

# A Sacred Calling

by Allen R. Moore

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of a sacred calling and the need for a general organization of the church to maintain the dignity and character of our calling.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 30:8, Matthew 9:37, Acts 6:4, 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 2:2

**Topics:** "Church Leadership", "Pastoral Ministry"

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## Description

Allen R. Moore preaches about the need for more efficient and dedicated preachers in the church, emphasizing the divine call to the ministry and the importance of faithful men who are able to teach others. He addresses the challenges faced by both churches without preachers and preachers without churches, highlighting the need for a better method to bring them together. Moore discusses the qualities a preacher should possess, focusing on faithfulness, teaching ability, and true manhood, rather than external attributes like wealth or eloquence.

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## Transcript

Carnegie Hall, Friday Afternoon, October 15.

"The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."--2 Tim. 2:2.

One of the greatest problems before the church to-day is that of an adequate supply of acceptable preachers. The call comes from every State, "Send us more preachers." Our last Year Book reported eleven thousand churches and only about six thousand preachers. What are we to do for these thousands of churches that have no regular minister of the gospel?

But while there are so many churches without a preacher, there are also many preachers without a church. Why is this? Is it the fault of the preachers? Is it the fault of the churches? Or is it the fault of our method, or lack of method, in bringing churches and preachers together?

The ministry is a calling, a

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profession. He who would succeed in it must give it his undivided attention. In the past farmers, doctors and lawyers have done good work as preachers, and I say all honor to them. But they themselves know

that the day has passed when a man can hope to attain to the highest success as a preacher while giving much of his time to something else.

#### THE DIVINE CALL.

We not only need more preachers, but we need more efficient preachers. This is a sacred calling, and I believe in the divine call to the ministry. I do not say that I believe in a mysterious call, or a miraculous call, but in a divine call. The time was when men listened for a voice, or looked for a sign as an evidence of this call. The best evidence of a divine call to preach is the sense of duty, "I ought to preach," coupled with a knowledge of the Word and the power to impart it acceptably.

#### PROBLEMS.

The work of the ministry has its problems that clamor for solution. There is the problem of the young man getting a start, and of the old man holding his own. In the presence of obligations and temporal needs, there is the problem of the pay. Then, there is the care of the church. The sick must be visited and the wayward looked after. The sorrowing must be comforted and the strong led. The lambs must be fed and the old sheep sheltered in the fold. All of this requires thought, labor and system. And to reach the best results, a co-operation of ministers is needed.

#### AN IDEAL.

Perhaps a separate organization is not the ideal thing, but for the present it will suffice. It was in some such spirit that Alexander Campbell greeted the organization of the first missionary society. He said in effect that it was good, but not ideal. What he seems to have advocated was a general organization of the churches so as to care for and direct the general activities of the brotherhood in all departments--missions, benevolence, education, ministerial character and the distribution of the Bible, or, broadly, the distribution of Christian literature. An application of Mr. Campbell's idea of organization, so as to embrace all our interests and care for them adequately, without jeopardizing the work of any, would be to form an American Christian Convention, made up of delegates from the churches, under which all our separate societies, with their individual organizations, should be co-ordinated. It is not within the scope of this address to elaborate that plan, but I, for one, believe that, [280] with this, our first Centennial, we should take some step looking toward the perfection of our general organization, the absence of which makes necessary an organization of our preachers.

#### WHY NEEDED.

Such an organization is needed to maintain the dignity and character of our calling. An army made up of individuals, no matter how brave or intelligent, but lacking in leadership, direction and co-operation, could scarcely be dignified by the word "army." A cause so great and so worthy as the one in which we are engaged should be dignified with that co-operation which would avoid any unseemly scramble after positions on the one hand, or indifference and neglect upon the other.

Again, such an organization ought to be of great value in guarding against unworthy preachers, for, unfortunately, there are men who put on the livery of heaven in which to serve the devil. Perhaps an association of ministers can, in some measure, protect churches from an unworthy man.

Again, such an organization as this ought to be of far-reaching value in encouraging young men to enter the ministry. Some influence should be started that will counteract that tendency toward other callings and

lead more young men into the ministry. It is believed that this organization of ministers can accomplish much in that direction.

#### WHAT OUGHT A PREACHER TO BE?

Should he be a rich man, so as to be free from care about temporal things and independent in judgment upon public questions? Or should he be a poor man, knowing what want is, and pinched by daily necessities? We may say with the writer of Proverbs:

"Give me neither poverty nor riches;

Feed me with food that is needful for me:

Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah?

Or lest I be poor and steal, and use profanely the name of my God."

Should a preacher be handsome? It is rumored that some churches seem to think so. Should the preacher be a humorist or a wit? There can be no doubt of the drawing power of humor, yet some of our best men have never found a place in the pulpit for a joke or a humorous story. Should the preacher be especially gifted in pathos? There can be no doubt of the value of pathos in a sermon, yet it may be overdone. Should a preacher be eloquent? There can be no denying the power of eloquence. The people love oratory. It is one of the fine arts. Men are swayed and moved by it as by nothing else. We should not despise it. Yet, I do not hesitate to say that oratory is not the sine qua non of the preacher. The gospel message is sometimes told with more power by faltering lips, backed by earnestness, sincerity and genuineness, than by the most eloquent tongue where these qualities are lacking. Some one has said:

"The coarsest reed that trembles on the marsh,

If heaven select it for its instrument,

May shed celestial music on the breeze

As clearly as the pipe whose virgin gold

Befits the lips of Phœbus."

I would but add the simple description of the apostle Paul himself. He tells us what a preacher ought to be when he says, "The things which thou hast learned from me commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others." This statement makes the matter very plain: faithful men, able to teach. A preacher must be a man, a manly man, a man among men. The world admires true manhood and the preacher should be above all things a true man. He is to be a faithful man. A message is committed to his care. He must keep it faithfully, not pervert it, not lose it, not destroy it, but keep it faithfully. A life is entrusted to him. That life is in the likeness of the Master. He is to be an ensample of what a Christian ought to be. He is to be true to the life, vitalize it and uphold it.

But he must also be able to teach. Without this he would not be a preacher. The teaching power is all-important. It means the ability to interest, to impart information and to draw. We can not teach those who are not interested. Nor can we lead people who have not been informed. No message is so beautiful as the gospel story. No teacher has ever taught so charmingly as the Master. To catch something of [281]

his spirit and method and lay the truth upon the hearts of the people in such a way that they can not fail to understand it, love it and embrace it is teaching in the Scriptural sense. This is the preaching that draws.

Now, the practical question arises, Where are we to get such men? Where are we to look in order to find young men to fill such an exalted office? I answer, in the Christian homes of our land. Your sons and mine must be directed toward the ministry. As Hannah prayed devoutly for a son, and then, when her prayer was answered, reverently gave him back to the Lord, so should we do. We owe this to the Master and his church. The field is wide, the laborers are few; pray ye therefore that the Lord of harvest send forth laborers into the field. We may help to answer this prayer by searching out young men from Christian homes who may be educated and trained for this work.

There are many of our very best young men who would turn to the ministry with a little encouragement and assistance. We owe it to the present, as well as to the future generation, to lend this encouragement freely. As the church commended Timothy to Paul, is it not the duty of the church to-day to find and commend young men for this work? Most assuredly it is.

The preacher's home is another thing that should be provided for wherever possible. By entering the ministry, a man gives up the opportunity to buy and sell and get gain. Because of the narrow margin upon which he must live, the church would do well to provide a parsonage for its minister and furnish it, at least, in part. And let me suggest that a very important part of that furniture would be the installment of a preacher's library. Of course individual tastes differ in the matter of books, but there are some books that every preacher needs. He needs an encyclopedia, a good commentary upon the entire Bible, dictionaries, a few other books of reference and the best books from our own brethren. Such books are expensive, and most men can ill afford to buy what they really need--or even to move them.

I have mentioned but a few ways in which the church can make the ministry attractive to young men. These suggestions will doubtless cause you to think of others. The field is by no means exhausted.

In conclusion, we are proud of the achievements of the hundred years of history which we are now celebrating. We have before us, in our sacred calling, the grandest opportunities that any set of men have enjoyed since the days of the apostles. Untrammelled by human creeds, unfettered by dogma or human opinion, pleading for the supremacy of Christ, the sufficiency of the Bible as a guide, the superintendence of the Holy Spirit and the unity of the church, we go forth to the conquest and conversion of the world. It is not too much to say that the church of Christ, thus constituted, is the angel of Revelation, "flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people."

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