

of Jesus in every place, and make you "unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." 2 Cor. ii. 15. Having a priceless treasure in earthen vessels, may the excellency of the divine power rest upon you, and so may you both glorify God and clear yourselves from the blood of all men. As the Lord Jesus went up to the Mount and called to him whom he would, and then sent them forth to preach (Mark iii. 13), even so may he select you, call you upward to commune with himself, and send you forth as his elect servants to bless both the church and the world.

*How may a young man know whether he is called or not?* That is a weighty enquiry, and I desire to treat it most solemnly. O for divine guidance in so doing! That hundreds have missed their way, and stumbled against a pulpit is sorrowfully evident from the fruitless ministries and decaying churches which surround us. It is a fearful calamity to a man to miss his calling, and to the church upon whom he imposes himself, his mistake involves an affliction of the most grievous kind. It would be a curious and painful subject for reflection—the frequency with which men in the possession of reason mistake the end of their existence, and aim at objects which they were never intended to pursue. The writer who penned the following lines must surely have had his eye upon many ill-occupied pulpits:—

"Declare, ye sages, if ye find  
'Mongst animals of every kind,  
Of each condition, sort, and size,  
From whales and elephants to flies,  
A creature that mistakes his plan,  
And errs so constantly as man!

Each kind pursues its proper good,  
And seeks enjoyment, rest and food,  
As nature points, and never errs  
In what it chooses or prefers;  
Man only blunders, though possessed  
Of reason far above the rest.

Descend to instances and try:  
An ox will not attempt to fly,  
Or leave his pasture in the wood  
With fishes to explore the flood.  
Man only acts of every creature  
In opposition to his nature."

When I think upon the all but infinite mischief which may result from a mistake as to our vocation for the Christian pastorate, I feel overwhelmed with fear lest any of us should be slack in examining our credentials; and I had rather that we stood too much in doubt, and examined too frequently, than that we should become cumberers of the ground. There are not lacking many exact methods by which a man may test his call to the ministry if he earnestly desires to do so. It is imperative upon him not to enter the ministry until he has made solemn quest and trial of himself as to this point. His own personal salvation being secure, he must investigate as to the further matter of his call to office; the first is vital to himself as a Christian, the second equally vital to him as a pastor. As well be a professor without conversion, as a pastor without calling. In both cases there is a name and nothing more.

1. The first sign of the heavenly call is *an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work*. In order to a true call to the ministry there must be an irresistible, overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling to others what God has done to our own souls; what if I call it a kind of *στροφή*, such as birds have for rearing their young when the season is come; when the mother-bird would sooner die than leave her nest. It was said of Alleine by one who knew him intimately, that "he was infinitely and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls." When he might have had a fellowship at his university, he preferred a chaplaincy, because he was "inspired with an impatience to be occupied in direct ministerial work." "Do not enter the ministry *if you can help it*," was the deeply sage advice of a divine to one who sought his judgment. If any student in this room could be content to be a newspaper editor, or a grocer, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a senator, or a king, in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way; he is not the man in whom dwells the Spirit of God in its fulness, for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants. If on the other hand, you can say that for all the wealth of both the Indies you could not and dare not espouse any other calling so as to be put aside from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, then, depend upon it, if other things be equally satisfactory, you have the signs of this apostleship. We must feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel; the word of God must be unto us as fire in our bones, otherwise, if we undertake the ministry, we shall be unhappy in it, shall be unable to bear the self-denials incident to it, and shall be of little

Spurgeon, C. H. "The Call to the Ministry." In *Lectures to My Students*. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990.