

**Devotional Thoughts :: Authenticated Ministry****Authenticated Ministry - posted by h2oboy (), on: 2006/3/20 12:52**

Authenticated ministry

1 Cor 9:1-3

9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 3 My defense to those who examine me is this. NASB

There are many opinions among scholars as to how to group these words from Paul and what relationship and meaning some of these words have. This is but one possibility.

Paul is saying I came to Corinth of my own free will, I am no man's servant, and no one made me come here to preach. I am one who has been sent on a mission with a message, a mission that I chose to accept and fulfill. I have had a revelation of Jesus our Lord. This message is not hearsay or second hand, it is directly from my personal encounter with the living Lord and Master. You, the believers in Jesus, are the result of my work. This preaching and teaching which is my occupation, is performed in His strength and ability. If other people do not acknowledge the authenticity of my calling, my credentials of being sent by the Lord, surely you recognize that my commissioning and message are real. You are the seal, the stamp of approval, the proof of authenticity, that the Lord sent me. This is how I explain in my own defense to people, who look at my work and message in great detail for proof of legitimacy.

Paul was well aware of Jesus words, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits." Paul was placing the changed lives of the Corinthian believers on the evidence table in the courtroom of public opinion as proof that God was working through him as a sent messenger. Paul understood the principle from Mark 16:20, "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed."

Paul did not defend his 'calling' by exhibiting an organization or a building. His proof of God working in and through him was not numbers of people or financial prosperity. Paul knew that the real proof of a messenger from God was the hearts and lives, which were delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love. So many of us in ministry try to validate our 'calling' using human standards and measurements. The truth is that men, without God's help, can build buildings and organizations, raise finances, and appear to be successful in 'ministry.' The only verification of the work of the Holy Spirit in any ministry is changed hearts. This is how the believers in Corinth knew that Paul was a true apostle, because their hearts had been changed by the message, which he had brought to them from God.

Holy Father, forgive us for using human standards to validate the work that we have been doing. Make us truly come to know "Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it;". Teach us how to labor as Jesus did, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works." May we truly see that the only real evidence that we are working together with you, and that we are 'anointed' for ministry, is changed hearts.

Jeff

1 Cor 3:6-7 "I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." ASV

Re: Authenticated Ministry - posted by roadsign (), on: 2006/3/20 13:30

Thank you Jeff, You are so right. Man's validation of something is no proof that God has authorized it. Man tends to reject the authentic because it doesn't fit into his worldly way.

Quote:

-----The only verification of the work of the Holy Spirit in any ministry is changed hearts.

Think of Jeremiah, and Isaiah - they didn't even have success stories to prove themselves. Yet they were authentic.
Diane