

Question: Do you believe that God “calls” preachers to their work today as He did in New Testament times? (Part #2)

There are two senses in which the Bible speaks of God “calling” preachers to their work. The first sense, which we addressed last week, is a direct, personal calling, as when God appointed the apostles and prophets to their work (e.g., Ac 26:12-18; 1Ti 2:7). This was a unique calling, which took place in the days when God was revealing His will to man.

The second sense of a “calling” to preach is less direct. For example, God “calls” people to salvation through the gospel of Christ (2Th 2:14). Among the individuals who will respond obediently to the gospel, are men who will become pastors (elders), evangelists, and teachers in the church (Ep 4:11). The apostles tell us that it is God Who gives to each person his capacity for service (Ro 12:4-8; 1Pe 4:11). Therefore, it is up to each individual to use the capacity that God gives him, and for some that will entail preaching and teaching. In that sense it could be said that God calls men to preach and teach the word (2Ti 4:1-5). However, this is not the direct and miraculous calling as in the case of the twelve apostles. Jesus specifically promised them, “...do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (Mt 10:19-20). The man who would preach the word of God today would be well advised to study the Scripture before preparing his speech, because he has not received the same promise the apostles received.

How does God call one to preach today? To answer that question let us notice something about the evangelist Timothy. He was told to teach “faithful men,” that they might be able to “teach others also” (2Ti 2:2). Faithful men were simply instructed to teach the same doctrine Timothy was teaching. In addition, everyone who is taught the gospel and baptized should be taught to continue spreading the word of Christ (Mt 28:19). All Christians should teach others as they have the opportunity. The only restriction is that women are not to teach or preach to men in a public forum (1Ti 2:11-12; 1Co 14:34).

Like all genuine Christians, true gospel preachers of today were called to salvation in Jesus Christ by means of the gospel. Their call to preach is much the same type of a calling; it is a duty that is understood through learning the gospel. Gospel preachers are not called directly, personally and miraculously, as in Paul’s case, nor are they granted special powers of divine inspiration to give their speeches. If any preacher claims to be inspired of God, let him produce the proof. Paul was given the power to prove his claim to be inspired; he said “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds” (2Co 12:12). If someone claims to have been personally called by God to preach -- then his claim should be confirmed in the same manner as Paul’s claim was confirmed.

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