

## Divine Calling of God

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”(2 Peter 1:10-11) The apostle Peter encourages us to be diligent in responding to God’s calling. In verses 5 to 7 he lists areas of Christian growth that ensure that we will bear the fruit that pleases God. He tells us to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. If we do these things, we will have clear spiritual vision and won’t stumble. Even more incredibly, we will be warmly and richly welcomed into God’s wonderful Kingdom!

"When did you receive the call?" "The call" has come to signify the very moment the person knew God wanted him or her to minister and shepherd a flock. Biblically, the most evident passage referencing "the call" is the Apostle Paul's Damascus road experience. In Acts 9, we read about God's miraculous conversion of Saul, a religious leader who persecuted followers of The Way. Speaking of Saul, the Lord said to Ananias, "Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel"(Acts 9:15). In what seems like an instant, Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit, had his name changed, had blinders physically and spiritually removed from his eyes, was baptized, physically nourished himself to regain strength, and went off to begin preaching.(Acts 9:17-22) That is "the call"—a unique, divine assignment given by God for his purposes, which requires faithful and active obedience, firm commitment, and devotion from the one called. When thinking "the call", the anointing of the Holy Spirit—like fulfilling His purpose on this earth. Not only is he anointed to teach; he has been prepared and equipped to do the work well. A divine calling is first birthed out of conviction. God miraculously does a work—either immediately or progressively—on a person's heart, and that work propels the person into action. Paul's Damascus road experience as the immediate heart-change of God. This is where the Holy Spirit entered Paul's heart. However, God had been progressively and relentlessly pursuing Paul long before then. Paul's heart had always belonged to God; before Paul had an intimate encounter with Jesus on the road. God's sovereign hand was at work in Paul's life from the beginning, bring into line every piece to build Paul's character so he would be the faithful man God called to preach good news to the Gentiles. God uses culture, and the everyday to shape every leader's heart and define his or her calling. The call is a mystery. It begins and ends with God, but it loops through a very human individual. It is personal, the call comes out of who we are as well as shaping who we are. It has both being and doing components. Those who describe themselves as divine calling mean that they have made a commitment of life into God's service, to be for the efforts of accomplishing his agenda." It is important to know that each Christian, has a specific calling on his or her life.

Once convicted, the anointing (power and presence of the Holy Spirit) is what passionately drives the leader to faithfully continue the work. A true calling can be sustained only by abiding in Christ and totally depending on Him. Ministry efforts can continue by drawing near to God through constant surrender in prayer, and the faithful study of his Word. A divine calling cannot be self-contained by any human being. A true calling requires God to jump-start the effort and God's presence to sustain it. The privilege of being called and anointed is a great responsibility, and it is also a reminder of how deeply we all need God. Every great biblical leader, understood this. The anointing of God keeps us. "For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ"(1 John 2:27b). Through orientation and anointing, God sets us on track to pursue the vision and purpose he has for each of our lives. Our acceptance of that calling means that we say yes to God and fearlessly abandon anything that does not work toward his ends. We can answer the call of God with confidence, He uses every strength, weakness, heartache, success, relationship, and experience to shape our hearts, to draw us closer to him, and to equip us to fulfil our life's calling. God created us for his work, has already prepared the work for us to do (Ephesians 2:9), and will glorify himself through the work of our hands (Matthew 5:16). Have you accepted God's calling for your life?

Every Christian has a calling. There is a general call, of course, to believe in Jesus Christ. But everyone who believes in Christ also has a special calling to a particular sphere of obedience and ministry. First of all, there is a call to salvation. God sent His Son Jesus to seek and to save those who are lost. Peter explains that God is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."(2 Pet. 3:9b) God calls us to salvation and by grace through faith we can call back. "for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"(Rom.10:13) Next, that call does not just result in 'fire assurance' as some term it, there is also a call to Christlikeness or holiness. "But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy. (1 Pet 1:15-16) The Christian is called, is summonsed to act like a Christian all the time, to be like Christ. Third, every believer is called to ministry in God's kingdom. Ephesians chapter 4 passage mentions gifts being called to ministry. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers called "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." Every Christian has been called by God; called to salvation, called to personal holiness and then called to service or ministry. Jeremiah had a mission to accomplish and a message to deliver to his generation. Proclaiming “all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the Lord”.(Jeremiah 3:17) For the Great Commission to be obeyed, every soldier in God's army must do his or her assigned task with his or her grace gifts. The question is not, 'Are you called?' It is, 'Will you obey the call?'

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry began with a divine call: The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." (Jeremiah 1:4-5) God did wonderful things for Jeremiah before he was even born. He knew him. He formed him. He set him apart and appointed him as a prophet to the nations. God is the Lord of life. God formed Jeremiah in the womb. God himself fashioned him and knit him together in his mother's womb. While Jeremiah was being carried around in his mother's womb, God was making preparations for his salvation and his ministry. To set something apart is to sanctify it or to dedicate it to holy service. Long before Jeremiah was born, God chose him and consecrated him for ministry. The prophet was set apart before he was born. A person is a human being created in the image of God, living in relationship to God. This verse testifies the personal relationship between God and his child takes place in the womb. God has a personal knowledge of the individual that precedes conception. God's choice is true for every believer "God knows you, God loves you, and God has entered into a personal relationship with you. We do not choose God before God chooses us. This is known as the doctrine of divine election. "You did not choose me," Jesus said to his disciples, "but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit" (John 15:16) "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Ephesians 1:3-4). God not only knows you, he chose you; and he did so long before the creation of the world.

Jeremiah knew what God wanted him to do. Yet even after he received his divine call, he was still a doubtful candidate: "Ah, Sovereign Lord," he said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child" (Jeremiah 1:6) Jeremiah had two main objections to becoming a prophet: his lack of eloquence and his lack of experience. This reminds us of Isaiah's experience when he saw "the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1) Isaiah had doubts about his calling too, but his doubts were different. Isaiah's main problem was that he had a guilty conscience: "'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty'" (Isaiah 6:5) Isaiah did not doubt his ability, he doubted his integrity. When the seraph flew from the altar to touch Isaiah's lips with a live coal, he said: "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for" (Isaiah 6:7) What about the call of Moses? Jeremiah's objection sounds very much like the objection Moses made when God called him: "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue" (Exodus 4:10) Unlike Isaiah, Moses doubted his competence rather than his righteousness. Was it right for him to object to God's call or not? When God gives his servants a clear calling, he does not accept any excuses. "The Lord said to him [Moses], 'Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say'" (Exodus 4:11-12) God said much the same thing to Jeremiah. He said, "Don't give me that stuff!" "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you" (Jeremiah 1:7) "Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'Now, I have put my words in your mouth'" (Jeremiah 1:9) God did not disqualify Jeremiah on the basis of his youth and inexperience. But God exposed his false humility for what it really was: a lack of faith. Jeremiah had forgotten that God is not limited by human weakness. In fact, enabling weak tools to do strong jobs is God's standard operating procedure. When God calls someone to do a job, he gives him or her all the gifts needed to get the job done. With God's calling comes God's gifts. If you do not know what God is calling you to do, take an honest look at the gifts and talents he has given you. If God has actually called you to do a particular job, then he will do for you what he did for Jeremiah: He will give you everything you need to do that job. If you think you know what the Lord wants you to do with your life, trusting him to give you the grace to answer his call.

Once God had issued his divine call, He gave Jeremiah a dangerous commission: "You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you" (Jeremiah 1:7-8) God does not promise that Jeremiah has nothing to fear. But God does command him not to be afraid, and promise is to rescue Jeremiah. God told the prophet to stand firm before the people and not to break, for he would be made a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall before the people of Judah. In addition, God told Jeremiah that the people would fight against him but they would not prevail. The reason Jeremiah did not need to be afraid was that he had the promise of God's presence. The Lord gave him the same promise he made to Moses, to Joshua, and to all his children: "I will be with you." Not only did Jeremiah have God's presence at his side, he also had God's words on his lips: (Jeremiah 1:9) "I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him" (Deuteronomy 18:18). Whenever Jeremiah spoke in God's name, God was the one doing the talking. God speaks to us directly. The Lord instructed Jeremiah to be a bold prophet, not because of his preaching ability or because of his age and experience, but because he was called to speak God's own words. If God has done all that for you, will you go wherever he tells you to go, and say whatever he wants you to say, even if it turns out to be a dangerous commission? Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:1, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." "Will you respond to the call of God on your life?" The Bible teaches that all Christians are called by God to serve in His kingdom. Will we respond like Isaiah with "Here am I, send me," or will we take the next-boat-to-Tarshish approach of Jonah?

God called Elijah the man of the desert regions to go before kings, bringing the message of warning and repentance. God used him during an important time in Israel's history to oppose a wicked king and bring revival to the land. Elijah the Tishbite, of Gilead, was a human being just like any of us—a man of similar hopes and dreams, weaknesses and shortcomings, but also a man of deep faith in God. (James 5:17-18) Once called, he faithfully carried out God's mission in the face of danger and hardship. His was a singular voice of "one crying in the wilderness" to rebuke sin in the land and to expose the false prophets and false religions of his day. Elijah was a bold, direct-to-the-point prophet of God. By speaking the prophecies of God, he made fierce enemies, but his enemies could not overpower him. Elijah's ministry marked the beginning of the end of Baal worship in Israel. We see Elijah as the central character in a face-off with the prophets of the false god Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:17-40) Elijah invited these false prophets and all Israel to a demonstration to show that Baal had no power at all against the God of Israel. The prophets of Baal call upon their god all day long to rain fire from heaven to no avail. Then Elijah builds an altar of stones, digs a ditch around it, puts the sacrifice on the top of wood and calls for water to be poured over his sacrifice three times. Elijah calls upon Israel's God, to send fire to swallow up the sacrifice prepared for Him. God responded to Elijah's prayer. In a moment thousands witnessed the fire from heaven consume the carcass, all the water in the trench and all the wet wood, burning up even the stones! God proved He was more powerful than false gods. The outcome would demonstrate who served the true God. (1 Kings 18:19-40) Elijah continued, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21) We have access to the same power as God's Word works through us and demonstrates the power of His Spirit in our lives. (2 Corinthians 4:7) Elijah is an illustration that it is not the vessel but God in the vessel that demonstrates power. The present age also has its idolatry, though it is more subtle than that of Elijah's day. The shrines of pagan worship may not be as visible in a basically Christian-professing society, and there may be very few carved images that people actually worship, yet millions are following after the gods of this world. Also today's idols can be riches, fame, pleasure and the pleasant-sounding fables that occupy the hearts and minds of many who are unwilling and disinterested in learning about God.

Elijah prophesies a drought to come upon the whole land as consequence for Ahab's evil. (1 Kings 17:1-7) Then God's Spirit moved Elijah to pray that it would rain; and the rains came, ending the terrible drought (1 Kings 18:42-45) After the great victory over the false prophets, rain once again falls on the land (1 Kings 18:41-46). However, in spite of victory and provisions from the LORD that he receives, Elijah enters a period of wavering faith and depression. (1 Kings 19:1-18) Hearing that Ahab's wife Jezebel has made a vow to kill him, Elijah feels sorry for himself, hides in a cave, and even comes to believe that he alone was left of the prophets of God. He got his eyes off of God and onto the details. It is then that the LORD instructs Elijah to stand on the mountain as the LORD passed by. There is a great wind, an earthquake, and then fire, but God is not in any of those. Then comes a still, small voice in which Elijah hears God and understands Him. When Elijah stopped focusing on the fear of what men could do and his feelings of being alone, God's voice was heard, and Elijah went on to be taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. (2 Kings 2:1-11) As was true for Elijah, when we focus on the noise and the tumult of life in this world, we can get our eyes off of the LORD. However, if we listen for His still, small voice and walk in obedience to His Word, we find victory and reward. Each person in the Bible has a lesson for us to learn and can aid our walk as believers. Elijah struggled with typical human frailties, yet he was used vessel for mightily of God

At the time of the end, just before the great and dreadful day of God's wrath upon the earth, the world will again be given the same message that was preached by Elijah the prophet. The prophet Malachi declared, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5-6). Similar to the way John the Baptist came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17) this end-time fulfillment will feature a commission much like the Elijah-like work will be done before Christ's return. Scripture indicates that an Elijah-like message to repent and obey God will be preached by the Church of God. (Matthew 24:14) In Elijah's day a revival of true worship was begun. His whole life was devoted to the work of restoring true worship. His admonition that God's people faithfully serve Him with their whole hearts remains important for us today.

The response of Elisha was to God: (Read 1 Kings 19:19-21) The first thing we see about Elisha is that he was plowing with his oxen to break up the tough rugged ground, when God came through his prophet Elijah and sought him out. We see the seriousness of Elisha's response take this call from Elijah? Well, this is answered above where we read the Elisha slaughtered his oxen as a sacrifice and burnt the plowing equipment to cook the meat! No going back! At the call of God he gave up all. Instantly he "left the oxen and ran after Elijah" There should be no hesitation in entering upon the service of God. In doing this we see a great example of someone leaving behind the old life when the call of God comes. He knew this was a new beginning for him and there is no compromise with his past life. Jesus said. "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62) There is no looking back here! Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.' How true of us this is. Not with Elijah of course, but with our Master, the Lord Jesus. We arise, count the cost, leave the past behind, and follow Him! And what's more, we are called to minister to Him as well. How about you? Have you been looking back or are you pressing on to the higher calling of our Lord?