God has given us the free gift of salvation in the person of Jesus Christ and through the finished work of the Cross.

I want you to notice that this good news was “heard” and “preached,” verse 23. I believe there is no substitute for the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world” and preach the Gospel. He didn’t say, “Go into all the world and feed people.” Should we feed people? Yes; that’s a great thing to do. There are times you can’t share the Gospel with somebody until you feed their hunger. Shall we clothe people? Yes; we should clothe people. Should we take shut-ins in and visit the hospitals and the sick and the needy? Should

we educate people? Yes to all of the social involvement that the church does. But it's not the priority of the church. The number one and most important thing we do as a church is preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And we should never be deterred or distracted from that priority. But a lot of churches today don't have that as a priority; that's the last thing they do. They're not preaching the Gospel. They're not preaching the need for the Gospel; that man is a sinner, and God sent a Savior and the only way to be saved is through faith and repentance, trusting Jesus and being born again, as Jesus told Nicodemus. That's the Gospel. But we've turned into a social club instead of a preaching machine. I believe we need to get back to the purpose for which we exist as ministers, as the church: preaching the Gospel.

In Romans 10:15, it says, "How beautiful are the feet of them who preach the Gospel." Do you know that you have beautiful feet? I think it would be cool to have a barefoot Sunday sometime. We'd have to open the doors and get the fans going and stuff like that. But it would be just to remind ourselves that we have beautiful feet, and that our feet are to be used to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I think that's what we need to do; we need to all go everywhere sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, which brings us to the next point: The Gospel is for everyone. Notice in verse 23 it says that the Gospel "...was preached to every creature, which is under heaven..." Why would Paul use words like that? First of all, he's probably speaking in hyperbole, because not every single native person in the entire world had heard the Gospel, but the entire Roman world had been reached with the Gospel. Everyone that Paul could reach was reached.

What he's trying to convey in that phrase is that the Gospel is universal and that it is not exclusive. Why? Because the false teachers who had come into the church at Colosse—and let us not forget that the reason Paul penned this entire epistle is that the Christians in Colosse had been invaded by false teachers. The false teachers were telling them that Jesus was not enough. "You need something more than Jesus. And that more-than-Jesus is only for a select few; it's only for an elite group chosen to gain the knowledge, the gnosis, that we will introduce you to." The false teachers were preaching an exclusive Gospel which was not a gospel. Any gospel that excludes races, ethnic groups, nationality—any gospel that excludes anyone is not The Gospel. It's not the good news of Jesus Christ. The true Gospel is inclusive.

I love that fact, and I think our church should reflect that. We ought to pray that it does more so; every race should be represented in this church. I don't think there should be black churches or white churches; I think all churches should be all different colors, because we are the body of Christ. And it's certainly going to happen when we get to heaven. We're all going to be together forever, so learn to get along; okay?

"We don't go to that country because we don't like those people. We don't preach the Gospel to those people." No. The Gospel is universal; it's for everyone. The cool thing about the Gospel is that it doesn't change. It's not for the intellectually elite. It's not for the upper classes.

It's not just for white folks or black folks or brown folks; it's for everyone. It doesn't matter. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." It's inclusive.

It's the whole church's job to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. You know how we can simply do that? By every person telling somebody about Jesus. If everyone who comes to Revival Christian Fellowship this week told one person about Jesus Christ, think about how the Gospel would spread in this community. If we just got our mouths open and started telling others about Jesus!

I love what Vance Havner said. He said, "The Gospel is not a secret to be hoarded but a story to be heralded. Too many Christians are stuffing themselves with Gospel blessing while millions have never had a taste." I think about the fact that we come to church, we sing our songs, we hear the sermon and we're so blessed and we love the fellowship, but there are people dying in sin outside this church right now.

Whenever I come to church on Sunday I see people jogging by, taking a walk, and I'm thinking, "Man, I wish they'd come to Revival. I wish they'd hear the Gospel. I wish they were on the way to our church. These people need to hear." They may not come to the church, so the church needs to go to them. We need to go to our neighbors and go to our coworkers and go to our family members and tell them about Jesus Christ. You may not be a public speaker, but you can certainly tell them, "I was blind but now I see. I was lost and now I'm found. I was in bondage and now I'm set free. Jesus is the One Who changed my life." The mark of a true minister is preaching the Gospel.

The second mark is that a true minister suffers willingly for the cause of Christ. Look at verse 24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you..."—why?—"...and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church." Paul preached Christ, so Paul suffered for Christ. Let me be honest with you; if you get aggressive and start telling people about Jesus, some people won't like it. Some people may suddenly ostracize you, or they may openly attack you. They're not going to like that. God will prepare hearts, and some people will respond, but there will be some people who say, "Don't tell me about Jesus. I don't want to hear that." They'll get hostile. But their reaction is not our responsibility; our responsibility is just to be faithful to tell them about Jesus.

Now notice that Paul says, "...in my sufferings" he rejoices. Do you know it's a joy and a privilege and a blessing to suffer for the cause of Christ? Paul was writing these very words when he was in prison. This is one of his prison epistles. While in prison, Paul was rejoicing. How could Paul rejoice in his suffering? Two reasons. Number one, he was suffering for the church or for you, verse 24. Jesus gave His life to create the church, His body, and we should love, serve and be willing to suffer for the church.

How much prayer and sacrifice and devotion and time and concern do you give for the church? "I just come on Sunday mornings and hope your sermons are not too boring. And if they're

really good, maybe I'll put some money in the offering next week." What commitment, what sacrifice, what price do you pay to make this a better, healthier church? Not just our local church but the church universal. If you really love God, you'll love God's people. Not just this church but all churches. I pray constantly for all the churches in this valley; that we preach the Word, that we preach the Gospel, that we reach the lost, that we don't miss our calling as a church. What do you do? Do you sacrifice? Do you pray? Do you give yourself; your time and your talents?

Timothy Dwight wrote this poem. It's a poem I saw many years ago. It says:

I love Thy church, O God;

Her walls before Thee stand,

Dear as the apple of Thine eye,

And graven on Thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall;

For her my prayers ascend;

To her my cares and toils be giv'n,

Till toils and cares shall end.

We need to love the church as the body of Christ. We need to sacrifice, we need to pray, we need to give, we need to serve, we need to do all we can to enlarge its borders and to advance the cause.

But not only was Paul suffering for the church, which caused him to rejoice, but secondly, he was suffering for Christ, which caused him to rejoice. Notice it in verse 24: "Paul says, "...and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church."

What does Paul mean by "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ"? Let me tell you what he does not mean by that. He doesn't mean that the atoning, sacrificial work of Christ—suffering on the Cross—was inadequate or insufficient. Paul is certainly not teaching that Christ's atoning sacrifice is not sufficient, and we need to make up for it by sacrificial atoning of our own suffering. He's not saying that. We cannot participate in our salvation. All we can do is receive the free gift of salvation, purchased by Jesus at the Cross. Even in the book of Colossians, it would be contrary to the theme of the very epistle we're reading. He says that Christ is sufficient and we're complete in Christ. When Jesus hung on the Cross, He cried, "It is finished. Tetelestai." Paid in full. So Paul's not saying that Christ's atonement was not complete, and we need to make it up by helping to atone for our own sins.

What he's saying is that they persecuted Christ, they rejected Christ, the world persecuted Christ and He suffered, and we, as His followers, being identified with Jesus, following Jesus means that we will suffer in His place. Jesus said, "If they persecuted Me..."—as our Lord and Master—"...they will persecute you." Paul said it like this in Philippians 3:10: "That I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." That's what Paul is talking about; to know "the fellowship of His sufferings." He wanted to know the fellowship that comes from suffering for Christ that drives him.

When you suffer for Christ, guess what that does? It drives you closer to Christ. And when you're closer to Christ, you're going to be more like Christ, and you're going to suffer because of it. And when you suffer because of it, it drives you to Jesus. And when you are driven to Jesus, He changes your life, and you suffer more. You go, "Ah, I don't know if I like this, pastor. I don't know if I want to be like Jesus." I'm always praying, "Lord, let the way be smoooooth. Slightly downhill. Wind at my back. Lined with roses. Take the thorns out. And let everyone clap for me as I go by. In Jesus' name. Hallelujah!" I don't want the way to be rough. I don't want to be rejected. I don't want to go the way of the Cross. I don't want to follow Jesus, the crucified Lord. But Jesus said that would be our lot. "They rejected Me, they'll reject you." We know the fellowship of His sufferings.

But the badge of a true minister is that they're going to suffer, they're willing to sacrifice, they're willing to be persecuted for the cause of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul says, "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often." Paul said he was a pastor. When Paul wanted to prove he was a minister, he didn't pull out a clergy card. He took his shirt off and showed them the whip marks, the stripes on his back. He said, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren..."—Do you think Paul had perils?—"...in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

Welcome to the ministry. Paul said he was whipped, beaten and shipwrecked and rejected and cold and hungry. That's the ministry. That's what it means to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. But what a privilege to suffer for Christ and for His church.

The third mark is that a true minister is a steward of the mysteries of Christ. This is found in verses 25-28. Notice in verse 25 it says, "...whereof I am made a minister..."—and here's the phrase—"...according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God." Paul's ministry was stewardship. You say, "Well, Pastor John, I don't see the word 'stewardship' in the text. So where do you get that idea?"

It's found in the word "dispensation." "...I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you." The word "dispensation" literally means "house law." And we actually get our word "economy" or "economics" from it. It denotes careful stewardship. A steward is one who cares for the interests or property of another. It speaks of a responsibility and a privilege. God has given us His Word. He has trusted us with His truth. God has given us the church to broaden, strengthen and encourage, and we are stewards over the ministry. All of us are.

In the parable of the talents, He gave a certain number of talents to each person, and the Master came back to see what they did with them. Some of them applied them, and He said, "You are to be commended." But one servant took the talent and wrapped it in a cloth and buried it in the ground. He came back to the Master and said, "Here is what you gave me."

And the Master said, paraphrasing, "Why didn't you put it in the bank so I could at least get some interest off of it?" Of course, today I don't know if this parable would work or not. You have to pay the bank to keep your money. I'm not real happy with banks right now. "You're going to charge me to keep my money in your bank?! I don't think so. I think I'll put it in the mattress or something."

But the servant wasn't using what the Master had given him. That's the point of the parable. So God's given you an opportunity. God's given you a voice. God's given you His Word. If you come on Sunday and you're learning the Bible, you're responsible to share that with somebody. I hear, "Oh, Pastor John, I'm learning so much from your sermons on Sunday."

"Great! What do you do with it?"

"Ah, I'm underlining it in red. I've got notes in my Bible."

How does it change your life? Does it make you a better husband or a better wife? A more obedient child? Does it make you more godly? Are you faithfully serving the Lord as a result of the knowledge of His Word? That's what it's all about. It's not just about having a big head but having a transformed life.

Paul's stewardship was to God's Word. Notice it in verse 25: "...to fulfil the Word of God." I believe that my highest priority, as your pastor, is to be faithful to the Bible. It is to be a man of the Bible. To be a preacher of the Bible. To teach and preach the Word. To proclaim God's Word—nothing more and nothing less. "To fulfil the Word of God" means that I must be faithful to preach it, and I must not compromise what I preach. I must be faithful to preach the Word—nothing more and nothing less—and I must not compromise it by taking away from it or misinterpreting it.

Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the Word." He told him how to preach the Word: "Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." He told him why to preach the Word: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having

itching ears.” Now the “itching ears” are not on the teachers but on the listeners. It’s the people in the pews. Their ears tickle and they want them itched. When the pastor preaches, instead of saying, “Preach it,” they say, “Itch it, preacher. That feels good.” They want a preacher to tell them that they’re okay and everything’s fine. “There’s no hell. You can live any way you want. All paths lead to God. Oh, itch it, pastor.” They don’t want the truth. They judge whether the pastor is sent from God and true by what it does for them and how they like it and makes them feel.

Whether you are in this church or in any church, what you should do when you listen to someone preach the Bible is to ask yourself, “Is that true? Is that what the Bible really said? Is that what that text actually means and says? Is that Scriptural? Is that really Bible truth? Or is that just his opinions or his views?” What we want is the Word of God. We want a “thus sayeth the Lord.” We don’t want a man’s opinion. We need to preach the Gospel.

Let me give you five facts about Paul’s preaching in this passage. First of all, it revealed the mystery, verses 26-27. And that mystery was “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.” That God would take Jews and God would take Gentiles and put them together into one body, which is the body of Christ. And by the way, the New Testament mystery he describes here is that in ages past, verse 26, was hidden “...from generations, but now is made manifest...”—or “revealed”—“...to His saints”—or to “New Testament believers.”

A mystery is something that cannot be known unless God reveals it. And He has. But it means that in the Old Testament, it hadn’t been revealed. What they didn’t know from the Old Testament was that Christ would live in the hearts of Gentiles, and that Jew and Gentile would be one, new humanity. They would be the body of Christ. Read Ephesians 3, where Paul so eloquently and powerfully explains the oneness of the body of Christ and the wall of partition had been broken down. Jew and Gentile are all one in Christ.

So there was the revelation in Paul’s preaching, and there also was the proclamation in his preaching, verse 28: “Whom we preach.” He preached Christ. So he revealed the mystery of the church, and his preaching was centered in Christ, “Whom we preach.” Christianity is Christ.

Thirdly, there was admonition in his preaching. It contained warning, verse 28: “...warning every man...” So he would warn unbelievers of the coming judgment and the wrath of God and of hell, and he would also warn believers of false teachers and false cults and false groups.

You know what is not popular today in preaching? Warning people about false teachers. Naming names. Listing cults. Whenever that’s done, people say, “Well, that’s not right. You shouldn’t get down on people, or you shouldn’t criticize someone else,” instead of focusing on what’s true and what’s false or what is Biblical and what is not Biblical. We don’t have that ability to think critically.

Actually, political correctness has come into the church. We’ve weakened the preaching of God’s Word and watered it down where it has to be palatable and nice and friendly and happy

and good. And the preacher should always smile and say positive things. Never anything negative. No; the preacher should say what the Bible says. If the Bible warns us, then we should be warned. If the Bible admonishes, we should be admonished. If the Bible rebukes us, we should be rebuked. The job of the preacher is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

So there is revelation, there is proclamation, there is admonition, and then, in verse 28, there is instruction. It contains teaching: "...teaching every man..." That's what Paul did when he preached. That's what I need to do when I preach. That's what you need to do; teach others and share with others. There should be content; didactic, doctrinal content. Teaching what is right. Belief and behavior and doctrine and duty.

Then notice, fourthly, its purpose. I love this. Verse 28, its purpose is "that we may present every man..."—person, mankind—"...perfect in Christ Jesus." This is transformation. So the elements of Paul's preaching were revelation, proclamation, admonition, instruction and transformation. Paul says, "I want to present all of you perfect." The word "perfect" means "mature" or "full grown." It doesn't mean sinlessly perfect. It was used of fruit that is fully ripened. So my job as your pastor is to ripen you, to bring you to full maturity. In Ephesians 4:12, the minister is "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry." We are all to be stewards of the Gospel of Christ.

George Whitfield said, "Other men may preach the Gospel better than I, but no man can preach a better Gospel." I love that. Some of you may preach it better than I, but they're not going to preach a better message.

Then lastly, verse 29, the mark of a true minister is that they strive in the power of Christ. They work hard, they labor, they strive. It's all according to His power and His working in their lives. Notice verse 29: "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." So Paul was determined to be a true minister of Jesus Christ. He uses the word in verse 29 "whereunto." So this was his purpose. He had two things that he did: he labored and he strove. He did all of that in the power of the Spirit of Christ given to him. Now the word "labor" in verse 29 means "physical and mental exhaustion." It means to labor to the point of being weary and exhausted.

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, Paul said, "...be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." What motivated Paul to labor to the point of exhaustion was that he knew he would be rewarded. One day he would hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

For myself and all of us included, to serve the Lord, do you know what our motivation is? Our motivation is to please God and to honor God and to glorify God, and one day we will hear those words in Matthew 25:21: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of the Lord." I believe with all my heart that there is coming a time for all of us Christians that this one thing is the only thing that is going to matter. All the things you're worried about,

all the things you're so absorbed in, all the things you're so distracted with, all the desires, pursuits and passions you have all boil down to this: Will you hear Christ say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" when you enter into heaven? That's all that matters. And that's all that should motivate us and should constantly motivate us.

Why does the minister do what he does? Why does he work? Why does he labor? Why does he fly? Why does he teach? Why does he study? Why does he pray? Why does he sacrifice? Many times even their own families suffer because of their commitment to the church and to the work of Christ. He wants to hear those words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of the Lord."

Paul goes from laboring to striving. The word "strive" is even more intense. It's the Greek word "agonizo." We get our word "agonize" from it. It's used of athletes who would agonize in running a race or in wrestling. I remember when I was young, we used to wrestle. It was so taxing, so demanding. And when we had our son, Jared, he and I would get on the floor and wrestle. It's a kind of Dad thing to do. Then he would start getting bigger and stronger. "Come on, Dad. Let's wrestle!"

"No. No." I remember I got him boxing gloves when he was about five, and I'd kneel in the living room, and we would box. Every year, he'd hit me a few times, and it was like, "Whoa, whoa!" I'm getting older and weaker, but he's getting older and stronger. Then one time, he decked me. He was about eleven. I took off those gloves and threw them down. No more boxing anymore. This is humiliating. It's strenuous. And that's what Paul uses to describe the ministry. Ministry is hard work.

Evangelist D. L. Moody said that one time he had come home so tired from his preaching that he fell in bed and said, "Lord, I'm tired. Good night." And he hit the hay. I've prayed that prayer many times. So he says he was striving and he was working.

Here's the closing point, verse 29: "...according to His working." From that word "working" we get our word "energy." "...according to His energy, which energizes me mightily." I love that. Do you know that God has promised to give you strength for whatever he calls you to do? I'm convinced that's true of me. Whatever God calls me to do, He gives me the strength to do it. When I don't have the strength to do what I'm doing, then obviously God's not called me to do that. "God, it's Your work. God, it's Your ministry. This is Your church and these are Your people. Lord, You'll have to give me the strength and ability to do what You've called me to do." And if it's not there, then maybe He's called me to do something else.

You know God's given you the strength to be the wife He's called you to be. The husband He's called you to be. The servant He's called you to be. Whatever God calls us to do, He gives us His grace and strength.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain. But I labored more abundantly than they all, yet

not I, but the grace of God, which was in me.”

I hope and pray that as a result of the study of this passage that you not only know what the minister is to be and to do but that you also know that you are called to be ready to share the Gospel of Christ. To be willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. To be faithful as stewards of Christ and to strive in the energy and power of Christ.

Let's pray.