

GOD'S CALL AND MY RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

"And the child, Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days: there was no open Vision.

And it came to pass at that time. when Eli was laid down in his place and his eyes began to wax dim that he could not see
And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

That the LORD called Samuel; and he answered Here am I. And he ran unto Eli and said, here am I, for thou calledest me. And he said, I called not, lie down again. And he went and lay down.

And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him: And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I, for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down; and it shall be if he call thee, that thou shall say, "Speak LORD, for thy servant heareth". So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered; Speak LORD for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, 'Samuel, Samuel, then Samuel answered, Speak~ for thy servant heareth.

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Behold I will do a thing, in Israel at which both the ears, of everyone that heareth it shall tingle" 1 Samuel 3:1- 13

Is God calling you or has He called you? Have you ever asked your self this question? Have you ever heard it in the silence of prayer, in an experience of God in your life?

How can a man today, hear God calling him to ministry? To be called by God is different from a man wanting to do something himself. When you are called of God, God speaks to you. There is a deep knowledge in your heart that God wants to use you.

In the case of the prophet Samuel that we just read, there is no mistaking his calling. His was definite.

Many a good man of varying degrees of aptitude and ineptitude mistakenly enter the ministry. Having never been taught the magnificence of the Divine call, they set out upon sacred ground as one who becomes a teacher, doctor or lawyer. They have no grasp of the nature and depth of the ministry.

The pressures and temptations in the ministry are greater than in any other profession. The purpose in this book is to give clear instructions about the Divine call, so that it will be unmistakable where it exists.

One is not a preacher and ought not to preach unless called of God. From my personal experience and analysis of scriptural examples, I have endeavoured here to treat the subject of God's call and our response.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And **HOW SHALL THEY' PREACH, EXCEPT THEY BE SENT?** As it is written. How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things Rom. 10: 13 - 15.

Kings claim the throne through birth, Presidents are elected, Generals rise through the ranks, but only God can call a preacher. How **SHALL THEY PREACH EXCEPT THEY BE SENT?**

In all ages and from all walks of life God calls his men. The call was, always unmistakable and unforgettable. Read the accounts of the following men in Scripture. Moses was a prince, Amos a shepherd, Matthew a tax collector, Peter a fisherman. Samuel was about Twelve and Moses Eighty. It was a supernatural experience for each of them. Time will fail me to tell of Isaiah and Paul, men who had a definite encounter with the LORD.

But how does God call a man? God calls today in many ways. Simply stated, He sometimes speaks through verses of scripture. Many times, he creates a deep appreciation of a need, which you see. Some consistently have dreams and revelations.

Talking about dreams and revelations, we must be very careful about this. Satan also speaks in dreams. If you have a dream about a call, search carefully to see if it fits with God's word in the Bible. In the New Testament God speaks most often by the Holy Spirit.

If a Church Committee is drafting you, you must ask God to show you, if he is calling you. In Acts 13 : 2 you can see that the calling came from God before the church acted upon it.

To be called is to be divinely appointed or set forth to do the work of the ministry. The initiative comes from God. “No man taketh this honour unto

himself' Heb. 5:4. Sometimes, your friends can tell if you are called to the ministry. But they are not always right and may not be in a position to know how God may be dealing with you. The ministry is an exacting occupation. It is not good news to hear that a man enters the ministry and finding himself a misfit quits. Hence you must be sure of your heavenly calling.

If you can be happy in any profession other than the ministry you definitely are not called. The call of God is compelling. When I received God's call, it was so gripping that I knew I couldn't follow any other course. Like Paul of old I could say ""necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel." I Cor 9: 16.

The call of God upon your life will kindle a flame, a passion that nothing in this world can crush or erase from your soul. An over whelming concern for the souls of men is its hallmark. When you are called of God, you will be ready to sacrifice everything for the work of the Ministry. Your love for your fellow man will know no bound. Hence you will spend hours in prayers for them.

If you think of God calling you, you must not be in a hurry. You must look carefully for God's will in the Bible You must listen to what he is saying in your heart. You must pray. You must know for sure that God has called you.

Do not go into the ministry because your parents or relations think you should. Do not even go into it because your Pastor insists on it. Know for sure that God Himself is calling you. If your business has failed or you have problems on your job it is not necessarily a sign of God's call. One thing is true in every case study on the Divine Call in scripture - God never calls a lazy person. You must settle whatever problems you have in life with prayers.

My aim is not to discourage you from the call of God upon your life. If it is there, my hope is to further stir it up. But if it is not there, you must first get it. When God calls a man, he gives him such energy and excitement about the ministry that you are willing to risk your life to fulfil it. If religion however calls you, you merely see ministry as a noble work that somebody has to do. Burn-out is soon to follow because you must supply your own energy, resources and motivation. You become so discouraged and disfranchised that there is very little left to do often.

Your call must be a personal experience. Something you should never be in doubt of. It should be strong. The reality of your calling is what will see you through in the days ahead in ministry.

When I gave my life to Jesus, I never thought of becoming a preacher. My goal in life was to go to the University, train as a professional and endeavour to get to the peak of my profession while supporting the local church with my tithes and offerings.

But all that changed on the 18th of October 1980 when I received the

mighty baptism" in the Holy Ghost. I will never forget the experience. We had gone to church that faithful morning to "wait upon the LORD." How we prayed! We cried! We desired the baptism in the Holy Ghost. I can't tell the number of persons any more - but can't forget the experience.

I asked the LORD to give me power to remain faithful to him. I asked him to search me and reveal any sin in my life, and that I was ready to repent and be pure before him. I didn't want to be an "ordinary" Christian who goes to church and still suffers in the hands of the enemy.

As I prayed, there came a point where I can't remember what I prayed for or how I prayed it. My whole being was on fire! The blessing had come! My heart was flooded with love for God and my fellow man. I had such a compassion for the lost and the dying that I never had. My language had changed. The reality of God was so strong upon me. I knew like never before that God exists and that He was so close to me.

I prayed for my parents and relations. I prayed for my friends and enemies. I prayed for my nation and people. I prayed for neighbours and colleagues. My heart was filled with love. I couldn't stop praying. I couldn't stop loving.

I remember that the service was not officially closed. The power of God was so real and strong in that meeting. The leaders left after sometime and the Ushers told each person as he got up, that he can go if he wanted to. It was such a blessed experience.

When I managed to cease' praying, God started speaking to me. His voice was strong in my spirit. I heard him clearly like never before. He spoke to me; calling me into the ministry. In a flash, I could see most of those I had prayed for. They were in chains and agony. They were seeking for help and deliverance.

At a particular point, the crowd was so breath taking that I knew that it would take only God's power to meet the need. Scene after scene, of men in need appeared before me and I cried.

Then He spoke those unforgettable words amongst others "Go preach the gospel to the lost I and deliverance to the captives." He proceeded to show me thousands of men and women that would be reached for the kingdom by my obedient response to His calling. He assured me of his support and presence. He even went on to show me some specific events that will occur in the future. As write this. I want to testify that some of them have come to pass.

Then He asked me if I was willing and ready to go. The whole of my being responded, YES. He then told me that I was at that moment been anointed to go. I can never forget the currents of liquid fire that went through my being. Tears rolled out freely. I became a changed person.

Suddenly all my desire for earthly achievement disappeared. All my plans

faded away. The lust of the world, the attraction of money, the desire to be recognised by society faded away. At that time in the Pentecostal history of Nigeria, being a minister was not ticket to the "good" life. Many a preacher had only one suit and a pair of sandals. It was like a vow of poverty.

My sole aim in life became to win souls. R. A. TORREY has put it in words that fire me so well "I would rather win souls than the greatest king on earth; I would rather win souls than be the greatest general that ever commanded an army. I would rather win souls than be the greatest poet or novelist or literary man who ever walk the earth or the wealthiest man that ever lived. My only ambition is to win as many as possible. Oh, it is the only thing worth doing."

When I managed to get up from the floor that day I started to go home. As men and women passed by me, I would want to reach out to them with my physical hands and pull them out of hell. I shared the gospel with all that I could. When I took the taxicab, I shared Christ with all in it and prayed with them. When I arrived home, I did the same to all our neighbours and then to our household.

Persecution started from home. I wouldn't be allowed to introduce a "new religion" into the; home. But God' strengthened me. The call of God will separate you from others. People won't understand you. The reality of the call will become- your anchor. When God calls you; He will stand by you. Read his promises to Jeremiah "Be not afraid for I am with you... Behold I put my words in your mouth...for I will hasten my word to perform it" Jer. 1:4-12.

Are you discontented, despondent or miserable? It may be that you do not know God's plan for your life or that He has revealed it to you and you have persisted in following your own. God has a plan for your life. You can not be truly happy until you have found it out and followed God's plan for your life.

God is not double minded about you. He will never call you if he never wanted you. God's call upon your life is divine permission and power to do what you ordinarily couldn't do. God has given you a word, act on it. If a man didn't call you, man won't destroy you.

Many a failure in ministry is as a result of this Moses spent the first forty years of his life learning the wisdom of the Egyptians Acts 7:22 &23 and then another forty years learning the lessons of leadership and priesthood Exod. 3:1, Acts 7:30,31.

Even our LORD Jesus spent Thirty years preparing for his three and half year's ministry. Today we went to do the opposite. Look at the Apostle Paul. He was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) He invested years of preparation (Phil. 3:4-6). He also had a Three years school term (Gal. 1:17 & 18) the time spent preparing is not wasted time.

Your calling might require your getting a reassurance. Particularly if you are

going to quit a job or something serious for full time ministry. You must be doubly sure. When I indicated my intention to resign my job at the Bank, many a friend of mine had to call me and ask questions and try to discourage me. But had a definite encounter with the LORD and that more than once.

I remember once when travelling from Warri to Aba in a taxicab (12th Sept., 1986). How the Spirit of the LORD came upon me in a mighty way and I saw visions. I saw thousands of men and women in bondage crying for deliverance. I felt an urgency to go and rescue as many as possible. I knew God wanted me to commit my life to the winning of souls.

While doing my job at the Bank, there would be times when the spirit of the LORD would stir up within me in the middle of a transaction. My close associates got to know when this happened again and again. My Assistant General Manager, who wasn't a believer then, once called me to discuss the issue of my going full time with me. The hand of God was so evidently upon me.

Preparation does not necessarily mean but may include' Bible school attendance, Many a Bible school in the country today succeed only in quenching the fire of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of men. But we must "study to show ourselves approved unto God, as workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth 2 Tim. 2 : 15.

Preparation definitely include seasons of prayer and waiting upon the LORD for instructions, directions, empowerment and such like. Waiting on the LORD provides time for God to address the problems, When you get ahead of God, you rob him of an opportunity to prove His power in your life.

Preparation time reveals the true motive and intentions of those around you; it enables you to gather accurate and untainted information. Everyday you get new clues, You will not understand everything the LORD has for you in one prayer session: So continue to wait upon the LORD. God is interested in a relationship and not in an event.

You must discover in your prayer closet those to whom you have been called. This is awaiting your discovery from the Holy Spirit and the pages of scripture. Like Jeremiah, you must discover your agenda Jer. 1:10.

The place of assignment is the place of blessing Make sure you are not in the wrong place. In the early eighties. I knew God wanted me to preach in the buses, taxies schools and market places and I concentrated on these. I never asked a Pastor to invite me to preach. I never sought a church position. I never sought a title nor asked for an offering.

The knowledge of being in the will of God gives peace and brings the blessing of God. You must discern the place God has for you. It may not be possible to know everything before you begin, but you must get the initial steps right.

I had a notebook where I wrote down most of what God told me or laid in spirit. Some were revelations of things that will happen in ministry in future, other were specific steps I was to take or things that I should do.

After preaching in public places for sometime, I knew the time to go into the pastorate had come. I got' offers from denominations, prayed and made a choice. I had the pleasure of working with a particular church for some years before I heard again, the commission to go full scale into mass evangelism.

As the LORD spoke I wrote down. The name of the ministry, our focus, the name of the radio and television outreach, our mass crusades missions etc. From time to time I look at this notebook either to write down a new information or to check for thanksgiving on something the LORD has done.

I am always amazed when young people meet me and say that they have a calling but do not know where or how to begin. Go and pray; I always tell them. If God called you, He definitely has a place for you. Until you surely have a clear blueprint from him do not even bother to announce your calling.

I do not even believe that a divine call is something to be announced. Rather the LORD will mark you out; such that those who don't even know you personally can tell that the hand of God is upon your life.

Young people have a habit of giving themselves titles and bragging about their calling. This is not right. Let the anointing of God upon your life bring you out. "A man's gift maketh room" for him and bringeth him before great men Provo 18: 16

You must have a message. Do not go out believing you are called without having a message from God for a dying word. If you intention is to provide social service or education or even raise the standard of living of the poor, you 'better join a government department. They can do a better job than you. The primary assignment of the one called by God is to preach the gospel of salvation to a lost and perishing world.

Why are you going into the ministry? What is your purpose in preaching the gospel of our LORD Jesus Christ? Do you want to entertain? Are you interested in the money you can make? Are you doing it because it is the respectable thing to do and because it will give you prestige and influence? Is that your purpose?

Then my friend you had better seek any other position. You had better look for something else, because God's blessing will never rest upon you if these are your reasons. The world is waiting for God's messengers. If you are going into the pulpit to present-a living Christ to a dying world, then God will bless and use you to His glory.

This chapter will not be complete if I do not discuss the issue of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. There is this idea today that we can get along in ministry without the Holy Spirit. That education and training will take His place and somehow become a substitute for His power. Many a minister has endeavoured to carry on his ministry apart from the Holy Spirit.

Yet it was the Holy Spirit who took the leading place in the book at Acts and actually did all the work. He guided and directed the apostles. He convicted of sin and founded the early church. Unless you know something about the anointing of the Spirit of God, you will not get far in the service of God. And is better to settle this before you go into the ministry proper.

With the anointing of the Holy Spirit, you can accomplish more in few weeks or months, than you can in the energy of the flesh in years.

An essential part of preparation is the basic discipline of daily prayer and bible study. Many a Christian are not faithful in their own private walk with the LORD. A man who can not discipline himself to privately pray and study the word of God daily, consistently for years will fail if he enters the ministry that way.

God responds to consistent consecration. By the time it has become a strong habit to daily spend quality time in bible study, one is getting ready for ministry. Otherwise, ministry work will become more or less like government job. No life, no power, no spirituality.

If what you do is get up in the morning, fall down beside your bed, mumble out a few words of prayer and hurry to work, and then at night, when you are exhausted you do the same thing and climb into bed, you are not ready for ministry.

Some have never learned how to wrestle in prayer. Therefore they do not know how to prevail. Not until you prevail with God will you prevail with men, and to prevail with men you must learn how to travail in prayer. Not until you have learned how to get alone with God and travail in prayer you will not be able to accomplish much. Not until then will God commence to use you, answer your prayers and to glorify himself in your ministry. Every man ever used of God has been a man of prayer.

FAITHFULNESS TO YOUR CALLING

God did not call you to fail. Just like nobody else can discern God's calling upon your life and make you obey it, so nobody else can pursue and complete it for you.

Some people in the ministry either were never called or they are hopelessly unfaithful. That is why they fail. God does not plan any failure. I know that the first years in ministry are a great sacrifice. But if you know the call is there, you will stay in there no matter what it may cost you. "Do not despise the day of small things" Zech. 4:10.

Your ministry should not develop to a certain point and then lose its momentum and begin to decline. As you gain more experience, you should become more proficient. Your faith should rise to higher heights. You should be achieving greater victories. The highpoint of your ministry should never be reached until the hour arrives when God takes you home and says to you "well done, thou good and faithful servant".

"No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God" Luke 9:62. If you are convinced that God called you, then you must be ready to stick to your ministry, come rain come shine.

Usually you will need to pass God's tests of time. Rome was not built in a day. If you are expecting to be an Apostle Paul overnight, you must be a joker. God will take time to work you and bring you to where he wants you to be. Do not enter the ministry before you are prepared.

Passing God's test of time is a necessary prerequisite for success in ministry. During this period satan will try to distract you. But if he can't distract you he can't defeat you.

The man who is going to be successful in the ministry is the man who has set everything else aside and doggedly faces the work of God. I am not talking about been called a full-time minister and spending all the time sleeping or socialising. I am talking about spending all available time receiving from the LORD or doing his work. Any man with divided attention, blurred focus, interest in other things etc will fail in the ministry Read the Apostle Paul in Phil. 3: 13 & 14

I know that the ministry demands all that there is in a man. It requires his entire attention day and night. I do not understand how some minister carry on without been devoted to the one great work to which God has called them.

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with he affairs of this life that he may please him, who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Tim. 2:4). We must separate ourselves from worldly affairs.

Every desire .to succeed in the Accounting profession has since faced of my heart. Every political ambition has died. I have devoted my entire life to this one thing - the work of the ministry. Nothing else will attract interest or take my attention. I am prepared to concentrate, to give myself wholly to God's service. As someone has said, "the world is yet to see what God can do with one man wholly committed to God." "Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings and not mean men." Provo 22 : 29.

Sure, there will be problems and difficulties. This does not surprise God. He knows how to turn it for good. PS. 37 : 23 & 24, Provo 24 : 16 There could be times when people don't understand you and oppose you. You may even become the target of scorn, ridicule and opposition. Even our Lord Jesus tasted of loneliness, alienation, betrayal etc. Read the gospels.

You may even pass through Seasons of want and hunger. Difficulty is not a sign that God did not call you neither does it indicate that you are living in sin. It is a trick of the devil.

Then you must also forget about all the excuses you gave at the beginning. "The cost is too much", "I am too young", "I am not eloquent", "my position in my family wont permit me", "people wont believe". Read the Bible, everyone who gave such excuses eventually (by God's enablement) overcame them and did valiantly for the LORD.

For us young men, I have a word in Lamt. 3 : 22, "it is good that a man bear the yoke in his youth". Do not fail God. He is depending on you for the fulfillment of your ministry. Like he said in Col. 4:17 "Say unto Archipus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it"

Launch out in faith "God's man doing God's work in God's way at God's time will not lack God's support". Hudson Taylor tells us.

"And the Spirit bade me go...nothing doubting" Acts 11:12 "Whereon... I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" Acts 26 : 19 Some people begin their lives in secular work, rise through the ranks to the top and respond to God's calling upon their live. For me, my entire life, the prime of it inclusive the Lord has demanded.

I have responded to the Lord "Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee". When I was still at the Bank, many times while going to work, I will be translated to the supernatural. It would seem I was going to explode, as I would see visions of great evangelistic meeting in near and distant lands.

I know that God wants me to commit my life to the winning of souls. I do not want to waste my life in this world. I do not know about you. As for me "O Jesus I have promised to serve Thee to the end. Be thou forever near me, my Master and my Friend. I shall not fear the battle since thou at by my side, nor wonder from the pathway since thou will be my guide".

I have heard the LORD speaking "in accents clear and still above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self will". Many regions in Africa and the world at large have not been reached for Christ. Many are slaves to sin, sickness, poverty, demons etc. Eastern Cults are parading their wares all over the place.

We must not allow them to confound the situation. We must go all out to save the lost. The time left is too short. We are indeed living on borrowed time these last days. We must do all we can within the time left. The task therefore is urgent. All men must have the opportunity to receive Christ.

What is your decision? What are you going to do about this God is calling you! Most of you who read this might be intending to spend your life

pursuing money. May be you believe like I did previously that the best way you can serve the interest of God's kingdom is to be a faithful and heavy tither. Probably you are right. It is not for me to judge. All that I say is that souls are perishing!

God forbid that you offer the LORD money when he is asking you for your life. God forbid that you make money your aim rather than means, and pile it up for selfish purposes rather than using it for the glory of God. I pray that God will get someone's ear, heart and will from these pages. I will like to close with the story I read somewhere about Charlie Peach, who was a criminal. When the law caught up with him, he was condemned to death.

On the fatal morning of his execution in Armley Jail, Leeds England, he was taken on the death walk. The prison Chaplain walked before him, routinely and sleepingly reading some Bible verse. The criminal touched the preacher and asked what he was reading. "The consolations of religion" was the reply.

Charlie Peach was shocked at the way he professionally read about hell. Could a man be so unmoved under the very shadow of the scaffold as to lead a fellow - human there and yet, dry eyed, read of a pit that has no bottom into which this fellow must fall?

Could this preacher believe the words that there is eternal fire that never consumes its victims and yet slide over the phrase without a tremor a man human at all who can say with no tears, "you will be eternally dying?" All this was too much for Charlie Peach. So he preached. Listen to his on - the - eve- of - hell sermon-

"Sir, addressing the preacher, "If I believed what you and the church of God say that you believe, even if England were covered with broken glass from coast to coast, I would walk over it; if need be on hands and knees and think it worth while living, just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that."

Think on all these things. "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them for me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." Ezekiel 33: 7-9.