



Run!

Heidi Truitt, July 2023

You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?

*That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. **Gal. 5:7***

These men are shepherds who feed only themselves.

*They are clouds without rain...autumn trees without fruit...**Jude 1:12b***

As in the world of business, so also in the church. The insecure and threatened will try to hold you down, devalue, marginalize, and discredit your contributions and talents – for their own self-interest. Jude, the brother of James and Jesus, warned about this. He called these individuals “scoffers,” clouds without rain, and teachers of falsehoods (**Jude 1:12-13, 17-18**).

Paul used the metaphor of the footrace to describe this truth. People will try to overtake and derail you from using your talents in service to the Lord. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing - false prophets (**Mt. 7:15**). The Bible warns to watch carefully – not everyone who works in ministry has the Spirit of God (**Col. 2, Gal. 5**). “These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit” (**Jude 1:19**).

When writing to the church in Corinth Paul made motivations clear: “We don’t peddle the Word of God for profit” (**2 Cor. 2:17**). When compensated – whether piano, pulpit, or other - territorialism can be a temptation. As with the fire hydrant and our furry loyal friend, humans also tend to protect their territory. The reasoning goes something like this: Why equip and make space for another– the congregants may decide they like them better. When that occurs, my

position (salary) will no longer be secure. The Apostle Paul built tents while also preaching so he was a burden on no one (**Acts 20:33-34**). Jesus taught the disciples to trust the Lord and share the Gospel freely - without bringing a staff, bag, or second tunic (**Mk. 6:8**). Those who are truly called will serve the Lord freely with their talents – compensated, or not. Those who are truly called will also create space for others to serve.

The early church – without a payroll - added thousands of believers daily to those who were being saved (**Acts 2**). All were “tentmakers”; all were missional; all used their gifts. You will not find a title or office in the New Testament other than the priesthood of believers (**1 Peter 2:5**); there are, however, lists of spiritual gifts. Jesus asked us to place our focus on Him, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and avoid the use of titles (**Mt. 23:8-10**). When a spiritual gift becomes a title and compensated, individuals are attracted to a “career” in ministry – with the perk of salary, benefits, and housing allowance. To keep the congregants coming back – and to keep the tithes and offerings coming in - they give the people what the tickling ears want to hear (**2 Tim. 4:3**). The message of truth, compromised. Believers, marginalized.

My friend, the Bible warns to be on your guard – not everyone in church leadership is concerned with shepherding your soul. Some are more concerned with protecting the perks. Be in the Word and in prayer. It is God’s desire for you to use the gifts He gave you for His glory. Like the Apostle Paul, run the race and use your talents fully for the Lord – let no one derail you from the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (**Phil. 3:14**).

Prayer:

Dear Lord, I have experienced a roadblock and/or discouragement in the use of my spiritual gifts. Please provide the opportunity to bring You glory and encourage the followers of Christ. Please give me the mind of Christ - eyes to see, a heart to listen, and the strength to follow.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.