

THE DIVINE CALL TO TEACH

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by

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In the brief suggestive studies during the week on "The Divine Call to Teach," we have noticed these main topics: First, that teaching is a spiritual gift, given for spiritual exercise and to bring forth spiritual fruitage. But this gift is found in earthen vessels. We are human, possessed of a divine gift, and so the aptness to teach is set in a life subject to temptation and all the human frailties. For this reason this gift, like others, depends for its efficiency upon the kind of setting in which it is cherished and exercised.

The spiritual teacher must be patient, gentle, meek; must not dispute or engage in controversy, or deal with foolish and unlearned questions. He must keep the proper self-restraint and self-direction in the exercise of this heavenly gift.

As our example, we have the Master-Teacher, One who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, One who is able, by His grace to heal the infirmities of the under-teacher, One who has compassion upon the ignorant and those who are out of the way who come under his instruction.

We are the under-teachers, with this Model before us. He was a teacher sent from God. He had His credentials from heaven. He ^{that fact} always recognized ~~that fact~~ in all His teaching, and made it stand out, that He was speaking for the Father, doing the work that was given Him to do. His divine ordination to the work was always a matter of conscious power and freedom with Him, and because of the

revelation of that power in Him, men, both friends and enemies, gave Him the honor of speaking and teaching as never any man spoke ~~xx~~ or taught. We are the under-teachers to Him, under discipline to Him, under His tuition, in all our work.

Then, as He was sent from heaven, so He turns over His work to us and calls us ~~xxx~~ by the same divine authority and power by which He himself was sent into the world. "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you; and I send you into the world not to be of the world, but to do a work in the world while being kept from the evil that there is in the world."

Then we come to the closing topic this morning,--Give thyself wholly to the exercise of this heavenly gift. We will read, to refresh our minds, 1 Timothy 4:14-16, the very passage suggested by this topic. Paul's instructions to Timothy apply in so many respects to the teacher that those two epistles are worthy of much study. The exhortation in the 14th verse is:

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. [While the teacher is not ordained in this formal way, by the ministry, it has always seemed to me that it would be a fitting thing if he were; but while he is not, it seems to me his office is none the less sacred, and the work he is to perform is none the less to be recognized as the work of God.] Meditate upon these things; [These little suggestive sketches this week are intended to be only suggestive for us to meditate upon and follow up in our study.] give thyself wholly to them; that thy profit~~ing~~ may appear to all. [Not so much as a motive for us, but that our work may confirm itself, establish itself, may command the confidence that is necessary to make it most effective, that all who come in touch with our work, have any chance to observe

it can see in it the profit that the gift was afforded to bestow.] Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine [here literally the word teaching; take heed to thyself in all matters of personal conduct, our attitude toward those who are over us, our attitude toward ~~the~~ one another, our attitude toward those who are under us; then in the teaching itself, "take heed" is the caution here, what you teach, how you teach, where you teach, and in what spirit you teach. Continue doing this; let it not be ^a spasmodic experience, but let it be that steady, continuous exercise of the gift, acceptable to God.] For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

Who could ask a larger reward than that for the exercise of this heaven-bestowed gift,--save ourselves and save those that hear us? And there might be added to that, And prepare those that hear us to go out and save others in the same way.

Now I want to read a paragraph or two in "Education," pages 80 and 81, that seem to me to have quite a direct bearing. This is in this wonderful chapter on "The Teacher Sent from God." It is pointing out in particular terms how exclusively Christ devoted Himself to the mission He was given to fulfil, how He allowed nothing to divert Him from that mission:

"It was not on the cross only that Christ sacrificed Himself for humanity. As 'He went about doing good,' every day's experience was an outpouring of His life. In one way only could such a life be sustained [note the continual element in it]. Jesus lived in dependence upon God and communion with Him. To the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty, men now and then repair; they abide for a season, and the result is manifest in noble deed; then their faith fails, the communion is interrupted, and the life-

work marred [that is the human experience]. But the life of Jesus was a life of constant trust, sustained by continual communion; and His service for heaven and earth was without failure or faltering.

"As a man He supplicated the throne of God, till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that connected humanity with divinity. Receiving life from God, He imparted life to men.

"'Never man spake like this Man.' This would have been true of Christ had He taught only in the realm of the physical and the intellectual, or in matters of theory and speculation solely. He might have unlocked mysteries that have required centuries of toil and study to penetrate. He might have made suggestions in scientific lines that, till the close of time, would have afforded food for thought and stimulus for invention. But He did not do this. He said nothing to gratify curiosity or to stimulate selfish ambition [and we might add, to draw attention to his wonderful intellectual powers]. He did not deal in abstract theories [one of the faults that teachers easily fall into], but in that which is essential to the development of character; that which will enlarge man's capacity for knowing God, and increase his power to do good. He spoke of those truths that relate to the conduct of life, and that unite man with eternity.

"Instead of directing the people to study men's theories about God, His word, or His works, He taught them to behold Him, as manifested in His works, in His word, and by His providences. He brought their minds in contact with the mind of the Infinite.

[There seems to me to be a well-defined aim for the teacher, no matter what he is teaching,--that the result of it may be to establish the contact, the union, with the mind of the Infinite.]

"The people 'were astonished at His teaching; for His word

was with power.' Never before spoke one who had such power to awaken thought, to kindle aspiration, to arouse every capability of body, mind, and soul."

Now just a few sentences from page 83:

"In the Teacher sent from God, all true educational work finds its center. Of this work to-day as verily as of the work He established eighteen hundred years ago, the Saviour speaks in the words,--

"I am the first and the last, and the Living One.'

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.'

"In the presence of such a Teacher, of such opportunity for divine education, what worse than ~~folly~~ folly is it to seek an education apart from Him,--to seek to be wise apart from Wisdom; to be true while rejecting Truth; to seek illumination apart from the Light, and existence without the Life; to turn from the Fountain of living waters, and hew out broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

Connect this once more with John 4:34, where, in characterizing His mission in a few simple words, and His devotion to it, He says:

"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Then with that let us put Paul's declaration with reference to his attitude toward the work that was given him to do, as stated in Phil. 3:13, 14:

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

I believe that "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," which is ours, is worthy of all the devotion, the concentration, of our

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powers of mind, of our time and our effort, in a similar way as Paul expressed it here, that we might reach the prize that is set before the one that is divinely called to teach.

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