

## *The Calling*

The divine calling to the ministry came in my life in the spring of 1997 at the age of thirty. I never had any ambitions of becoming a preacher and certainly not a pastor. My wife and I were content to raise our family and God had provided us with a home and the means to support it. The calling came in a shocking manner, out of the blue, so to speak. I knew immediately it was God's will that I should follow and spent a couple of months before I finally surrendered to the burden. I was always rather embarrassed to speak in public and had refrained from doing so all my life, but God had plans for me and my family. At this present time my oldest sons (now 19 and 20) were 2 and 3. I had no way of knowing the difficulties and the blessings I would encounter on the way and the impact it would have on my family. I know there are more seasoned minister's that would tell me that after 17 years I am just beginning to get my feet wet. Faithfulness to the high calling of God seems to be a waning purpose in our day. Presently in my 10<sup>th</sup> year of pastoral work I feel even more inadequate than when I first began. A sincere pastor will spend many hours throughout each week praying for God's message and preparing to preach it. If He is truly spirit led by the time Sunday morning comes he is so convinced of the message from God that he could do nothing less than deliver what the Holy Spirit has spoken to him.

We now live in a time and a culture that I feel ministry has become most difficult and nothing can be taken for granted. The simple objectives of the church set forth plainly in the word of God have become complex and too many people, questionable. How we relate to people, how we worship, how we conduct stewardship, or even how we pray and sing and even the smallest things now seems injected with enormous weight, and pastors can often feel the burden residing on their own slumping shoulders. Many Pastors are asking: "What will become of the church?" Should we change to accommodate culture as to save the remaining church population? I fear many are willing to forsake the truth to do so, God forbid. I have seen other men as I, called into this work, relentlessly labor and agonize in prayer, weekly deliver messages that have been sought after with strong prayer and conviction yet to little or no avail.

I have read after ministers who speak of a time when a pastor could at least impact the church and the community through the weekly message. Preaching to lost soul's, addressing social problems, helping the poor, rallying the church, all of these and more could be addressed with a degree of effect through a sermon and by the aid of the Holy Spirit. Now . . . in a culture where all things are visual, quick and of gnat-like-brevity, a sermon's impact is often just momentary. Attention spans can no longer hold the spoken word, and, once heard, the sermon floats away on a soft, breezy pillow of boredom. Abrasive sermons or edifying sermon seem to have the same results when delivered to ones who do not hunger for the word of God. To keep up with cultural demands some try to adapt faster, bolder and more shocking stimulation just to hold an audience if one can even be gathered.

What has happened to just preaching the plain simple truth and a sincere faithfulness and devotion of the hearers. Today's pastor's have difficulty competing with the onslaught of other voices and the latest technology that people clamor for. Difficulty is compounded by difficulty. The hard just got harder. And the field of harvest grows ever larger. I see pastor's "preaching their hearts out" weekly uplifting Christ, trying to encourage people to live for Christ, trying to promote good works in the church yet people are still starving for the one thing often held before their very eyes. Many are dying of thirst when a never ending river flows before them. People try to satisfy what culture has dictated that they need by other means rather than just focusing on their own relationship with Christ. Many become quickly bored with traditional music, repetitive sermons and church life in general so they look to fill the void in their souls that can only be filled by one, Jesus.

I must stand to remind us that it's not a "what" that's missing from today's church it's who. We all struggle relationally because walking with Christ is against our very nature and living counter culturally is the present day spiritual warfare. Our problem is we are trying to Christianize culture and Jesus said that just doesn't work, "ye cannot serve God and mammon". If you are truly born again nothing else other than Christ can fill the void in your soul. The divine element of the Holy Spirit has come into your life and when "He" is suppressed by the our selfish lifestyles our soul will begin to yearn and cry out to be filled but it cannot be filled by any church,

progressive programs, personal study, a motivational preacher or by anything else other than Christ. We can feed off of a good sermon or testimony but only because it stimulates the relationship we already have. I find historically and biblically that's the difference. As Christians, we are not "abiding" in Christ. That is living for, praying to, worshipping and meditating on Jesus every moment of every day. If our relationships were right then everything else we think is wrong might become trivial.

Many Christians today are seeking a religious social environment for their children's well being rather than a sound element of the gospel. I must state this can be detrimental if we sacrifice the true gospel and seek to replace it with religious relevance and social worship. Sometimes we want so much good for our kids that we unintentionally expose them to what is the exact opposite of what they need.

I know I have sacrificed my family to the ministry but the glorious thing is God has taken care of my family, in ways I could not foresee or even understand. I mean much, much more than just provision. My family has followed me wherever the Lord has placed us. I admit I have worried about the impact of about being in small churches and the inconsistency in the home that ministry demands. If those decisions had been left up to my wife or myself we would have planted ourselves in the most progressive Missionary Baptist Church we could have found, the one that had the most to offer for my kids, the one that appeared to be successful. However that's exactly why it's not left up to us. God knows what you need even if you do not want it! God will plant you exactly where you need to be if you will allow Him. When you are faithful to God's direction for your life HE knows what's best for you and your family. Faithfulness and stability are as much a part of the walk of faith as faith itself. When it seems like things are bleak, unsatisfying or God is absent, that's usually when He's working. This article is a testimony to the faithfulness of God amidst the faithlessness of men.

I praise His high and holy name and thank Him for He has given me a wonderful privilege through ministry that few enjoy. The challenges of ministry have brought many sleepless nights and many days of agonizing in prayer but the blessings God bestows are of eternal reward and immeasurable. During the times we are discouraged or even questioning God is when He most often proves himself if we would just stay the course.

Upon taking my first pastorate 10 years ago the very first Sunday after my ordination I had three to baptize the first person I ever immersed was my first born son, Kyle. Since that time I seen my youngest (Karson) saved and recently had the honor of baptizing him into Grace church where I presently pastor. My middle son was saved at Victory MBC and baptized there but God recently God gave a blessing I never expected or even imagined. He called my second born son, Kurt, into the ministry and this past Sunday I stood in the same pulpit as my son and introduced him as he stood to preach his first sermon. What a blessing! I cannot express my joy. God has taken care of my family. His benefits and blessing are far beyond our understanding. It's not social skills, a culturally trendy church or even education that makes me proud of my children. It's the blessing of seeing God at work in their lives!

*3 John 1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

Remaining faithful is of the utmost importance in our walk with the Lord. The decisions we make have an impact not only on ourselves but our families. If you're called to preach remain faithful to your calling. If God has given you purpose in His church, remain faithful to His direction. It's easy to get lost in ambition or discouraged by a lack of enthusiasm but don't try to replace what's missing with as the prophet says, cisterns which cannot hold water.

#### THE CALLING

*2 Tim 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

- *The Nature of the Call: One does not choose the ministry! He is chosen by God for God's purposes in God's time and place and serves Him in God's ways. There must also be a calling that comes from God to preach His word. This call is not by the will of man (Eph 1:1, 2Tim 1:1).*

- This is a divine call, unequalled by any other vocation in the world. God himself, the creator of the universe, the sovereign God throughout eternity is the one whom initiates and implements this call. Throughout the scriptures God has always personally called His servants. This is a special, spiritual relationship with God through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- No man could ever be worthy of such a calling. We do not deserve it nor are we able to handle it within ourselves. However, God enables us by the presence of the Holy Spirit to fulfill completely His call. The call and enabling are special. Do not let anyone explain away your high calling or make it common to all. It is not common! It is Holy. Preaching is spiritual and scriptural.
- God has a message He wants conveyed, according to His purpose. If the messenger will yield himself to the Holy Spirit he can be used as a mouthpiece for God. Personal influence and self must be set aside. God must be allowed to do His work without the aid of man.

**NO MAN HAS EVER BEEN CALLED TO PREACH WITHOUT FIRST BEING CALLED TO FAITHFULNESS AND HOLINESS**

**ANSWERING THE CALL REQUIRES A FULL SURRENDER**

\*Throughout the scriptures God has always personally called His servants. This is a special, spiritual relationship with God through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit unto an individual and it is not common to all, it is a special calling from God.

**A MAN WHO DECIDES TO ENTER MINISTRY WITHOUT A CALLING FROM GOD WILL NOT PROSPER IN THE LORD'S CAUSE...**

*If a man be truly called of God to the ministry, I will defy him to withhold himself from it. A man who has really within him the inspiration of the Holy Ghost calling him to preach, cannot help it—he must preach. As fire within the bones, so will that influence be until it blazes forth.*

*And when a man does speak as the Spirit gives him utterance, he will feel a holy joy akin to that of Heaven; and when it is over, he wishes to be at his work again, he longs to be once more preaching. Is not the Lord's Word like a fire within me? Must I not speak as if God has placed it there? (C.H. SPURGEON)*

Spurgeon also upheld that certain moral requirements and an example of faithfulness as a prerequisite in a man taking the pulpit...

**CALLED TO LIVE HOLY AND GODLY LIVES**

- True and genuine piety is necessary as the first indispensable requisite; whatever 'call' a man professes to have, if he has not been called to holiness, he certainly has not been called to the ministry."
- Call to Holiness is the first priority of every minister and of every Christian
- Call to service is the second

**CHRISTIANS AND ESPECIALLY MINISTERS OUGHT TO STRIVE REMAIN UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD**

- Remain pure sexually – Be faithful and devoted to wife and family
- Remain faithful in your engagements – Be truthful in all things and Do what you say
- Remain true to God, your calling and His word

**GOD NOT ONLY CALLS BUT HE ALSO ENABLES**

- God has never called anyone whom He did not equip or enable or make a way for them to accomplish his will.
- Throughout the bible God has called men from all walks of life from sheep herders like Amos, to young boys like Jeremiah, to lawyers like Paul...
- Whatever you do after answering your call, make sure it is God leading you to do it. Never quit the purposes of God no matter how difficult for God has not called you to success, He has not called you to rescue the church, He has called you first to obedience...