



Introduction to the Doctrine of Vocation

**CPC Adult Sunday School
Week 9 - Vocation in Church**

April 6, 2025

The Case of Tom and Fred

Tom and Fred have been members of the same church for several years. Tom has a reputation of being a bit of a hothead with a short fuse. He has been praying recently about his temper, asking that the Lord would help him develop patience. Fred has a reputation for being careless with his speech, which sometimes leads to conflicts. Those who know him well have come to expect this and usually ignore his offhand comments. However, Tom finds such comments annoying. Last Sunday, Tom was engaged in conversation with another member about a particularly frustrating day at work the prior week. Suddenly, Fred approached from behind and made a sarcastic comment about Tom's job indicating that he had overheard part of their conversation. Already frustrated by his rough week at work, Tom responded, "Why don't you shut up and mind your own business!" Fred, feeling somewhat intimidated and frustrated, responded with a nervous smirk "I was just kidding. Don't be so serious." This infuriated Tom, who stormed off. Fred and Tom have been avoiding each other at church since this incident occurred. Other members have begun to notice, but are not sure what to do about it.

How might this situation affect Tom and Fred if it continues unresolved?

How might it affect the church?

What should be done to help Tom and Fred resolve the situation?



The Challenge of Submission to God's Will

1 Samuel 24:4-15



⁸ Then Abishai said to David, “God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice.” ⁹ But David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD’s anointed and be guiltless?” ¹⁰ And David said, “As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. ¹¹ The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD’s anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go.”

1 Samuel 26:8-11

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰ To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:19-21

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

1 Peter 4:19

***Impossible apart from the Gospel!**

The Importance of Submission



²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Matthew 16:24

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:42

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **James 4:7**

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:21-24

***Be mindful of our common enemies - The World, The Flesh and The Devil.**

Our Confessional Standards

WCF 25.2 *The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and **is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.***

WCF 25.3 *Unto this catholic and visible church, **Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto.***

WCF 25.4 *This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less, visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, **according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.***

WLC 63 **What are the special privileges of the visible church?**

*The visible church hath the privilege of being **under God's special care and government; of being protected and preserved in all ages, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies; and of enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation, and offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the gospel, testifying, that whosoever believes in Him shall be saved, and excluding none that will come unto Him.***

***Means of Grace (Word, Sacraments, and Prayer)**

***Church Discipline - Hebrews 12:12-15;
Matthew 18:15 ff.**

***Made effectual by the presence of Christ and his Spirit.**



Our Confessional Standards

WCF 26.1 All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by His Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as to conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

WCF 26.2 Saints by profession, are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

***Fellowship requires an appropriate level of transparency at all levels.**



Reflected in our vows:

- Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?***
- Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?***

Some Reflections on Ephesians 4

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6

***We are called to cultivate and protect unity, which requires humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another.**



⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." ⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers...

Ephesians 4:7-11

***Christ, the conquering King, has given gifts to his church.**

This includes offices (Elder and Deacon) as well as each member individually (see Romans 12:3-8 & 1 Corinthians 12-14).



Some Reflections on Ephesians 4

¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:12-16

***The purpose of Christ's gifts are for the building up of his body (Think Priesthood of all Believers).**

***Doctrine and love are essential.**

***We are to cultivate and protect this process (study the church's purity and peace).**

***We must see God at work as each of uses our gifts.**



Some Reflections on Ephesians 4

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:25-32

***We need to make use of the means of grace toward one another (Christ ministering through us) as each of us battles the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.**



Returning to the Case of Tom and Fred



Some initial considerations for helping Tom and Fred:

*Tom and Fred need to be reminded of the gospel - they are united to Christ, having received all his benefits, and are called to submit to him. This situation is part of their cross bearing.

*They need to be mindful of their shared enemies - the world, the flesh and the devil. They need to be aware of how these enemies are affecting them. They are powerless to change themselves. The Holy Spirit applying Christ to them is the only power that can overcome their enemies. They need to see God at work in the situation.

*As they reflect on their status as priests, having received all they need from their Great High Priest, they must be reminded of their call to serve each other - eager to pursue forgiveness and peace - willing to be disadvantaged if necessary so that the other can be advantaged.

*Make use of the means of grace for self and others. Pray that God's will would be done - that the Holy Spirit would produce humility, gentleness, patience, kindness, tenderheartedness and love toward each other as they reflect on what they have received in Christ. Pray that God would reveal/remove the logs in their own eyes (Matt. 7) and provide a willingness to repent. Pray that God would remove all bitterness and malice.

*Those aware of the situation in the church can encourage them in these things and add their prayers and counsel as needed.

*The process outlined in Matthew 18:15-20 should be appropriately applied.



Digging Deeper

1. What is most challenging for you in loving and serving in church?
2. What do you think is the biggest disconnect for you between the gospel and your vocation in church?
3. Write a prayer addressing your answers to the first two questions.

