

## THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT  
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

### QUESTION # 158.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #158. *By whom is the word of God to be preached?*

A. The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted,<sup>1</sup> and also duly approved and called to that office.<sup>2</sup>

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Question 1—*Wherein consists that gifting needed to qualify those who are to preach the Word of God?*

*Answer*—Those who are to take up the preaching of the Word of God must be sufficiently gifted for the task to be performed, 2 Cor. 3:5. This is a work of the highest importance and, if unskillfully managed, it may have a tendency to do prejudice to the interest of Christ, 2 Cor. 4:2. For this reason, those who are employed in this work must be made able by the Lord, 2 Cor. 3:6. Gifting is the result and proof of the ascension of Christ, by whom and through whom, those gifted must exercise their gifts, Eph. 4:8-11. Preaching of the Word of God involves an opening and closing of the heaven to those who hear, therefore it is beyond the capacity of all men to have a sufficiency in themselves, 2 Cor. 2:16. The hope and help of all who preach is to be found only in Christ, John 15:5. This deficiency in man is a deliberate part of the foolishness of preaching that God might have all the glory for any good accomplished, 2 Cor. 4:7. Thus, it is a very difficult matter to determine who are sufficiently gifted since the work is so great and our natural and acquired endowments are so very small in comparison, Ex. 4:10; Jer. 1:6-10. All depends upon that power of the Spirit to be effectual, Luke 24:49. This gifting should be twofold:

*First*, it should embrace those moral qualities of being blameless and exemplary, without which, those who preach the gospel would be a reproach, 1 Tim. 3:2, 7; Tit. 1:6. This does not entail a state of sinless perfection, Rom. 7:22-24; nor does it demand a sinless past, 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 15:9; but it does require that all habitual sin, especially public sins, have been matched with a suitable repentant state of heart, John 21:15-17. Those who teach ought to strive to be examples that might be safely copied, 1 Thess. 2:10. Thus, Paul advises the Corinthians to be followers of him, 1 Cor. 4:16. Elsewhere he commends the church for conforming to his example, 1 Thess. 1:6; which example is only binding as it is agreeable to Christ, 1 Cor. 11:1. Without some degree of conformity to the doctrine that he is teaching, a person may lay a stumbling-block for other professing Christians, Rom. 2:21. An experimental knowledge of the divine truths will greatly furnish the teacher to communicate these truths to others, 1 Cor. 9:27. Without regard to these outward observances, teachers are not sound guides in matters of practice, Matt. 23:3; and they stand condemned of their Lord, Luke 11:46. Nonetheless, experience of the grace of God alone will not warrant a person's engaging in the ministry because the end of

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. 3:2, 6; Eph. 4:8-11; Hos. 4:6; Mal. 2:7; 2 Cor. 3:6.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 14:15; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 5:4; 1 Cor. 12:28, 29; 1 Tim. 3:10; 4:14; 5:22.

teaching is the glory of God and the edification of the church, which requires that a man be endowed with additional gifts than that of grace, Rom. 12:4-6.

*Second*, there are those qualities which are more directly subservient to the work of the ministry, which entails a correct conveying of the knowledge of the true religion, Mal. 2:7; without which the people of God are made desolate, Hos. 4:6. These qualities include: 1.) An aptness, or skillfulness, to teach, 1 Tim. 3:2. 2.) The ability to discern the correct meaning of the text, 2 Tim. 2:15. 3.) The ability to make just and necessary applications of that doctrine, Tit. 1:9. Those who would take upon themselves to explain the scriptures to others, and make application to the consciences of men, ought to use diligence to understand it themselves, Matt. 13:52; 1 Tim. 4:16. There is reason to believe that even those best qualified shall confess this work to be one of great difficulty, 1 Cor. 13:9.

Question 2—*Wherein consists the due approval and call to the office of teaching the Word of God?*

*Answer*—Besides those qualities, or qualifications, of grace and gift, there exists a need:

*First*, for approval, (*lit.* to test, or examine; δοκιμαζέσθωσαν) 1 Tim. 3:10. For this reason, sufficient acquaintance is needed for there to be judgment passed; therefore, none should be advanced that are but novices (“newly planted,” νεόφυτον), 1 Tim. 3:6. It is required not only that they discern within themselves some grace and gift to teach, Rom. 12:2; but, more importantly, that others perceive this same grace and these same gifts to be present, 1 John 4:1. This approval is primarily in the people of God, who lend their assent to the teaching, Mark 12:37; marking him as a teacher sent from God, John 1:6, 7 (though there be no miracles done, John 10:41). It is necessary to all subsequent approval, 1 Cor. 16:3. There is an approval that is secondarily in the church, 1 Tim. 5:22; whereby a man is marked as being sent by the presbytery, 1 Tim. 4:14. It is through this approval that men are received, 2 Cor. 8:4; and that they are sent, as ambassadors of particular churches, Acts 15:22. Providence may open the door to preaching, Rev. 3:8; Acts 16:6, 7; but the success of the endeavor remains wholly of God, Acts 16:9, 10, 14; 1 Cor. 3:6, 7.

*Second*, for a call to ministerial office, without which they cannot be said to be sent, Rom. 10:15. This calling is *first* and *radically* from the Lord, who calls those to speak in His name, Jer. 14:15; therefore, none can call himself or any other to this office without the divine call, Heb. 5:4. This call is to the end that such as have the grace and gifts for carrying out the office of teaching are to be set in the church, 1 Cor. 12:28, 29. Like approval, this inward call is first outwardly perceived by the people of God who stand to profit by the hearing of the Word of God being taught and preached, Gal. 2:9. Thus, those most familiar are those who are best positioned to recognize and perceive the grace and gifts necessary to calling to office, Deut. 1:13; Acts 6:3. Afterward, this outward call ought to be ratified, or regularized (*i.e.*, ordered, hence, ordination), by the church, in its ministerial, or representative, capacity in order that all under the care of the fellowship of the ministry might rest assured of the official judgment of the presbytery, Acts 6:6; 13:3.

There is a difference between the approbation passed upon those who engage in the work of preaching and the call to the pastoral office; the former being universal, the latter local, Matt. 28:20; Tit. 1:5. Pastoral office, involves ruling, or applying the Word in a disciplinary manner, 1 Pet. 5:2; Mic. 7:14.