

## Qualifying for Ministry

**Acts 1:20** For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take.

While this scripture is speaking of Judas, it has application to us today. To me, one of the saddest things possible is for our calling and purpose to be given to another because we did not fulfill it. Remember that Judas walked with Jesus just as the other disciples. He heard the same teaching as the other disciples. He worked miracles just like the other disciples. He went forth when Jesus sent them two by two just like the others, yet his position was taken by another. What is the difference between Judas and us? To me, that is an important question to answer.

Judas was a zealot. His primary focus was on the overthrow of Rome and the establishment of the kingdom of Israel. He was very sincere in his goals and purpose. When he heard Jesus speak of the Kingdom, he thought, “here is one who can accomplish my desire”. He fitted Jesus to his political purpose rather than fitting himself to Jesus' purpose. We can see this in the scripture when we look at the way the disciples addressed Jesus as they spent more time with Him.

As the disciples came to Jesus at the beginning they called Him Rabbi, that is, teacher (John 1:38 among others). As you follow them through the Gospels, the way each addressed Jesus moved from Rabbi to Lord. The fullest expression of this is at the last supper.

**Matthew 26:22-25** And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? (23) And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. (24) The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. (25) Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

In their relationship with Jesus, each of the disciples had moved from Rabbi (master, teacher) to Lord except for Judas, who still referred to Jesus as Rabbi (master, teacher). Judas never made the transition to the Lordship of Jesus. While one would find it very difficult to betray anyone whom you thought of as Lord, it is not nearly as hard to betray someone whom you think of as teacher.

We should learn a clear lesson from this. Judas didn't betray Jesus for the 30 pieces of silver. The money was not his motivation. He was a zealot. He saw Jesus as the one that had the power to establish the kingdom of Israel. He thought that he could manipulate Jesus into proclaiming his kingship. He never dreamed that Jesus would actually allow himself to be put to death. Judas thought that his betrayal would cause Jesus to use his power in a political manner. That is why he killed himself when he realized how wrong he was.

We too must transition to the Lordship of Jesus. We cannot manipulate Him for our own agenda or for our own gain. He is Lord and King. We do His will; He doesn't do ours.

Paul was also concerned about this. He disciplined himself for the ministry like an athlete disciplines himself for an athletic contest. His reason for doing this was to ensure that he would not become a castaway himself after ministering to so many others.

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27** Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. (25) And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. (26) I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: (27) But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

If this was a concern for the Apostle Paul, where does that put us?

Paul said that we should prove ourselves in all things as ministers of God. The list of areas that approve us is certainly not a seminary curriculum.

**2 Corinthians 6:4-10** But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, (5) In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; (6) By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, (7) By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, (8) By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; (9) As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; (10) As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

While we can never be worthy of our salvation, however, we do need to be worthy of the work God has called us to do.

**Ephesians 4:1** I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

It is a constant theme with Paul in his other letters, also.

**Colossians 1:10** That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

**1 Thessalonians 2:11-12** (11) As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, (12) That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

In each of these cases, walking worthy is always related to God's calling and His work.

Peter gives us clear instruction on the things that need to be added to our lives and continue to increase as we grow in the Lord. [See *The Process of Change lessons for understanding on how these qualities become a part of us.*] The first part of Chapter 1 of Second Peter details these things and then in verse 8, Peter tells us why they are so important.

**2 Peter 1:8-11** For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was

purged from his old sins. (10) Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: (11) For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Greek word that is translated here as *barren* means *idle, useless, inactive*, and interestingly, *unemployed*. If we don't have the qualities listed and if they are not increasing in our life, we could find ourselves *unemployed* in the kingdom of God. To be called to work and then be unable to fulfill that work would be most tragic. Peter says that we are to be diligent to make our calling and selection steadfast, stable. If we practice the things listed, we will never fall or fail.