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NewEra

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FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY

As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:5)

There's a big difference between starting and finishing, but one word carries both meanings. The word commencement is used in two common ways: the ceremony where degrees are conferred on graduates, and the beginning of a process. ¹Each year, schools hold commencement or graduation services. Commencement is the finish line for which students labor and toil—some for many years—in hopes of donning an awkward robe and funny hat and walking across the stage to shake hands with the president or dean, pose for a photo, and receive their coveted diploma.



**DR. VICTORY
GODSPOWER**
International President

However, graduation is not—or at least should not be—the ultimate goal of students' studies. It is rather the conclusion of their academic *preparation* for something else. Those who enroll in seminary typically do so in order to be equipped for ministry. At Christian institutions, a commencement service celebrates the faithfulness of God, recognizes the achievement of those students who have “fulfilled” all of the requirements for their degrees, and then commissions them to carry out the good works to which God has called them. While commencement looks back and marks the close of one chapter, it also marks the beginning of a new one. Thus, I frequently charge seminarians who have fulfilled the requirements of their degree programs to “fulfill your ministry.”

Not everyone who begins seminary fulfills the requirements of their degree. Financial difficulties, health crises, family pressures, academic challenges, personal burnout, changes in calling, moral failings, or other factors may lead seminarians to withdraw before completing their program.



FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY

Similarly, not all seminary graduates continue in faithful ministry. One study, Pastors in Transition, surveys seven motivating factors for why pastors leave their local churches:

1. they preferred another kind of ministry;
2. they need to care for children or family;
3. they had conflict in the congregation;
4. they had conflict with denominational leaders;
5. they were burned out or discouraged;
6. they left due to sexual sin;
7. they left due to divorce or marriage problems.²

A recent Lifeway study cites change in calling (37%) and conflict in the church (26%) as the top reasons for pastoral attrition, followed by family issues (17%), moral or ethical issues (13%), poor fit (13%), burnout (10%), personal finances (8%), and illness (5%).³

What we often call 'ministry burnout' ... is often the result of pastors' seeking in their own ministry what cannot be found there”—namely, one's true security, identity, and heart rest.⁴ Ironically, multiple prominent Christian leaders who endorsed Tripp's excellent book on the dangers confronting pastors have resigned or been removed from their pastorates in the past several years, illustrating the need for all of us to examine ourselves and take heed, lest we fall.

Some pressures and pitfalls are unique to pastoral ministry, such as the constant anxiety for the spiritual well-being of others and the great responsibility of teaching God's Word (**2 Corinthians 11:28; Jas 3:1**). Others are intensified versions of the challenges facing every would-be disciple who must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Christ (**Luke 9:23**).

Is our commitment to Christ even deeper than our commitment to our family

(Luke 14:26)? Do we love and cling to Christ more than to possessions and the pleasures of this life (**Luke 8:14; 18:22–25**)? Do we crave the approval of others more than the reward of God, who sees in secret (**Matthew 6:16**)? The Lord summons us to “sit down and count the cost” of being his disciple lest our lives resemble an unfinished tower that workers abandoned due to lack of planning (**Luke 14:28–30**). Those who apply to seminary and who interview for pastoral positions and other ministry positions should “count the cost,” lest they fail to continue in faithful discipleship and gospel ministry.

As one well acquainted with the trials of ministry, the apostle Paul regularly encouraged other gospel workers. Near the end of his life, Paul writes from prison to Timothy, his faithful ministry partner and beloved spiritual child. In his final charge in 2 Timothy 3:10–4:8, the apostle urges his protégé to follow his own example and carry out the duties of his ministry.⁵ He writes, “As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (4:5).

Yarbrough observes that the final three commands “serve to restate or summarize what Paul’s own life in ministry has exemplified, as well as what he has already commended to Timothy in this epistle.”⁶ Indeed, in the very next verses the apostle offers a further rationale for these admonitions: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” The shift from *you* to *I* is significant in vv. 5–6. Paul and Timothy have run together for many years as comrades and coworkers in gospel ministry. Now the apostle signals that his own race is over, so he is passing the baton to Timothy, who must faithfully carry out his own ministry. Paul’s charge to Timothy also anticipates his final summary of his own ministry career at the letter’s close by the repetition of the Greek verb πληροφωρέω (“fulfill”):

Fulfill [πληροφώρησον] your ministry. (4:5)

But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message *might be fully proclaimed* [πληροφορηθῇ] and all the Gentiles might hear it. (4:17)

Paul gives a similar command to a lesser-known disciple named Archippus. In Colossians 4:17, he writes, “And say to Archippus, ‘See that you *fulfill* [πληροῖς] the ministry that you have received in the Lord.’”⁷ Archippus is mentioned elsewhere in the NT only once in Philemon 2, where Paul names him as one of the recipients of that letter, along with Philemon, Apphia, and the church in Philemon’s house. It is possible that Archippus was Philemon’s son, but the title “our fellow soldier”—used elsewhere for Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25) — emphasizes Archippus’s significant partnership with Paul in gospel ministry.

We do not know the precise nature of the “ministry” Archippus must fulfill—it may be a specific act of service (e.g., a financial collection) or a more sustained assignment (e.g., pastoring a church). However, “in the Lord” signals that this has to do with gospel work, and the appeal echoes Paul’s description of his own calling as “a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God *fully known* [πληρῶσαι]” (Colossians 1:25).

These considerations, in addition to the parallel with 2 Timothy 4:5, suggest that Archippus's service is "an arm of Paul's own work of ministry."⁸ Perhaps this "fellow soldier" was discouraged or wavering in some way—one cannot be sure of the details. Regardless, it is striking that the apostle singles out Archippus here at the close of this letter to offer a direct, personal, pastoral word of encouragement to him.

In his final letter, Paul presents his own life and ministry as an example for Timothy to emulate: "You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings" (**2 Timothy 3:10-11**). Few observers would confuse Paul's ambition to fulfill his ministry with a quest for self-fulfillment or self-actualization. In city after city, the apostle was badmouthed, blacklisted, beaten, bound, bruised, and booted out of town for preaching that Jesus was the crucified Savior and the risen Lord (cf. **2 Corinthians 11:23-29**).⁹ Paul's message matched his manner of life.

He suffered like his Lord, and his sufferings personally and vividly illustrated his preaching about salvation through Christ's suffering. For Paul, fulfilling his gospel ministry entailed "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" to fully proclaim God's word and "present everyone mature in Christ" (**Colossians 1:24-29**)

What then does it mean to "fulfill your ministry" (ESV)? *The servant of Christ must fully carry out the assignment he has received from the Lord in a way that is biblically faithful and spiritually fruitful.* "Fulfill your ministry" includes carrying out specific duties, such as Barnabas and Paul's mission to bring funds from Antioch to the Judean church (Acts 12:25). More generally, it includes following Christ and discharging his assignments until he says, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

Not all Paul's associates followed in his footsteps. It is instructive and sobering to contrast Timothy and Archippus with one of Paul's other ministry partners: Demas. The apostle includes Demas among his "fellow workers" (**Philemon 23**) and mentions him alongside the likes of Epaphras and Luke in

Colossians 4:14. However, several years later Paul writes to Timothy, "Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to **Thessalonica**" (**2 Timothy 4:9-10**). Perhaps Demas distanced himself from Paul during his imprisonment due to fear or social pressure. Perhaps he grew weary with pressures and difficulties of ministry on the road and longed for the comforts of home. However, Paul states that Demas left him "because he loved the world" (4:10 NIV). His example contrasts sharply with those who have loved Christ's appearing (v. 8).

As one of Paul's co-workers, Demas likely assisted and accompanied the apostle in his ministry. He would have proclaimed the gospel, explained sound doctrine to new believers, and encouraged and prayed with the churches. Yet Demas did not fulfill his ministry. He left Paul—and probably Christ as well—because he sought his true security, identity, and heart rest in what this world offers rather than seeking the reward that Christ promises those who long for his return.

What lessons might we glean from Paul's exhortations to Timothy and Archippus and his personal example of fulfilling his ministry?

(1) *Fulfill your ministry by pursuing faithfulness and fruitfulness, not numbers or notoriety.* Beware the siren song of “success.” Our ministries are not defined by the number of people we baptize or the size of our loyal following (**1 Corinthians 1:11-17**). Rather, Christian ministers are servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries, and “it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (**1 Corinthians 4:12**). In today's terms, this means that one's Twitter audience, book sales, and podcast subscribers are unreliable guides for assessing true ministry success.

God may grant some faithful gospel ministers prominent platforms through their publications and speaking engagements. However, this is probably the exception rather than the rule. Graduates of seminary

graduates—and those in full-time or bivocational ministry who did not attend seminary—will labor as “ordinary” pastors, elders, missionaries, counselors, etc.¹⁰ They will not write best-selling books or speak at well attended conferences. Instead, they will fulfill their ministry out of the spotlight in relative obscurity as they share the gospel with friends and neighbors, disciple believers, teach the Bible, encouraging the fainthearted, and shepherd the people of God. As Robert Murray M'Cheyne said, “It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus.”¹¹ Seek to receive commendation from God more than success in the eyes of others.

(2) *Be content in fulfilling the ministry you have received, not the one you wish you had.* In the command, “Fulfill your ministry,” the personal pronoun is significant. *Your* ministry does not imply that the ministry is *for* you or determined by you. Rather, it means

that you have received an assignment from Christ for the sake of his name and his kingdom purposes. Pastors are often tempted to compare their ministry to others that seemingly have greater kingdom impact, stronger giving, greater unity and support from the leadership and congregation, etc.

Rather than measuring your worth as a minister against the yardstick of other people's successes or desiring a more comfortable or prominent position, seek to be content with the situation God has placed you (Philippians 4:11).

As Jesus said to Peter when he inquired about John's ministry, “What is that to you? You follow me” (John 21:22).¹²

(3) *Encourage others to fulfill their ministry.* The apostle Paul was deeply invested in the spiritual well-being of other people. He called the Thessalonian saints “our glory and joy” (**1 Thessalonian 2:20**). He yearned for the Philippian believers

“with the affection of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:8). He labored as though in childbirth to see Christ formed in the Galatian Christians (Gal. 4:19). He acknowledged his daily “anxiety for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28).

Paul also commends his coworkers like Timothy and Archippus and encourages them in their ministries. Many pastors feel significantly discouraged and weary in

their ministries. They receive constant criticism from church members. They are disappointed by the lack of visible fruit in their ministries and saddened by the sin and immaturity of their congregation and in their own lives. Pastors also feel isolated without true friendships and are burdened by the church's unrealistic expectations. Pastors need mentors and friends who will listen well, speak the truth, and encourage them to fulfill their ministry, especially in the darkest days.

Welcome To The Month of June 2023. Enjoy all God has in it for you and remain blessed!

Yours In His Vineyard!



Dr Victory Godspower
(International President)

UP COMING EVENTS IN JUNE 2023

THE PLATFORM INTERNATIONAL
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FAITH BUILDERS

MONDAY 5TH JUNE, 2023

zoom
Meeting ID: 879 1371 8618
Passcodes: 853358

Guest Speaker
PASTOR CHRIS SARNO
(USA)

DR. VICTORY GODSPOWER
President
TPI International

SOUTHERN AFRICA 17PM
WEST AFRICA 16PM
EAST AFRICA 18PM
USA 11:00 AM (EST)
INDIA 20:30 PM (UTC + 5:30)
MAURITIUS 19:00 PM (UTC +4)

For More Info Visit: www.theplatforminternational.org

THE PLATFORM INTERNATIONAL
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KINGDOM BUILDERS

MONDAY 12TH MAY, 2023

zoom
Meeting ID: 879 1371 8618
PASSCODES: 853358

DR. VICTORY GODSPOWER
President
TPI International

PASTOR ROLAND KING
USA

SOUTHERN AFRICA 17PM
WEST AFRICA 16PM
EAST AFRICA 18PM
USA 11:00 AM (EST)
INDIA 20:30 PM (UTC + 5:30)
MAURITIUS 19:00 PM (UTC +4)

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THE MINISTRY MANDATE

MONDAY 19TH JUNE 2023

zoom
Meeting ID: 879 1371 8618
Passcodes: 853358

DR. VICTORY GODSPOWER
President
TPI International

PASTOR GREG JENNINGS
(USA)

SOUTHERN AFRICA 17PM
WEST AFRICA 16PM
EAST AFRICA 18PM
USA 11:00 AM (EST)
INDIA 20:30 PM (UTC + 5:30)
MAURITIUS 19:00 PM (UTC +4)

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FOOTPRINTS FOR LIFE & MINISTRY

MONDAY 26TH JUNE, 2023

zoom
Meeting ID: 879 1371 8618
PASSCODES: 853358

DR. VICTORY GODSPOWER
President
TPI International

PASTOR GREG JENNINGS
(USA)

SOUTHERN AFRICA 17PM
WEST AFRICA 16PM
EAST AFRICA 18PM
USA 11:00 AM (EST)
INDIA 20:30 PM (UTC + 5:30)
MAURITIUS 19:00 PM (UTC +4)

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