

Sufficient Ministers Of A New Covenant

“And such confidence have we through Christ to Godward, not that we are sufficient as from ourselves to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God, who made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant ...” (2 Cor. 3:4-6a).

Paul has indicated already one of the things which made him and other apostles sufficient ministers of a New Covenant: the message they wrote in tables that are “hearts of flesh” was with the Spirit of the living God. The disciples of Jesus were saddened when they were told He would be returning back to His Father, but He exhorted them not to be: He would come again and it was needful He go away else the Holy Spirit would not come to them (Jn. 16:7). The importance in the coming of the Holy Spirit dare not be overlooked: He would search all things, the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10). He would guide them into all truth (John 16:13) and when they spoke (or wrote) it would not be their words but words the Holy Spirit would teach them to say (Mt. 10:20). Peter said, “No prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20f). Paul said the same: “Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Spirit teacheth, combining spiritual things with spiritual words” (1 Cor. 2:13). The apostles were therefore sufficient as ministers of a New Covenant because they had the infallible Spirit which guided them in the revelation of that covenant and that Spirit guided them into all truth. In his second letter to Timothy Paul had written, “Every scripture inspired by God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Not only were the apostles sufficient ministers of a New Covenant because they were inerrantly guided in the revelation of the provisions of that covenant, they were also miraculously empowered with signs to establish the veracity of their words. This Jesus also had promised. When he commissioned the eleven prior to His ascension back to the Father, He said, “These signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover ... and they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen” (Mk. 16:17-18, 20).

These signs were powerful matters in making apostles “sufficient ministers”. When Paul and Barnabas were in Cyprus preaching, the proconsul of the island, a man named Serguis Paulus, called them to preach to him. A certain sorcerer named Elymas was with him and he sought to counteract their teaching whom Paul smote with blindness (Acts 13:7-11). The record continues: “Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” (Acts 13:12).

Finally, the apostles were made sufficient ministers of a New Covenant by being upheld and strengthened by the Lord amidst the multitude of evil and trials they were called

upon to endure. Jesus had promised, "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20) and Paul wrote the Philippians, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Such was Jesus' promise which He unfailingly kept. Paul wrote, "At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me. May it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen" (2 Tim. 4:16-18).

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