

A PSALM OF THE MINISTRY
by Pastor Bert

Lord, I'm drowning
in this sea of expectations—
pious hopes and dreams
zealous goals
rich traditions
practical realities
personal agendas.

Each expectation sounds so right:
Sermons shouldn't be so long
People need more attention
Evangelism must be number one
Children can't be neglected
We need more sermons on giving
Take a stand on social issues
Don't forget missions
Have you checked on the wayward?
Why don't we pray like we used to?
What are you doing to reach community people?
Why was that program allowed to die?
Doesn't anyone care about the youth?
We need to train men
Are you pursuing any continuing education?
We need to do more for the poor
Don't neglect your personal growth
Why don't we hear good theology anymore?
We ought to be planning for expansion
How about a morning Bible study?
The women's group needs something
We need counseling; can you help?
Dear Pastor, please promote this cause...
One-to-one discipleship is the key
Would you read this and tell me what you think?
I was sick and you didn't even call!

Lord, it's all true.
But with each expectation
I'm hauled before the bar
of yet another judge
to be pronounced
guilty of neglect—
once again

unworthy of my calling.
Have mercy, Lord
on a failure such as I
By your grace release me
from this prison of despair
this mental lock-up for losers.
I readily admit
incompetence
unworthiness
failures too numerous to mention.

Even long ago, Lord
I wanted no part of this ministry
I'm no prophet, I said,
Just one of the people.
But in Your sovereign wisdom
You refused to take no
for an answer
And launched me anyway
to navigate these waters.
So now,
Show me anew
Your own expectations
Guide me
by your gifting Spirit
and grant me
the grace of faithfulness,
with joy.