

Educational Qualifications FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

By George E. Failing

There are two amazing facts about ministerial qualifications. First these facts which seem to make the qualifications exceeding small. Second, the apparent contradiction that nevertheless the qualifications for the ministry are exceeding great. The twelve apostles were remarkable both for what they possessed and what they lacked. They lacked any thorough priestly training or Gentile learning. But positively they had a great eagerness to learn, an ardent love for Jesus, and a passion to follow Him. Their resources were both small and great. Jesus advised them all, "Follow Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." It should be noted that in the Greek the imperative is in the present tense which would have the force of keep following me.

It will certainly be agreed that Paul was the most conspicuous and learned of all the apostles. And yet it is doubtless true that he would be no better known than Gamaliel had not Jesus arrested him. Let me make the following preliminary observations.

First, the standards for entering the ministry should not be prohibitively high. There should be a licensed apprenticeship in the ministry while the individual is learning. One might observe that there is little value in beginning practice. It would scarcely be wise to study a chemistry text book and do the laboratory work the next year.

Secondly, young men should begin as early as possible. Under proper guidance this can scarcely be too early. Note for example Samuel, who at a very tender age heard and spoke the Word of the Lord.

Third, there should be a place in the church for gifted men who can never qualify for the Christian ministry, but who none-the-less have vital spiritual gifts. These men can be used as class leaders and local preachers.

Brethren, let us remember that the Christian minister is a citizen of two worlds, but an ambassador of only one, the heavenly world. He should know this world well enough to interpret heavenly things to men, but should not aspire to special shrewdness and expertness of knowledge in earthly things. Such a minister will know Palestine better than his native state and be better acquainted with heaven's Governor and King than with any earthly ruler.

But to proceed further with the consideration of the educational qualifications of the Christian ministry let us observe that in the approach to learning there is needed first of all the spirit to learn. By this I mean a readiness and an eagerness to learn. Unwillingness to study disqualifies a minister at the very threshold of his work. While there must not be a "cloth" hierarchy in the Christian church there must always remain a Seniority of privilege and experience which should be respected.

In the approach to learning there is likewise the positive necessity of enjoying the presence and help of the Spirit of learning. The Holy Spirit who is Truth is also the teacher of all truth. Is it not true that any person who is a growing Christian is always learning? If the Holy Spirit be the best of all teachers what a shame it is that we are not better

acquainted with Him, eagerly waiting to be taught the lessons that He wishes to impart. The youngest Christian indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is more learned than the doctors and rabbis of mere theologological knowledge. How much more then do we learn as we are possessed by the Spirit and led by the Spirit.

Moreover there continues to be the quest for learning. Note these words from Proverbs 2:4-5: "If thou seekest knowledge as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." One is likewise reminded of the words of Paul to Timothy 4:15: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." There can be little question that practice cultivates an appetite for reading, for praying, and for every phase of the work of the ministry.

Let us proceed to consider the field of learning. The minister should know the Holy Bible better than any other book. The Bible should be to him the source and fountain of inspiration. It should serve to provide flavor and imagery to his preaching as well as direct words of counsel and comfort. Surely the preacher who does not live in the Bible does not dwell in the secret place of the most High. This knowledge of the Word of God remains his secret of power and wisdom, his invincible shield and sword.

A Christian minister should likewise know sacred theology, and have an understanding of church creeds and church history. There is much empty talk about despising creeds and loving Christ. But it is impossible to think of Christ except in terms of ordered thoughts which sometimes men call creeds. These statements of Bible-loving saints are valuable to us. No Christian starts to live and think for the first time. Many others have lived and prayed and thought before him and there is certainly little advantage in denying ourselves the benefits of studies and wisdom of the others.

The Christian minister should be aware of the implications of certain theological truths and should be able to discuss theology in terms of practical experience. It is exceedingly helpful also for the Christian minister to know something of church history. Actually church history in our day is but an uninspired record of the extension of God's kingdom, the kingdom which God established on earth in the day of the first Adam and which continues until the present.

Again, the Christian minister should know people as well as theology. Especially should he cultivate acquaintance with godly people. This knowledge of people was the especial genius of John Wesley. He learned doctrine with experience and tested doctrine by experience. On the other hand, John Calvin published his completed theological thesis at the age of twenty-eight before he had expended practical opportunity to work much with others who were learning to know the Lord.

The final suggestion is that the Christian minister should be acquainted with what one may call pastoral science. This includes all that may be understood by careful studies in psychology and psychiatry. But pastoral science is not limited to these. There are laws of the mind, but these laws are neither invariable nor absolute. The mind can be in-

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Self-Denial

By Evangelist Thomas Lauderbaugh

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

(Matt. 16:24).

To deny ourselves means to have ourselves under spiritual control. Reason, revelation, and conscience, all indicate the duty of self-control. All natural desires should be subject to the law of self-control. All desires of intellectual passion and tempers must likewise come under the law of self-control, for self-control partakes of "the wisdom that is from above (which) is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits." (James 3:17). Such self-control aims to establish the mind in all comely traits and tends to happiness both in the individual and in society at large.

Likewise, spiritual self-control means spiritual self-denial. Self-denial is the opposite of self-gratification. It has to do not so much with the unlawful and sinful, as with the permissible and pleasing. To deny self is not to please self in the direction of inclinations and indulgences that can result in no good. Christ set an example of self-denial; He pleased not Himself.

The problem of life is often solved by this simple law. Many a man has made a miserable failure by not curbing his desires to grasp more than his natural capacity could profitably employ. Unhappiness is sure to follow when self-pleasing is made the law of life. Self can be encouraged to think it not only wants, but deserves, the world; and then when it gets an extravagantly large share, to turn in and fight for more, and in the end, like Alexander, sit down and cry because there are no more worlds to conquer.

Religiously, self-denial is of the utmost importance. Our Lord made it a primary condition of discipleship. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." To the self-denying, the will and glory of God and the salvation of men must ever be of more account than any self-interest or pleasure. Such self-denial rules the body, the mind and the heart. It keeps self in subjection and holds the happiness and welfare of others in full view.

William Raymond, a missionary, said "When God called me, He said, 'Go to Africa.' My whole soul rose up to go. A blast and mildew seemed to be spread over everything here. I saw no beauty in anything, unless it was in some way connected with my God-called duty." Yes, dear reader, you can stand upon the deck of the vessel and see your native hills sink away until they are entirely hidden behind the mass of water that lies between you, with no other emotion than that of joy that your heavenly Father has counted you worthy to carry the light and life to those who set in the region and shadow of death. The labor of a self-denying soul anywhere is a delight.

True self-denial does not put on rags, nor offend the proprieties of life and the laws of society. It does not select a tub for its home, neither a mansion to live in. Nor does this excellent grace borrow the trumpet of the Pharisee to proclaim its piety, or engage a street-corner for the exhibition of its humility of garb and spirit. When self dies, then, and then only, can the church go forward.

—Pilgrim Holiness Advocate.