

He Sent Them - Two by Two

by G.W. North

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prophets in the early Church and the superiority of prophecy over tongues in founding and building churches, while also highlighting the danger of misusing tongues and the importance of the cross.

Scripture: Luke 10:1, Acts 13:2

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Apostolic Ministry"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the significance of sending out apostles and prophets together in the establishment of churches, highlighting that this combination ensures the fullness of spiritual gifts is present. He notes that while the practice of sending apostles two by two was initiated by Jesus, the early Church adapted this by pairing apostles with prophets, which reflects the value placed on prophetic ministry. North argues that prophecy is superior for church building, yet he acknowledges the importance of tongues when used correctly, warning against its potential misuse. He stresses that tongues, when abused, can mask sin and pride, but when aligned with the cross, they reveal God's wisdom and power. Ultimately, the sermon underscores the necessity of both gifts in the Church for fulfilling God's purpose.

Transcript

It is an outstanding feature of Paul's missionary journeys that he mostly travelled with a prophet as a companion. By this means wherever they went the whole complement of gifts and ministries normally to be found in a local church were always available. Between them these two offices comprise the fullness of all that is needed to bring churches into being and establish them according to the will of God. That is why they are spoken of as foundations.

Reading scripture we notice in the Gospels that the Lord originally instituted the practice of sending out His apostles two by two, but in the early Church this soon gave way to the practice of combining prophet with apostle. In fact it seems that the last occasion when two of the original apostles travelled together was for the founding of the church in Samaria, This original formation was subsequently varied when, after the apostles Barnabas and Saul had teamed up for their first missionary enterprise, Paul later exchanged his companion for Silas, a prophet. There is no reason to suppose that although this practice became customary with these men, it became law in the Church, but it is an indication of the Church's estimation of the place and power of the prophet among them.

The Foolishness of God is Wiser than Men

There can be no doubt of the superiority of and preference for Prophecy above Tongues in founding, building and upbuilding churches, but because this is true, prophecy by no means outweighs or displaces its kindred gift. Paul indicates that Tongues with Interpretation can be of equal effectiveness with Prophecy in the Church. If we understand scripture aright, Tongues is not to be disparaged or slighted. Paul did not write against the gift, but against its abuse -- a very different thing.

It was only that because of sin the Corinthians were behaving themselves childishly with the gifts, and for this reason he wrote as he did. The reason why he laid down his strictures upon the misuse of Tongues is because of all the gifts, Tongues can most easily be a cover for undetected sin and the flesh and the devil. Therein lies the greatest danger attached to the gift. Tongues can be an expression of childish nonsense or foolish pride; in fact they can be a manifestation and exhibition of almost anything or everything that dishonours God. Wrongly held and used the gift militates against the very reason for which God called us all in the beginning, which Paul plainly states in chapter 1 verse 29 -- 'That no flesh should glory in His presence'.

Tongues is one of the 'foolish things of this world'; like the Lord who gave it, it is despised and rejected of men and has been placed in the Church by God for the purpose of destroying the wisdom of the wise. It is intended to accentuate the cross in the Body of Christ, and rightly used this is exactly what it accomplishes. Tongues requires the cross to make it spiritual in nature and powerful in effect. When used in the power of the cross, this gift, perhaps more than any other, reveals that the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption of God are wholly contrary to man and his pompous wisdom, which is just what God wishes to accomplish.

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