

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE CALL TO PREACH

Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. Jeremiah 20:9

Men are by their very nature religious creatures. All societies, cultures, and nationalities have one or more "religions" that they keep. When the children of Israel left Egypt and its pagan gods and began their circuitous journey to the land of Canaan they encountered many different tribes and nations. Each one had its own gods and tradition of servitude and reverence for those deities. Then upon entering the Promised Land they were forced to do battle each step of the way with heathen cultures which owned and worshipped gods which were precious to them. The ONE true GOD was with HIS people and they ultimately triumphed and gained the land which HE had promised them. Throughout the history of the Israelites, recorded in the Old Testament, they were hindered in the worship of the true GOD by practices copied from those pagan cultures. They never completely learned that the way of the heathen was not acceptable in the sight of the LORD, but often sought to worship the ONE true GOD by using practices borrowed from those man made religions.

Sadly, this behavior has been repeated in the life of the church throughout history even to the present day. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, "*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*" (Acts 20:29-30) It was only a few years before these things came to pass. The simplicity of preaching the gospel and the lack of an organization with a hierarchy did not long appeal to the flesh. Even godly men were seduced by a desire to build "little kingdoms" of followers and to establish organizations with places of esteem for its "leaders". (see Mat.23:6; Luke 20:46; III John 1:9)

The "predominant churches" of our day bear little if any resemblance to the churches of the New Testament. Entertainment and "education" have for the most part supplanted true worship and HOLY GHOST enlightenment. This can be seen most clearly in the establishment of a class of men commonly called "the clergy". Ministry today is defined as a "profession" which one decides to enter. After fulfilling a certain course of study (some of it even includes the Bible) designed to equip oneself for the task at hand, a man (or woman) enters into "the ministry" just as one would enter any other worldly job. This all works out real well and keeps things running smoothly, and no doubt some good is accomplished in this endeavor. The only problem with it is that it goes contrary to that which is revealed in the scripture. Ministry is not a profession for a certain few but is the work which all of GOD's children are called to do for the benefit of the body of CHRIST. "*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for (i.e.; unto) the work of the ministry, for (i.e.; unto) the edifying of the body of CHRIST.*" (Eph 4:11-12) Not all of GOD's children are given teaching gifts but all of them are called to the ministry.

As we study the word of GOD, we find that those who are apostles, prophets, teachers, etc. are so because of gifts and callings given them rather than something they learned somewhere or some position of esteem that has been bestowed on them. This is not something one looks at, at a job fair and says "Oh I think I'd like to try that." This calling cannot be escaped, as Jeremiah testified. Paul said the same thing, *"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (1 Cor 9:16) There is no honor attached to the one who preaches, only to the message which is preached. If a man can live without preaching then he does not have this calling that Paul speaks about. GOD lays this burden upon whom HE will and no man can silence that nor overturn it. *"And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?"* (Rom.10:14-15)

It is requisite upon all of GOD's people to fit themselves as best as they can to whatever task HE has called them to. But it is impossible that a man can by his own study or by the instruction of others; prepare himself to preach the unsearchable riches of CHRIST. He can't even know where he ought to go except that the LORD sends him there. Phillip knew nothing of the Ethiopian eunuch's desire to understand the scripture, nor did he have any idea where he was. Yet the LORD sent him to the right place at the right time with the right message. (see Luke 12:11-12; Acts 5:27-32) Was this a coincidence? So while it is necessary that those who are thus called should be serious students of the scripture (see Acts 6:4) they must also be given to prayer knowing that *"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."* (Psalms 127:1) They also need to know that GOD can and does use "ignorant and unlearned men" (see Acts 4:13) just as ably as HE does those who sat at the feet of Gamaliel (see Acts 22:3).

Because a man is sent from time to time with a message does not mean that every time he opens his mouth he has been sent. GOD is able to shut the same mouth that HE is able to open, lest a man be lifted up with pride and think that the power of his message is in his eloquence and not the HOLY GHOST. *"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the SPIRIT and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of GOD."* (1 Cor 2:4-5)

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