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Pause Ponder Profit

A Called Apostle

by James A. Brown

As recorded in the New King James Version of the Bible, Paul begins his letter to the saints at Rome (Rom. 1:7), in this way: "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1). If you will notice carefully, the words "*to be*" are in italics. That means they are supplied by the translators. The same thing is true in regard to 1 Cor. 1:1 which says, "Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,".

The translators evidently felt that it was necessary to add "*to be*" to both text in order to clarify or make the meaning clearer for us readers. There intentions were no doubt sincere. For many examples can be found in the New Testament where adding a word or phrase does indeed help with one's understanding of the passage. But in Rom. 1:1 and also in 1 Cor. 1:1 the adding of "*to be*" does not clarify the text but instead hinders a proper understanding.

In these verses under consideration, Paul is not telling us what he was called to be but what he was, "a called apostle".

The word translated "called" is, an adjective derived from a verb participle. Thus it is a verbal adjective. That means that it partakes of the nature of both a verb and an adjective. The word itself in the Greek is, "klētos" ("invited, i.e., appointed") which comes from the Greek verb, "kaleō" ("to call"). Thayer says of the word "klētos" as used in our passages under consideration, "called to (the discharge of) some office: *klētos apostolos*, i.e., divinely selected and appointed".

We are told in Gal. 1:15-16 that it pleased God to call ("to call, select, appoint") Paul by His grace to reveal His Son through him. From this we learn that Paul did not take the honor of the office of apostle upon himself. That is he was not self-appointed, but he was like the high priest of old who had been called of God. "*And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.*" God and Christ did the choosing and appointing, not Paul himself or any group of men. Paul said he was "*an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)*" (Gal. 1:1). His therefore, was a divine summon or call to the office of apostle. Paul had not taken this office by his own hand but by a divine act.

At the beginning of both Romans and First Corinthians, Paul wanted his readers to know his authority, and his right because of this to write to them. Judaizing teachers had made the charge that Paul was not a regularly constituted apostle, but that he had merely assumed that office, or had been appointed to that office by the church at Antioch. To meet that charge, Paul asserts that he was "a called apostle" — an apostle that had been appointed to that office by the will of God.



Acting Where God Has Not Spoken

by Gene Lyles

There are numerous cases recorded in the Scriptures where various ones acted where God had not spoken. Cain acted where God had not spoken causing God to reject his sacrifice (Gen. 4:3-7). Nadab and Abihu acted where God had not spoken, and it cost them their lives (Lev. 10:1-2). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram acted where God had not spoken wherein God showed His wrath by causing the earth to open her mouth and swallow them up along with all who followed after them (Num. 16:1-35). If this does not make a person realize the consequence of acting where God has not spoken, then there is nothing more that one can say that will stop them from doing so.

Members of the church of Christ in the early days of what is called the "restoration movement" in this nation were known for **speaking where God's word speaks, and being silent where God's word is silent**. This principal continued for about thirty years, but several outstanding leaders decided to reject it in the mid 1800s. This rejection developed into what is now The Disciples of Christ and The First Christian Church, both of which are now recognized as full-fledged denominations.

True churches of Christ continued standing for speaking where God's word speaks, and being silent where God's word is silent until the mid 1900s. But in the early 1950s many leading brethren decided to give up this great scriptural principal, and again start acting where God has not spoken. They have followed almost in the identical steps of those who broke with this principal back in the mid 1800s. We shall now proceed to show wherein they have done so.

God has not spoken anything about a **sponsoring church** where the elders of a local church take upon themselves a responsibility which they know cannot be fulfilled by the resources of the church of which they are elders. They then call upon other churches to help foot the bill. Not only is such a course acting where God hasn't spoken, but even common sense should tell them that a wise, and all-knowing God would never have devised such an uncouthed arrangement as this. Surely they should be able to see that if it is right and profitable for one local church to become a **sponsoring church**, it would be right and profitable for all local churches to become **sponsoring churches**. Any person with common sense ought to see the folly of this. Why then are some elders willing to invade the silence of God's word and act on something so foolish as this when they know full well that God's word has not spoken on such an arrangement. They say they believe in being silent where God's word is silent, but fail to practice what they preach.

God has not spoken anything about a local church using its funds to support the **world's needy**. Yet this is being practiced by many local churches of Christ. If they do this where God has not spoken, then on what grounds do they have to object to denominational churches; doing all kinds of things where God has not spoken? Is it all right for brethren to do it, but wrong for denominational churches to do it? Do our brethren not know that this is the very thing which caused sixteenth century reformers to divide into the various denominations? Did some of our brethren not learn this from history? The great pioneer preachers saw wherein this was the problem, and made the necessary correction by being silent where God's word is silent.

Even though God has not spoken concerning local churches supporting the **world's needy**, His word has clearly spoken concerning

church support of **needy saints** (Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:34-35, Acts 6:1-4, Acts 11:27-30, Rom. 15:25-31, 1 Cor. 16:1-3, 2 Cor. 8:1-6, 2 Cor. 9:1-13, 1 Tim. 5:3-9). Yet nowhere has God in His word commanded the church in its congregational capacity to care for the **world's needy**. His word is completely silent on this. So why do brethren chide those of us who seek to honor the silence of God's word on this matter? Why are they so willing to go beyond God's word, and follow the denominations in this matter? After all, they got the idea of supporting the **world's needy** from the denominations in the first place, not from God's word.

Some brethren are now saying that to teach limited benevolence of **saints only** is parallel to teaching the doctrine of salvation by **faith only**. We have no problem finding where God condemned the doctrine of faith only (Jas. 2:14-26), yet nowhere do we find where God rejects the doctrine of church support of **saints only**. God has clearly authorized it as we have abundantly shone above. Furthermore, if the doctrine of church support of **saints only** is parallel to the doctrine of salvation by **faith only**, what does this do to the doctrine of **sing only**? Because they think the word **only** makes it parallel, they place themselves in a most unpalatable situation of condemnation, for if it is applicable to one, it is applicable to the other. Thus we find the leg of the lame is unequal. Furthermore, are they ignorant of the fact that we use the very same method of Bible interpretation to conclude the doctrine of **saints only** that we use to conclude the doctrine of **sing only**? Have they not trapped themselves in their own foolish argumentation?

God has not spoken concerning local churches supporting **human institutions** like missionary societies, secular schools, church camps, orphan homes, homes for the elderly, homes for unwed mothers, and such like. We saw the Lord's church divided in the nineteenth

century over these **human institutions**, and fought such with all our might. Yet some brethren in the twentieth century turned right around and started doing the same thing we condemned back then. They are like the dog that returns to his own vomit, and the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. Truly they have confirmed the fact that history will always repeat itself. When will brethren ever learn the error of the church doing its work through **human institutions**? Have they decided that God's divine institution, the church, is not sufficient to do what God designed it to do?

We shall now conclude this article with a quote from a great preacher of the past, brother H. Leo Boles. We were a united brotherhood when he said what he did. We only give this quote to show who it is that has changed in recent years which has caused us to be divided as we are. You can be sure of one thing. This division exists because many brethren no longer believe in being silent where God's word is silent. They are ready to **Act Where God Has Not Spoken**. Now for this from brother Boles:

"To sum up the matter of giving and receiving, it seems that we can say that Christians are to do good as opportunity offered them. We have examples in the New Testament of (1) churches helping other churches, (Acts 11:27-30), (2) churches helping individuals (Phil. 4:15-16), (3) individual Christians helping Christians in need (1 John 3:17), (4) churches helping their own members (Acts 4:34-35; 1 Tim. 5:3-12), (5) Christians helping those who are not Christians (Gal. 6:10). Christians are to do good to all, and helping those in distress is a good work. **We do not find any example of a church that has helped those who are not Christians. . .**" (Bold type added by GL.) *This quote is from the Gospel Advocate, Jan. 29, 1942*

The Irony of 2 Cor. 12:13

by James A. Brown

Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul said, *"For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!"* (2 Cor. 12:13). In this verse before us, the apostle Paul used **irony** when he wrote, "Forgive me this wrong!"

Merriam Webster defines "irony" as, "the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning". E. W. Bullinger in his book, *Figures Of Speech Used In The Bible*, defines "irony" as, "The expression of thought in a form that naturally conveys its opposite." He goes on to say, "The figure is so called when the speaker intends to convey a sense contrary to the strict signification of the words employed: not with the intention of concealing his real meaning, but for the purpose of adding greater force to it."

In the context of our verse under consideration, Paul was writing about his having received financial support from other congregation, but had not been a burden to the congregation at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:7-9). Now, because of the influence of false teachers (2 Cor. 11:12-13), the church at Corinth is beginning to question his apostleship and have a very low opinion of his teaching. Paul had every right to be supported financially by Corinth (1 Cor. 9:3-12), so, in extreme irony, he said: "Forgive me this wrong!"

Now, see if you can find the **irony** expressed in 2 Cor. 11:19 and in 1 Cor. 4:8.



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