

PHILIPPIANS: OVERCOMING BROKEN DREAMS GOD'S WAY
"Part I: Making The Most Of A Pastor's Slavery To Christ"
(Philippians 1:1-2)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Throughout my ministry as a pastor these last 24 years, I have encountered members in churches who have approached me much like they would a candidate running for office to view their wishes regarding what I am to do in ministry. Let me give you some examples:

(a) Once a man came up to me and said, "Pastor, I saw you use the gesture of opening up the palms of your hands toward us as a congregation, and motion in our direction. That signals that you are pushing people in the church away from you, so I am asking that you stop pushing people away from you by no longer using that gesture."

(b) Another time several ladies mentioned to me that they felt I was good at preaching on biographies, but not so good preaching on books of the Bible or doctrinal themes. They suggested that I stick with Biblical biographies to be effective for the Lord.

(c) Another time I had a former pastor of the church I was pastoring at the time share with me his view that I ought to be doing something he used to do in the church rather than continuing to do what I was doing. I felt he thought I was obliged to heed his advice as he was somehow over me in the Lord.

(2) Though I could include numerous other similar events here, in each case, I have **NOT** heeded these bits of advice because the advice was given, but **continue** operating as though I am not directly answerable to any human but God Incarnate Himself!

WHY? WHY does Pastor Shell, and other pastors and Church leaders like him, operate INDEPENDENTLY of the will of the PEOPLE? After all, didn't the congregation elect him and other such leaders to do the will of the people like the president of the United States is elected to serve us? What does this mean, and how does God want me to adjust to this?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section as follows . . .)

Need: "I see that our pastor functions NOT NECESSARILY based on what the majority in the congregation would want from him unlike what we expect of an elected official, and that INDEPENDENCE of his concerns me! WHY is this, and HOW must I respond productively?!"

- I. **According to Paul's words in Philippians 1:1-2 with the pastoral epistles to Timothy, a church's pastor is to be Christ's SLAVE!**
 - A. Though Paul often called himself a **slave** of Christ as an *apostle*, on **one** occasion in Scripture he named **Timothy** as Christ's **slave** -- in Philippians 1:1, cf. Moulton & Geden, A Concordance to the Greek Testament, p. 227-229; 943-944; UBS Greek New Testament, p. 681.
 - B. Now, **Timothy** was not an apostle, but was Paul's helper who later became a **pastor** of the Ephesian Church, 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 4:12-16.
 - C. The letters to Timothy and Titus apply to "the pastoral care of churches . . ." Ryrie Study Bible, King James Version, p. 1708.
 - D. Thus, Scripture teaches that **Biblical pastors** are Christ's **SLAVES**.
- II. **Now, Paul referred to himself and Timothy as Christ's SLAVES to COUNTER a tendency for Philippian believers to RELATE in a COMPETITIVE way that ignored ACCOUNTABILITY to GOD.**
 - A. The Philippians in Paul's day, due to their Roman colonization, inherited a selfishly competitive mentality from their history that tended toward strife by way of efforts to manipulate and control one another out of selfish ambition, Bible Know. Com., N.T., p. 647-648.
 - B. Accordingly, Paul wrote of Christ's great servanthood to the Father in Philippians 2:3-13, and **uniquely** introduced himself and **TIMOTHY** as Christ's **slaves** just to **example** humble **accountability to God!**
- III. **In examining other passages on what it MEANS for a pastor to be Christ's SLAVE, we see a very UNAMERICAN, POLITICALLY INCORRECT SLAVERY job description for today's pastors!**
 - A. A pastoral slave of God must be **faithful** to God, Heb. 3:3; 1 Cor. 4:2.
 - B. A pastoral slave of God must seek to heed **God** above **all other** persons and callings, acting like a soldier in combat who submits to the point of death to his Commander, Jesus Christ, Gal. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:4.
 - C. A pastoral slave of God has the following Biblical job description:
 1. He is to preach the Word, applying it to reprove, rebuke, correct and instruct the Church in God's truths, 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Eph. 4:11-16.
 2. He is to do so with careful teaching and great patience, 2 Tim. 4:2b
 3. In the process, he must not dominate or treat God's people harshly, but see himself as accountable to God and respect those under his watch by faithfully, gently doing his job before them, Lk. 12:42-48.
 - D. A pastoral slave of God is equipped to achieve **God's objectives**:

1. God's slave is appointed by God for his ministry, 2 Timothy 1:1.
 2. God's slave is given a spiritual gift, a supernatural equipping of God's choice for him to use in the ministry in relationship to God's people in the local church, 2 Timothy 1:6-7; 1 Cor. 12:11.
 3. God's slave is equipped to suffer opposition persecution for his ministry by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, 2 Timothy 1:8.
 4. God's slave has an assignment given to him that was carved out for his efforts before the beginning of time: thus, if he does what God wants him to do in God's way, he **will** succeed, 2 Timothy 1:9.
 5. God's slave is equipped to maintain doctrinal uprightness by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit Who is in him, 2 Tim. 1:13-14.
 6. God's slave is to be strong and endure hardness in his work by the power of God and God's plan for him, 2 Timothy 2:1,3.
 7. God's slave is to watch that his **methods** are upright if he would enjoy God's approval in his pastoral *ministry*, 2 Tim. 2:5.
 8. God's slave gets progress reports from God that he is doing His will via rewards in his ministry, 2:6. (Hendriksen, I-II Tim.-Tit., p. 249)
- E. As God's slave, a pastor is very accountable to the Lord for his work:
1. Failing to obey the Lord as a pastor can lead to one's being fired by God from his job (Rev. 3:16b) or to physical punishment (Luke 12:46-48) or to his premature death (Numbers 17:1-5, 6-13).
 2. God can use a congregation to remove a pastor as His instrument (cf. Mtt. 18:15-17) or He can do so indirectly, 1 Sam. 15:22-23.
- F. As God's slave, a pastor is also guarded by God from all who wrongly try countering his God-appointed works, Rom. 14:4; 2 Chr. 26:16-23.

Application: *To be blessed by GOD under the ministry of ANY pastor doing God's will, (1) BELIEVE on Christ for salvation by faith in Christ to be saved, Jn. 3:16; 1:11-13. (2) Then, realize the accountability a Biblical pastor senses before GOD as an ASSET, and look to GOD for HIS use of the pastor as His slave to teach and guide us with His Word and find God's richest blessings en route!*

Lesson: *As SCRIPTURE reveals a pastor is to be a SLAVE to GOD, his ATTENTION, ACTIONS and CHOICES are ALL to be focused EXCLUSIVELY on GOD'S WILL -- NOT on what OTHER PEOPLE or even HE HIMSELF wants! God's people must ADJUST to this FACT if they would be blessed under the ministry of a Biblical pastor.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

During my vacation several years ago, I had been concerned about the **meaning** of the emerald rainbow that appears around God's throne in Revelation 4:3. The rainbow God had set up for Noah has a variety of colors in it, not just the color green. I am unsatisfied about remaining ignorant about any part of God's Word because, as a Pastor whose spiritual gift majors in Bible knowledge, I was bothered by this ignorance of something I was supposed to understand in my calling.

While on that vacation, after having gone to bed one night, I received a phone call from a New Hartford police officer. Someone had forgotten to lock the side door at the foot of Fellowship Hall, and the officer wanted me to come down to the Church & secure it for him!

At first, I thought of telling the officer just to shut the door and I'd lock it the next day, but then realized this was **not** the will of **God!** Romans 13:1 commands us to be subject to the governmental powers, and verse 4 tells us parties like policemen are **ministers of God** over us.

So, taking my cue as God's servant from the officer's request, I replied over the phone I would be right down to the Church.

On the way here from my home in Torrington, I happened to turn on a radio station to hear an African-American pastor from Portland, Oregon preach a message out of Revelation 4. He was detailing how the emerald rainbow around God's throne there typified throughout Scripture the color of grace. Since Revelation 4 starts a section showing God's wrath during the Great Tribulation, this pastor taught the emerald rainbow illustrated God's grace in wrath. It fit the idea of Habakkuk 3:2 that in His wrath, God would remember mercy.

Realizing that the event was allowed by the Lord to reveal to me the truth I wanted to understand, I rejoiced in the Lord's revealing His care and leading of me on even my vacation. I thus met the officer as I would a superior with a directive from God to me and cheerfully locked the Church side door and returned home to a restful sleep!

I learned then that the *rightful* MINISTERS God brings into our lives, whether they be officers of the government to do their jobs or church leaders or pastors, be their ministry by radio or in person, are GOD'S SLAVES sent by HIM to HELP us!

Let us take advantage of these SLAVES of GOD sent to us and pay heed to what GOD is directing to us THROUGH them!