

Commissioned to Teach

“The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye should abide in [it].”

—I John 2:27

MANY ARE THE BLESSINGS

which reach the consecrated people of God through the medium of his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is his holy power. In our case, it is the power of his thoughts, his will, over our lives, and also his holy power as it operates in connection with his providential overruling of all our experiences.

God's thoughts, as they relate to his will for his consecrated people, are recorded in his Holy Word. It is through the humble and submissive study of his Word, and obedience to the precepts revealed therein, that we show ourselves approved unto him. (II Tim. 2:15) Those who surrender themselves fully to the doing of God's will are begotten of the Spirit to the hope of a new life. Thus they become the sons of God. The Holy Spirit, operating

through his Word, also anoints them to the high honor of being God's servants.

When Jesus began his earthly ministry, he quoted Isaiah 61:1,2 and explained that this was his commission to serve his Heavenly Father. This passage reads, "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 to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

Verse 2 of this commission includes the proclaiming of "the day of vengeance of our God," and the comforting of "all that mourn." This is a reference to the day of vengeance upon the nations at this end of the Gospel Age, when many would be caused to mourn as a result of the "time of trouble" it would bring upon the people. Jesus did not apply this to himself because he knew that it was not due to be fulfilled at that time.—Luke 4:16-21

Shortly after Jesus began his ministry, he sent his twelve apostles out to do a similar work. (Matt. 10:5-7) They too were to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom. In addition, he sent out seventy evangelists to represent him in the great work he had come to do. (Luke 10:1) On the night before Jesus was crucified, he said in prayer to his Heavenly Father, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."—John 17:18

The commission which Jesus gave to his disciples was ratified at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then it was that the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which came upon Jesus at the time

of his baptism, became truly effective on behalf of his consecrated followers—all who are baptized into his body. It was this that John had in mind when, in our text, he speaks of the “anointing” which we have received of him.

TO TEACH

In our text, John wrote that those who receive this anointing of the Holy Spirit do not need to have a man teach them. This does not imply that these are exempt from the need of Bible study, either individually or in association with others. John is emphasizing the fact that if we are truly anointed by the Holy Spirit to be the Lord’s representatives, then we have been taught by God and have learned the Truth which he wants us to make known to others. We are taught by God through the Scriptures and by various servants who he has provided to help us understand his Word.

In order to be qualified representatives of the Lord, we need to be acquainted with the glorious message contained in his Word. This is not a human message. It does not come from man, nor can it be understood by any except those whom the Lord enlightens by his Holy Spirit. Only such are able to understand “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 13:11) Jesus told his disciples, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear,” and added that many “righteous men” of old “desired to see” these things but were not permitted to do so.”—vss. 16,17

We may not know just how the Holy Spirit of God enables those whom he draws to himself to understand “the mysteries of the kingdom.”

Through his faithful people, the seeds of truth are sown as widely and continuously as possible. However, only one here and there responds with understanding and appreciation. It is a marvelous thing to note the readiness with which these receive the Word, and how quickly they come to an understanding of God's plan.

The wise man wrote, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." To this Solomon added, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."—Eccles. 11:5,6

How encouraging to realize that the results of "seed sowing" are in the hands of the Lord. We rejoice to realize that by his Spirit God assists those whom he calls in the study of his Word. We may think of this as a part of the anointing work of the Holy Spirit, for by it we are both authorized and qualified to be "the light of the world," workmen who do not need to be ashamed, because we have rightly divided the Word of truth.—Matt. 5:14; II Tim. 2:15

THE MESSAGE

The Holy Spirit's commission to Jesus, as recorded in Isaiah 61:1-3, presents a comprehensive idea of the message of truth we are authorized to proclaim. It is the good news of the kingdom, including the glorious hope of the resurrection of the dead. It also embraces the message of the High

Calling, because we are still to proclaim “the acceptable year of the LORD.”

In this end of the age we are also anointed to proclaim “the day of vengeance of our God.” This does not mean that we are to pronounce vengeance, either upon individuals or upon groups. It simply means that we are to explain to those who are meek and teachable the meaning of the present “distress of nations, with perplexity”—that it is a manifestation of God’s displeasure upon a sin-cursed and dying world.—Luke 21:25

Closely associated with the proclaiming of “the day of vengeance” is the commission to “comfort all that mourn.” (Isa. 61:2) This might well be a special reference to those who are caused to mourn by the distressing circumstances of “the day of vengeance.” Jesus said that “all the tribes of the earth” would mourn because of his coming and resulting presence at the end of the age, and it is our privilege to comfort at least some of these by pointing out to them the real cause of the world’s troubles.—Matt. 24:30

This seems to be the thought set forth in Isaiah 35:4, where we are commissioned to “say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.” Today the hearts of the people are filled with fear, even as Jesus foretold, and it is our privilege to explain to these that they have no real cause to fear, that while the Lord’s vengeance is upon the governments, under Satan’s control, his ultimate object is to save the people through the agencies of the Messianic kingdom.

WITNESSES FOR JESUS

Some of the details of the Holy Spirit's commission are brought to our attention in the New Testament. For example, Jesus made it plain that his people were to go forth in his name. After his resurrection, he said to his disciples, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts 1:8

The apostles came to understand this point very clearly. Peter made Jesus the very center of his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, and thousands of the Jews gathered there repented and were baptized. Shortly after this Peter preached his wonderful sermon on restitution, and again he gave prominence to the name and power of Jesus.—chap. 2:14-41; 3:12-26

We are informed that following this sermon on restitution, "the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." (chap. 4:1,2) Peter could not refrain from preaching Jesus Christ, even though his name was an offense to many who heard.

Paul's preaching was after the same pattern. With reference to his visit to a synagogue of the Jews in Thessalonica, we read, "Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."—Acts 17:1-3

TO WHOM?

Having come under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, to whom are we to proclaim the good news of the kingdom? The commission of Isaiah 61, quoted in part by Jesus, emphasizes that we are to minister to the “meek,” meaning the teachable—those willing and anxious to learn. However, this is quite general in the sense that it does not specify any particular group of people.

We are not to single out those whom we assume to be meek and confine our message to these. We are incapable of judging who, among all the people with whom we come in contact, are meek, and who are not. To use a scriptural expression, we are to “sow beside all waters,” in the belief that the Lord will overrule in such a way that the message will reach the hearts of those who are meek, while those who are not meek will have no ear for it.—Isa. 32:20

However, we have a special responsibility toward the meek who respond to the message. It is our privilege to further instruct these in the ways of the Lord. There is not only the evangelistic phase of the ministry, but the teaching and pastoral work as well. We are not only to witness the truth to others, but we are to build up one another in our most holy faith, and it is only the meek who benefit from this aspect of our ministry.

The kingdom message should not be held back from any who indicate a willingness to listen. Jesus made it clear that the whole world is to be considered our field of activity, and we should have a willingness to impart the message far and wide to Gentile and Jew, professed Christians and those of

the world, believers and unbelievers, the young and old, as we have opportunity.

At the same time, we are to recognize the hand of the Lord in the matter of just where and when to proclaim the kingdom message. As an example, while Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into all the world to preach the Gospel, the divine overruling was such that the message was taken mostly to the west and north, rather than to the east, from its origins in the land of Judaea. Paul obediently and gladly responded to the call, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us," when his own plan was to go in another direction.—Acts 16:9,10

As individuals our field of activity is quite marked out—at least, this is true with most of us. Doubtless we would like to extend our sphere of activity in the Lord's service, and it is well to have this desire. It denotes that the anointing power of the Holy Spirit is urging us on to greater sacrifices in the ministry of the Truth. However, we should not overlook the opportunities of service which are waiting for us close at hand—the little ways of witnessing which are known only to us and to the Lord. God may be watching to see how faithfully we are using these before entrusting us with larger opportunities.

It is also important to watch the leadings of the Lord in connection with our cooperative ministry of the Truth. He knows how to open doors of opportunity, and how to close them. We should never try to force open any door of opportunity to serve the Heavenly Father, nor should we hesitate to enter those which he unmistakably opens.

NOT WORLD CONVERSION

We are not to look for large numbers to accept the Truth at this time. We are in the “harvest” time at the end of the age, and ours is a harvesting work, although it is accomplished by a general “sowing” or proclaiming of the Truth. While we believe that seeds of truth are now being sown which will be a blessing to the world in the coming Messianic kingdom, our primary objective is to reach and assist those whom the Lord is inviting to run for the mark of the prize of the High Calling.

The Heavenly Father’s time for the conversion of the world, both Jew and Gentile, is still future. While we are glad to lay down our lives in the ministry of the Truth now, and to be figuratively “beheaded for the witness of Jesus,” we rejoice to know that in God’s due time the true knowledge of him shall fill the earth “as the waters cover the sea.”—Rev. 20:4; Isa. 11:9

Indeed, a glorious prospect awaits the whole world of mankind. Just as today “we see Jesus,” and rejoice in all that he means to us and will mean to the world, so later he will become the one around whom the people of all nations will rally. (Heb. 2:9) Then, with that “pure language” turned to the people, they will “all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.—Zeph. 3:9

IN THE CHURCH

All who are under the Holy Spirit’s anointing are authorized to be ambassadors for Christ and, as such, to proclaim glad tidings to the meek. There are no exceptions to this. The Scriptures do not

divide the Lord's people into two classes called "clergy" and "laity." However, in the assemblies of the Lord's people called churches—Greek, *ekklesias*—the Scriptures indicate certain arrangements to be followed, and certain restrictions to be observed.

Paul wrote, "I suffer [permit] not a woman to teach." (I Tim. 2:12) The reference here is to being a teacher in formal ecclesia meetings. It does not mean that women, enlightened by the Truth and fully consecrated to the Lord, are not anointed to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom by word of mouth, distribution of the printed page, or by other means. It is simply that God, in his wisdom and to carry out certain typical lessons, has limited teaching in the church to male members of the congregation.

In this also there are limitations. In his letter to Titus, Paul mentions those who serve as "bishops," or overseers—elders—in the church, and sets forth their qualifications. "A bishop [overseer or elder] must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men [things], sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision."—Titus 1:7-10

From this it is clear that one who serves as a teacher in a congregation of the Lord's people should measure up to a very high standard of

righteous conduct in his life. He must also be able “by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” The enemies of the Truth in Paul’s day were largely those of the circumcision—Jews who endeavored to convince believers in Christ that they should subscribe to certain features of the Mosaic Law. Doubtless the Truth was attacked in other ways also.

It was important in the Early Church that teachers be sound in the doctrines of the Truth, and have a measure of ability to teach, that they might be able to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) Along this line, we note in his various epistles Paul faithfully endeavors to correct the wrong doctrinal viewpoints of those to whom he writes. In his letters to the brethren at Thessalonica, he discusses and clarifies the truth concerning our Lord’s return and Second Presence. In his letter to the Galatians, he devotes considerable space to God’s covenants.

Today, it is likewise important that those who serve as teachers in our ecclesias be sound in the Truth—“established in the present truth.” (II Pet. 1:12) These doctrines comprise “meat in due season” during this harvest period. (Matt. 24:45) The issues of truth and error today may vary in detail from those confronting the Early Church, but it is just as important now for teachers to be able to defend the doctrines of our faith as it was at that time.

With our elders and teachers setting forth the Truth in its purity, we all benefit as learners. The more clearly we understand these things, the

more effectively we can proclaim them to others, as together we tell out, as widely as possible, the glad tidings of the kingdom, that fearful hearts may be given courage, and sorrowing hearts made glad. ■