

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CALL TO THE WORK

By S. L. Brengle

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you". (Acts 1:8).

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me" (Isaiah 61:1), is the testimony of the workman God sends.

God chooses his own workmen, and it is the office of the Holy Spirit to call whom he will to preach the gospel. I doubt not that he calls men to other employments for his glory, and would still more often do so, if men would but listen and wait upon him to know his will.

He called Bezaleel and Aholiab to build the tabernacle. He called and commissioned the Gentile king, Cyrus, to rebuild Jerusalem and restore his chastised and humbled people to their own land. And did he not call Joan of Arc to her strange and wonderful mission? And Washington and Lincoln?

And, no doubt, he leads most men by his providence to their life work; but the call to preach the gospel is more than a providential leading; it is a distinct and imperative conviction.

Bishop Simpson, in his "Lectures on Preaching," says:

"Even in its faintest form there is this distinction between a call to the ministry and a choice of other professions; a young man may wish to be a physician; he may desire to enter the navy; he would like to be a farmer; but he feels he ought to be a minister. It is this feeling of ought, or obligation, which in its feeblest form indicates the divine call. It is not in the aptitude, taste, or desire, but in the conscience, that its root is found. It is the voice of God to the human conscience saying, 'You ought to preach.'"

Sometimes the call comes as distinctly as though a voice had spoken from the skies into the depths of the heart.

A young man who was studying law was converted. After a while he was convicted for sanctification, and while seeking he heard, as it were, a voice, saying, "Will you devote all your time to the Lord?" He replied: "I am to be a lawyer, not a preacher, Lord." But not until he had said, "Yes, Lord," could he find the blessing.

A thoughtless, godless young fellow was working in the cornfield when a telegram was handed him announcing the death of his brother, a brilliant and devoted Salvation Army field officer; and there and then, unsaved as he was, God called him, showed him a vast Army with ranks broken where his brother had fallen, and made him to feel that he should fill the breach in the ranks. Fourteen months later he took up the sword, and entered the fight from the same platform from which his brother fell.

Again, the call may come as a quiet suggestion, a gentle conviction, as though a gossamer bridle were placed upon the heart and conscience to guide the man into the work of the Lord. The suggestion gradually becomes clearer, the conviction strengthens until it masters the man, and if he seeks to escape it, he finds the silken bridle to be one of the stoutest thongs and firmest steel.

It was so with me. When but a boy of eleven, I heard a man preaching, and I said to myself, "Oh, how beautiful to preach!" Two years later I was converted, and soon the conviction came upon me that I should preach. Later, I decided to follow another profession; but the conviction increased in strength, while I struggled against it, and turned away my ears and went on with my studies. Yet in every crisis, or hour of stillness, when my soul faced God, the conviction that I must preach burned itself deeper

into my conscience. I rebelled against it. I felt I would almost rather (but not quite) go to hell than to submit. Then at last a great "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel," took possession of me, and I yielded, and God won. Hallelujah!

The first year he gave me three revivals, with many souls; and now I would rather preach Jesus to poor sinners and feed his lambs than to be an archangel before the throne. Some day he will call me into his blessed presence, and I shall stand before his face, and praise him forever for counting me worthy, and calling me to preach his glad gospel, and share in his joy of saving the lost. The "woe" is lost in love and delight through the baptism of the Spirit and the sweet assurance that Jesus is pleased.

Occasionally, the call comes to a man who is ready and responds promptly and gladly. When Isaiah received the fiery touch that purged his life and purified his heart, he "heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And in the joy and power of his new experience, he cried out, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:5-8).

When Paul received his call, he says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. 1:16), and he got up and went as the Lord led him.

But more often it seems the Lord finds men preoccupied with other plans and ambitions, or encompassed with obstacles and difficulties, or oppressed with a deep sense of unworthiness or unfitness. Moses argued that he could not talk. "O Lord," he said, "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

And then the Lord condescended, as he always does, to reason with the backward man. "Who hath made man's mouth?" He asks, "or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exodus 4:10-12).

When the call of God came to Jeremiah, he shrank back, and said, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." But the Lord replied, "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee" (Jeremiah 1:6-8).

And so the call of God comes today to those who shrink and feel that they are the most unfit, or most hedged in by insuperable difficulties.

I know a man, who, when converted, could not tell A from B. He knew nothing whatever about the Bible, and stammered so badly that, when asked his own name, it would usually take him a minute or so to tell it; added to this, he lisped badly, and was subject to a nervous affliction which seemed likely to unfit him for any kind of work whatever. But God poured light and love into his heart, called him to preach, and today he is one of the mightiest soul winners in the whole round of my acquaintances. When he speaks, the house is always packed to the doors, and the people hang on his words with wonder and joy.

He was converted at a camp meeting, and sanctified wholly in a cornfield. He learned to read; but, being too poor to afford a light in the evening, he studied a large-print Bible by the light of the full moon. Today, he has the Bible almost committed to memory, and when he speaks, he does not open the Book, but reads his lesson from memory, and quotes proof texts from Genesis to Revelation without mistake, and gives chapter and verse for every quotation. When he talks, his face shines, and his speech is like honey for sweetness, and like bullets fired from a gun for power. He is one of the weak and foolish ones whom God has chosen to confound the wise and mighty (1 Cor. 1:27).

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