

**Bible Text:** 1 Timothy 3:1  
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Grab your Bibles and go to 1 Timothy 3 as we're going through this epistle on Sunday mornings. Beautifying the bride, that's what we're talking about when we come to 1 Timothy as the Apostle Paul is teaching, instructing Timothy of how he is to fashion, set up, structure, and then function in the local church at Ephesus. So the, the local church is the bride of Christ. Now one day all the local churches will come together as one universal glorious bride, that's at the Second Coming of Christ, that's at the end of this age and the beginning of the eternal state, but right now God's bride is in all of these local churches all over the world, and the Bible gives us the way God wants her to be fashioned and to function and 1 Timothy is directed almost exclusively to that mission and, "Timothy, here's how I want you to structure this thing. Here's how I want you to function in this thing, this local church."

Now 1 Timothy 3 begins talking about church leadership. This morning we will only look at verse 1 and I don't know if this is, is an encouragement or a discouragement but looking at my notes over the years, I probably have and I'm not exaggerating here, 200 hours of study in this chapter because it's so vital and it's so important. Ah, that means I, I could give you 200 sermons on this chapter. Not really, not literally, each sermon takes a lot of hours itself but I'm going to more, be much more abbreviated than that as we go through it but it is important this morning, I think, to look exclusively at 1 Timothy 3:1. Notice what the apostle says there,

1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer,  
it is a fine work he desires to do.

I call this "The God-Called Pastor." The God-called pastor. One of the greatest achievements of Satan is in putting into the pastorate and putting behind the pulpits of local churches men who are not God-called. There are those men who ascend to the sacred desk to lead God's people who do so because they have just good human gifts. They are naturally gifted in, in communication or in rhetoric, maybe even humor. They have organizational skills and on and on we could go. Now those things are not wrong, they're helpful but that does not mean they're called of God. There are those through the years who have ascended to the sacred desk and the office of pastor in the church who are mama-called. Mama always thought that would be wonderful if her son was in the ministry and she prodded and poked and pushed and massaged until he went into the

Gospel ministry, but what really matters is a man God-called. Just as God calls you to salvation and if he calls you to salvation, he performs in you through the preaching of the Gospel and the ministry of the Holy Spirit a regeneration within your heart, so it is God's sovereign purposes to call some to the office of pastor, sometimes I call it pastor/teacher in the local church.

Well, here's a question: how do you know if God has called you to the Gospel ministry? How do you know? Well, let's talk about that. Now by way of introduction, we know in the Old Testament it was common for God to speak directly out of heaven and assign a man to a particular task like to be prophet of the people. Sometimes God spoke through angels and assigned men to that task. During the New Testament era, that is when Jesus was on the earth ministering, he himself would call these men and say, "Follow Me," and he would begin to pull them aside and pour into them and train them for the following Gospel ministry they primarily would pursue after he was ascended back into heaven. But today that has been replaced. Jesus is not here. We are not receiving divine direct revelation, a voice from heaven or a voice through angels, but it is the compelling work of the Holy Spirit within a man's heart and this inward compelling work then must be balanced with all the stipulations God gives through Timothy in 1 Timothy 3, and these are to be observed and there is to be the, ah, affirmation of the local church in the final analysis before a man can consider himself called of God into the Gospel ministry.

Now looking at verse 1, let's break it down this way. Notice I., this is a weighty calling. A weighty calling. When Paul starts out here, he says, "It is a trustworthy statement." Now that phrase of a trustworthy statement is a phrase that Paul uses five times in his writings that we now have as part of the New Testament, and each time Paul used that phrase, "It is a trustworthy statement," something of solemn and weighty importance was about to be stated.

For example, go back to 1 Timothy 1 and look at verse 15 where he uses this exact same phrase. He says in chapter 1, verse 15, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost." Now that truth, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, is a weighty and important and great statement, and he uses the same phrase to introduce this thing of men being called to the pastorate. So as Paul uses this phrase to introduce those who believe they're called into full-time Gospel ministry, he's showing us this is a high, important and weighty matter. As a matter of fact, historians tell us this creed, it's a trustworthy statement, became a common creed in the early church and they knew anytime a leader said, "Now it's a trustworthy statement," you got up on the edge of your, your pew and you listened carefully because something of great importance was about to be uttered. That's what Paul is saying here.

Now beginning in Acts 14, we begin to see the rising profile of pastors or elders in the local New Testament churches. You know, you had the Lord Jesus Christ who led the entire enterprise and then after Christ ascends into heaven, we have these apostles who led the entire enterprise, and then slowly the apostles established local churches all over the known world and then slowly they began to appoint elders in all of those churches. So

it was a slow progressive thing that finally came to the settled fashion, if you will, or structure of the local church and that is that there are men called of God to lead and oversee these churches.

The Bible tells us in Acts 14:23, we'll not look at that yet, but in Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas are appointing elders in all of the churches that they've founded. Now let me make this statement: a pastor or an elder or pastors or elders are not essential to the existence of a church but they are essential as to health and the good of the church. So there were churches before there were pastors pastoring the churches. The apostles were something like circuit riders, they would make their circuit around to the established congregations before there were any pastors appointed. As our country was discovered and the 13 colonies became a nation and the journey westward began and settlements began all over what we have now is, is what we'd call the midwest and ultimately out to the west, ah, churches would pop up, up all over these known regions and there would be circuit riding pastors, sometimes you might not get a pastor to preach at your place for two or three months and you were so glad when it was your turn for a pastor to come through. Well, that's kind of like it was in the early days of the formation of the Christian faith 2,000 years ago as these local churches are established everywhere and slowly the apostles would minister to them and then begin to appoint preachers, pastor/teachers in every church.

Now here's what you've got to get clear in your mind to start off with, and that is that there are several terms that are used for this one office. Sometimes the word "pastor" is used, "poimen" in the Greek. It speaks to the shepherding role, the nurturing role of the man in that office. Sometimes the word "overseer" is used and that's the word used here in 1 Timothy 3:1. Overseer, which, which speaks to the leadership and the authority responsibility of this man in this one office, and sometimes, ah, you have the word "elder, presbuteros." It speaks to the spiritual maturity that that one should have. So the, the ecclesiastical structures we see in Christendom today were, that separates the bishop maybe from an elder, from a pastor, those are three distinct roles, the New Testament knows nothing about that. These are three descriptive words that describe the functions, the various functions of the man in the one office of pastor or elder in the church.

Let me give you an example. We don't have time to look it up but in Acts 20 we have the word, the label, the title, I should say, overseer and the title pastor used interchangeably. It's clearly that they are. In, ah, Titus 1:5 and 7 we have the title elder and the title overseer used interchangeably again. In 1 Peter 5:1-2, you have the term elder and the term pastor used interchangeably. So depending on what aspect or what function of the ministry the biblical writer wanted to emphasize, he would use one of those three terms: overseer, pastor, or elder.

To make it just a little more complicated, through the years the word "overseer" that we have in our text here in some of the older translations was translated "bishop." In one sense, it would technically accurate for you to call me the bishop of Grace Life Church of the Shoals. I don't prefer that, I'm not asking for that, but technically that would be true. But, um, it has become, I guess, I think hopefully affectionately that increasingly I've

been viewed as the pastor and the other men on here are called the elders. That's not absolute but it's a way to differentiate between the lead pastor, the preaching pastor and the other pastors in the church. But anyway, they're used interchangeably all through the New Testament.

In Philippians 1:1, it's addressed to the elders and the deacons of the church. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, elders had charge over the church. They were to diligently labor on behalf of the church. In Hebrews 13:17, elders are held accountable to the Lord for their guardianship of the people in their churches. 1 Peter 5:1-4, elders are exhorted to shepherd the flock of God providing examples for the people. What I'm saying here is in all of these truths that come out, we recognize the great and awesome level, importance, weightiness of this office.

I would submit to you – now listen to what I'm gonna tell ya – if Satan wants to gain advantage in God's church, if Satan wants to gain advantage over God's people, if Satan wants to gain the advantage over a country of people, the best thing he can do is compromise the pulpit. The best thing Satan can do is put a hireling behind the sacred desk and he's very very clever. Just as Judas Iscariot for upwards to three years was a part of the original 12 apostles with Jesus but was so impressive as to his seeming godliness and spirituality that even made him the treasurer of the 12. So Satan knows how to put counterfeits in the pulpit to diminish the church, the people of God and even the country that that pastor is pastoring within. This is a weighty calling.

II. Notice it is a particular calling, that is, to men only. To men only. Pastors today are just falling all over themselves apologizing for this and, and trying not to be offensive. It's just the truth. We cannot massage, manipulate biblical truth to fit the latest currents of the unregenerate culture the church finds herself in. It's a particular calling, it's a calling to men only.

Notice what he says here, "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man." Now this is not the feminine form of the word, it is a masculine form. That's why it's translated "man" and not "woman." It's of the masculine gender. As a matter of fact, each descriptive qualification for the office of pastor listed, listed it, listed rather in verses 2 through 6 is also in the masculine gender. And then verse 2 makes it very clear, he's to be the husband of one wife. If there was any possibility in the mind of God that this office was open to women, those statements and that exhaustive use of the masculine gender would never have been made. God made men and women different from each other.

Now ladies, remember in chapter 2 how God gave women the lofty, awesome and most powerful role of bearing children and training children for the glory of God in the world. I don't know if you've known this lately but, ah, you may have noticed men can't have babies. That's a role, a distinguished, esteemed, high, lofty dignity, a role God gave to women and godly women and spiritual women embrace and rejoice and praise God for the greatness of their role in God's kingdom. They can do things men cannot do and God's given roles in the church women are not to be called to do.

So there are limitations within the church for the roles that men and women play. Women, again, are of absolute equal importance before God, being, ah, co-image-bearers of the mark of deity God puts in his children. The women have that wonderful privilege of bearing children, nurturing children to impact the world through those children for the glory of God. Men are given the outward overt leadership and, um, there is a beautiful complementary balance in all that God does. It is a particular calling, a calling for men only.

III. It's an inward calling combined with an outward pursuit. It's a calling that starts in the heart and soul of a man. A desire is the word that's used here. Paul says in verse 1 of chapter 3, "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires," we'll get to that word in just a moment, "to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do." The word "desires" there has the idea of a passionate inner compulsion. There is an ever-abiding drive in his soul that, "I want to be about the work of preaching God's Gospel, of ministering to God's people, of building up and strengthening God's church." Now there's a lot of good and godly men in the church who have that but this would be different. This would be that drive that goes beyond even the level of a committed churchman in the church. So it's, it's, it's a literally one is beginning to stretch himself toward or to grasp that role or that office or that responsibility into the church.

Now the word "aspires" is a little bit different. It literally refers to external movement. This person finds himself reading, he finds himself studying, he finds himself wanting to be around the leaders in the church. He finds himself wanting to learn more about it, again, and it goes beyond the level of a committed churchman. A churchman should have all of those things but it's an abiding desire that has an outward pursuit as he begins to study and read and learn things pertaining to Gospel ministry. So it is the man that God is calling has an internal drive that motivates him toward the external pursuit of the goal and, ah, in my experience and I think it varies man to man, but in my experience, my bones were aflame. I know what Paul said when he said, "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel. I know what God's called me to do. I know what he's instructed me to do. I know what his will is for my life. I can do nothing else." And that's what it should get to, where you're gonna be of all men most miserable if you do not surrender to that and go on for God in his service. There's some of you sitting here this morning in this hour, that this message from this text is one of the final affirmations from God's Spirit to your heart that, "Yes, that is the course God has put me on." Ah, our Anchored in Truth missions is being wonderfully blessed, wonderfully blessed. We have places across this country where we need God-called men to go preach his word and shepherd his church. It would just be understandable that God would begin to call and lead more men to surrender to the Gospel ministry.

Now let's remind ourselves that this is a passion – now listen – not for position or rank. I'm not saying a man of God is perfect and he's all, and he's perfectly cleansed from wanting a position or a rank in, in Gospel ministry or in the church but here's what happens, when he dwells on that long, he gladly receives the reproofs and the rebukes of the Holy Spirit that you've got this thing upside down. This will include likely rank and position but that's not the main drive. The main drive is to be willing and yielded to serve

God and be about the work, "I want to teach the word. I want to preach the word. I want to structure and organize and nurture, disciple and care for God's people in God's church. I want to be about the work." I remember in my own heart laying in bed at night reading the Scriptures and thinking about, "I've got to tell this to somebody. I've got to teach this to somebody. The world needs to know these things. God's church needs to understand these truths." And that's been, what? 40ish years ago and I still have a fire in my bones about it. That's one thing you need to look for is if anyone else put the fire in there, it will burn out, but if God put the fire in there, you may need some times to separate, some times to rest, that's biblical, but the fire doesn't go out.

1 Samuel 13:14, "The LORD has sought out for Him a man after His own heart." Could I just elaborate there for just a moment? God wants men after his own heart. Let me ask you, where's the heart of God? The heart of God is to glorify himself by building his church and as a man is called in the ministry – now listen to me – he may not grasp all of that right away, I know I did not because it wasn't emphasized and it wasn't taught, but as the Scriptures began to be unfolded to him and he sees the centerpiece of God's purpose is his own glory through his local church, that begins to grasp him and he desires what God desires, God's glory through God's church for time and it will extend all the way into eternity.

Can I challenge you who may be led or prompted about Gospel ministry? Would you keep your heart centered on the work of it and forget the positions involved in it? Those positions will take care of themselves if you'll expend yourself in the work as your church leaders offer you opportunity. I can tell you this, if a man comes into this congregation and he says, "I, I, I don't know, I may be led into Gospel ministry," and we say, "Can you help us here? Can you help us there?" and they sort of feel like they're at a cafeteria line, "No, this is what I'll do and this is what I do, this is what I'm gifted to do, this is what I'm skilled to do," well, I, I've got news for you, sir, you didn't join this church to dictate to the church what you're gonna do. If everybody did that, does that we have chaos and many needs go unmet. You should walk in and say, "If it needs to be done and I can do it, I will do it." It's a passion not primarily for rank but for the work. It's an inward desire, an inward calling with an outward pursuit.

Ezekiel 22:30, "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land." This man who is called of God and outwardly begins to prepare himself for that call is a man that will represent God and share God's interest and share God's passion. Again, that's for God's own glory through God's church, and if you're not there, then you need to get there. Your calling may be genuine but your thinking about it may be weak.

IV. It's an important calling. We've talked about weighty but let's elaborate under this heading of its importance. He calls them an overseer. Well, let's go to the first subpoint before I elaborate on overseer and let's go to the authority invested in this calling. When God calls a man and a local church receives him into that office of pastor, he assumes an office of significant authority and that's why this word "overseer" has come to us out of the New Testament. It's, it's a word that, um, episkopos, that has the idea of a magistrate

in the community. As a matter of fact, in Greek culture that was the common used word, word used. If they were talking about a city mayor or a city council member, he would be called an episkopos, an overseer, it carried with it authority. The Jews up until this date and still to our day, used it for those who preached, taught and exercised care and authority over the people.

So the biblical overseer has the responsibility of leading, instructing and shepherding the people of God from this office of significant authority. He's a man who receives contributions from the people. He's to hear and verify accusations and disputes among the people. He administers the ordinances of the church and administers disciplines within the church. Now as a body grows large and as a body matures, he does that in concert with many other men and ladies as that pastoral work flows down through the entire body, but it is an office of significant authority.

2. Not only the authority in the office, but the responsibility in the office. It's a responsible calling. Now we'll talk about more of these as we go through 1 Timothy but let me just list the main six as I see them. He's responsible to lead the church, 1 Timothy 5:17; to teach the church, 1 Timothy 5:17; to pray for the church, James 5:14; to care for the church, 1 Peter 5:2; to set church policy, Acts 15:6-29; and to lead in the ordaining of future pastors or elders, 1 Timothy 4:14; and you could break every one of those down into many many subpoints and responsibilities. If you are the elder or pastor in a church or one of the elders or pastors, God has given you an office of authority, but church family, don't forget they have taken on an awesome responsibility – now listen – for which they will give a greater account and bear a greater judgment from God. We, those in this office, should carry this with some humility, even some trembling. If I didn't believe in the sovereignty of God, if I didn't believe in God's power to make me effective for his glory, I could not bear the weight of the responsibility because I do take it seriously.

Thirdly, the dignity in this work. That speaks of its importance also. The dignity. He says in verse 1 of chapter 3, "it is a fine work," and that word "fine" is interesting. Now you gotta understand the context. Pastors in this day were largely hated. The Jews hated them. The Greek culture hated them. They were often greatly persecuted. It's, it's, it's not a position that generally speaking the people of the culture would say, "Hey, that's what I want my son to do." As a matter of fact, it was something the majority of people would run from, scoff at, and ridicule. Paul says right the opposite. He says, "No, no, no, this is a fine work." There is a dignity to this work and that word "fine" means it's a good work, it's a noble work, it's an excellent work, it's an honorable work, it's a work of high quality, and I submit to you the work of pastoring God's church is the most worthy task in the world. If I were to become the President of the United States of America, I would be taking a step down from my role as pastor of Grace Life Church of the Shoals. It is a fine work, a work of great honor, excellence and dignity.

4. It speaks to the importance of the work, it is a difficult calling. There's difficulty to this. He says it's a work, "it's a fine work he desires to do." It's a difficult task. The word "work" here has the idea of expending great energy, effort and zeal. I meet a lot of young

pastors who've been at it 4 years, 8 years, 12 years, and they wonder about Grace Life Church of the Shoals and they wonder about how you guys do what you do and why you're so committed to the work, and they wonder about how Anchored in Truth missions developed and, and God has blessed it so much over these years and, you know, I, I, I come back to that old phrase that's not original with me but, um, a lot of times it's a lot more perspiration than it is inspiration. To those young in the ministry out there, you do not get a healthy true work without decades of hard work behind it.

There's lots of hard work. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he said things like this, he said, he said, "Timothy, I want you to know I'm at the end of my life and I have fought the good fight." Paul said, "Ministry for me has been a fight." I don't know if you've ever been, have you ever been in a fight? The last fight I remember, I got beat up but I gave it everything I had. Now he was older and a lot bigger and I was stupid, but it, I mean, I was so tired. I gave it everything I had. Well, that's what Paul said ministry, it's work.

He said, "I fought the good fight." Now he didn't say, "I finished the fight," he said, "I finished my course of the fight." If you're called to preach, you're not gonna get finished. That's part of the difficulty is that it's never finished. Every night if you care about your work, there's someone else that could've been witnessed to that's lost and without Christ, there's something else in the body, in our case many many many many someone else's who are hurting, who are broken, who are destitute, who are discouraged and need to be ministered to. There's so many things, it just doesn't end. That's part of the difficulty of the work. That's why as Paul writes to Timothy, he uses words like "labor in this pastorate, be striving," these are biblical words, "take pains, work to the point of exhaustion in this work, give it all you've got." It's an important work and it's a difficult work.

V. It's to be a confirmed work. A confirmed work. In, in my approaching four decades of ministry, in the early years there was so very little taught and very very little application of the truth that one's calling to the ministry must be confirmed by a body of local church elders and the church family at large. There, there was almost the notion. As a matter of fact, I think it was the notion that if anybody anywhere at any time said, "God's called me in the ministry," that we were all bound almost with chains to say, "Yes, sir, what do you wanna do?" And that's why you, I can take you in Baptist churches today and they've got 76 different ministries going on because 76 people got a word from God about 76 different ministries God called them to do. Why don't we just go back to this book and let it be the authoritative sufficient word for what we do in the church and not be the laughingstock of the world because we reinvent ourselves and reinvent our ministries every six months to two years in the church, just stay with the old stuff, be faithful to it?

Your call into ministry is not the call of God until God's local church confirms it, those who have watched you, those who have nurtured you, those who have loved you and cared for you. Now our position here at Grace Life Church is we're gonna always err on grace, we're gonna believe you, we're gonna support you, but there are times when we're gonna say, "You know, we don't think you're ready. We think you need to work on some things in your life." There's been many a young man come through our church and had

great skill and great talents and great potential but they had weak character and we said, "You need to slow down. We can't send you out with our blessing. We cannot confirm this yet."

Just to give you an idea, first of all, this confirmation is not spelled out in this text but what's the context? Who is Paul writing to? He's writing to a young pastor, Timothy. How did Timothy get in the pastorate? The people of his local church affirmed him, confirmed him, and the Apostle Paul who had unique apostolic authority. We don't have that anymore but in this day, that was enough. He was confirmed by Paul and his church, then he was ready for the office of pastor in the local church.

Just a few verses to show you how thoroughly this is taught in the Bible. He tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe." Here's his point: God's called you, you've sensed it in your heart, you've pursued it outwardly, and your church and me as the apostle, has confirmed you to this work and if we've confirmed you to this work, yes, you're young and, yes, young preachers make immature mistakes. You remember me? Boy, I'll, I'll tell ya and I just mean this genuinely, I'm so grateful that you saw my heart and calling and didn't judge me for all my blunders and immaturities through the years. Timothy had the same problem but Timothy could go back on something and say, "I know God called me and the apostle gave me his blessing and my church gave me his blessing, so I'm gonna lead on with authority and I'm not letting this church look down on my youthfulness." Because he was confirmed. God confirmed him and God do it, did it through Paul and the local church.

Now look at Titus 1:5, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you." Now Paul leaves Titus on the island of Crete and the churches on the island of Crete were in a big mess and Paul tells Titus, "Among other things, I want you to go to these local congregations on the island of Crete and I want you to recognize who feels like he ought to be an elder of the church." That's not what he says. "Titus, you take authority and you appoint the elders in those churches and they're to submit to you." So Titus is functioning as an extension of the authority of the Apostle Paul because the churches had not been established long enough to have the truth and the guidance of the Spirit to begin to see, sense, discern, and confirm the elders God has given them in the church. And we don't have the Apostle Paul today, nor his associate Titus to come tell us what to do, but we do have the word of God and proven men and an overall decently mature church family that can discern and sense these things and sense a confirmation ought to be given to certain ones for Gospel ministry.

Acts 13:1-4, "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul and while ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" So here's God saying set these men apart. "Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands," that's the local church, "on

them, they sent them out." Then verse 4, "So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit." Which one is it, pastor? They laid their hands on him. They sent them out. Then the next verse says then the Holy Spirit sent them out. Which one is it? It's both. It's always both. Now listen, if, if, if the Holy Spirit can lead you into ministry, can he not lead those in your church to discern that too? That's the confirmation. Paul and Barnabas themselves needed that to be sent out.

Acts 15:1-6, "Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue." They've got an issue in the Gentile churches about getting saved and what they should do about certain ceremonial customs of the law, and what does Paul and Barnabas do? They go back to the local church to get confirmation from them. "When they arrived at Jerusalem," verse, ah, 4, "they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported that God, what God had done with them. Some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up to say, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.'" Now here's, here's the controversy, we want them to be ceremonially like Jews but, "The apostles and the elders," verse 6, "came together to look into this matter." So even when the esteemed apostle had problems in the church, it was his custom to go back to a local church to get confirmation.

What am I saying? I'm saying God's made it clear in the New Testament that his work is to be confirmed and overseen by local churches and that includes one's call into the Gospel ministry. You see, a man who seeks the office of pastor seeks an office of significant authority but he must begin that journey submitting to the authority of his church. I think that is so vital. It was very very vital in my own pilgrimage to first submit to my pastor and honor that authority before God gave me the office of authority in a church. So that's the way, that's the means God has ordained to confirm those whom he has called into the Gospel ministry.

Now let me end with one more verse, a cross reference, 1 Peter 5:2 where the Apostle Peter is exhorting here and he says, "shepherd the flock of God," not the flock of Jeff, not the flock of Matt, not the flock of Steve, not the flock of the elders, the flock of God. Boy, that's, that's something pastors must remember, the church is not your church. You cannot lead this church according to what you feel is best, you must lead according to what he feels is best for his flock. You are an under-shepherd, you are a steward of another's property if you're a pastor.

Put it back up there, please, "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising over, oversight," now notice, "not under compulsion, but voluntarily," that means I'm, I'm not being driven to be forced to do this, this came up in my own heart by the Spirit of God. I chose to do this because God was leading me and calling me here. "But voluntarily according to the will of God," and I think that means the will of God into how the work's

to be done but it's the will of God that I have this role, "not for sordid gain," not for the financial gain, not for material gain, "but with eagerness."

Has God called you to the ministry? Church, do you understand what it means for God to call men to the Gospel ministry? I think we all need to covenant in our hearts together to seek the Lord because, I'm telling ya, the harvest is getting white for us through our missions work but the laborers are getting few. We need more and more men that God would call because you know what I found through the years? Some of you know our history and know that we've had some tough days, you can't quit what you didn't start. "Well, Jeff, why didn't you leave when all this went on with all that?" Because you can't quit what you didn't start. God put me here. I didn't start this and I can't quit until he says quit. I can't leave until he says leave. I can't transfer until he says transfer. You can't quit what you didn't start. You can't stop what you didn't start. That's the kind of men we need in the ministry who lash in. Oh, there were times when I wondered if I'd be fired. There were times when I wondered if this is gonna affect my salary greatly if I make this stand. But we're not to be in it for that. That takes care of itself over time. We're to be in it for the glory of God and the good of his church because it's the flock of God, it's not ours.

Has God called you to this work?