

The Call of God

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Devour the Word of God

Ezekiel 3:1-4

Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that roll. And He said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And He said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with My words unto them.

Here we see one of the greatest spiritual lessons found in the Bible concerning the call of God.

The Lord was dealing with Ezekiel, getting him ready to obey the call on his life. God handed him a roll that contained the message he was to deliver and told him to take and eat it. As Ezekiel obeyed the Lord and ate that roll, it was sweet as honey in his mouth. He was taking into him the message of God, being prepared of the Spirit to go forth and declare that which God wanted him to declare.

But first he was to *eat* the roll.

In thinking about the call of God on our lives, here is the area where we need to give lots of consideration: the Word of God getting deep down into our heart and soul. We must get the Word deep within. We must eat away at it until our souls have feasted and we are full; until our hearts are saturated with it; until our minds are filled; until we are thinking the Word, talking the Word, living the Word, rightly dividing the Word.

Yes, we must fill ourselves with God's Word until it controls our life, our mind, our soul, and our conversation. Then, we will be prepared to give it out.

We are a dull tool in God's hands when we are without a knowledge of His Word. We must have the Word on the tip of our tongue. Then we will have something to say when we meet the rebellious, the hard-hearted, the stiff-necked. When we meet those who have no interest in God, we're going to know exactly what to say. We'll also have a message to give to the hungry souls who are longing to know the truth and the way.

II Timothy 2:15

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

We're going to know what to give out because we've taken the time to get ourselves prepared; we've taken the roll from the hand of God and put it in our mouths; we've said: "Yes, Lord, I'm

going to eat this roll. I'm going to get Your Word down in me. And, Lord, I know it's going to be like honey in my mouth as I eat it."

The trouble with so many is that they don't want to hear the Word of the Lord. They don't want to read it or study it because it reveals too much to them.

Hebrews 4:12

For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

When they begin to study the Word to prepare themselves to obey the call on their lives, the Word gets too strong, too sharp, and they begin to shove it aside. As they study and meditate on the Scriptures, their sins begin to be uncovered. When the truth about themselves begins to be revealed to them from the Word, they begin to resist: "I've had enough! I can't take any more of this! I don't want to hear it!"

As the sword of the Word lays bare some of their ways (ways they don't want uncovered), they begin to get rebellious against God. The Word of God is no longer like honey in their mouths. It has become bitter and gives them a belly-ache. And if they don't surrender and repent, a year later they will still be belly-aching about it. The Word isn't doing for them what it should be doing.

Isaiah 55:11

So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

God said His Word wouldn't return unto Him void, but it would accomplish that which He sent it to do.

Now, the Word of God, as it comes into our hearing, will do one of two things: It's either going to make us or it's going to break us! It's either going to bring us up, or it's going to cut us down! It's either going to bring eternal life, or it's going to condemn us on the day of judgment because of our rejection of it.

When God places His call in your life, He will deal down in your heart and soul about the sweetness of getting closer to Him. He will deal with you about having a personal experience with Him where He can come near to you and reveal Himself to you.

But there has to be a longing and a hunger within if you are to be prepared for such an experience. God wants you to come to the place where He can speak mouth-to-mouth with you, where you can hear Him, where He can reveal to you in the night hours, where He can show you visions and dreams — where He can prepare you to go forth with His Word.

So many testify that many years ago God called them, but they still haven't obeyed. They still haven't prepared for His call.

To push aside God's calling would condemn me. It would haunt me. I couldn't live with my conscience if I knew that I was going against the will of God, knew that I was going my own way and doing just as I pleased.

God has a real way of calling us and making us know that His call is on our life. He uses many tools to make this known. One of those tools can be a sermon, such as this one. He can begin to deal through the message to make known His call to us. He can awaken us to the truth that He is speaking to our heart, saying to us that He wants to get hold of our life.

As He begins to deal, the message can begin to trouble us until we get down and pray about it, seeking God and fasting if need be.

Until we take some steps ourselves in response, He will continue to deal with us in a greater and greater way. Eventually, we will have to give into His dealings if we want to find peace.

My Personal Testimony

One day God began to deal in my life and call me into the ministry. I thought it was strange, as I never had experienced such dealings before. The more I got from God, the more I seemed to want. The more I got, the more it tasted like honey to my soul.

I was in a service one night where a preacher's wife testified of how God had dealt with her and her husband, calling them apart to the ministry. I just knew God was talking directly to me! It seemed so real to me as she testified.

I went home, and that night my wife and I lay on our bed praising the Lord. The Lord began to move. I felt a supernatural love come into me, a love I had never felt in all my life. As I lay there trying to tell God just how much I loved Him, I rolled over to the front of the bed, and a vision appeared before my eyes: I saw a multitude of people holding their hands up, crying to the Lord for help.

The Spirit of the Lord plainly spoke, "Whom shall I send?" In an automatic response from my heart, I said, "Lord, send me!" And then the vision passed from me.

The next day I went to work. When I entered my store, I went to the back room and began to pray, but I just couldn't be content. My mind was on God's dealings in my life, and though I tried to pray, I was miserable in my soul. I didn't have any peace as I searched and searched in prayer.

I left the store and drove up a big mountain where I parked my car and walked into the woods. There I sat on a log for a long time, praying and seeking God. I still couldn't make connections. Something was missing. I just couldn't get to the bottom of what was troubling me. I knew God

was dealing with me, so I stayed on that mountain for quite a long time, seeking Him for an answer.

Finally, in the afternoon, I went back down to the store and called my wife on the phone. I told her I was having difficulty keeping my mind on work. As I told her what had happened to me, she said the same thing had been happening to her!

The Spirit of God was saying to her: "You're going to preach the gospel. You're going to heal the sick. You're going to cast out devils." This had been going over and over in her mind all day. When I said, "I think it must be God is calling us into the ministry," it brought peace to both of us. Right on the spur of the moment we seemed to have clear understanding that it was God dealing with us about His call upon our lives.

We fixed His calling in our minds, and kept praying and seeking God about it as time went on. Finally, the Lord sent a man of God to our house to stay overnight. We had been praying and seeking the Lord, wondering what God was going to do next, and God spoke through this man to confirm what He had been dealing with us about.

God gave us instructions about preparing ourselves for His call and told us how long it would take. He said, "It might take a day, a week, a month, or even a year!" There certainly wasn't anything definite about that! So I began to pray for understanding, and He quickened to me that the time element was up to us. It was going to be governed by what we did in response to Him, completely determined by our own actions to His call upon our lives.

Well, I took that message to heart. As God began to tell me what to do, I started right out to respond and do it. I didn't make up excuses: "Next year, Lord! I can't, Lord! I lack finances, Lord! I lack the ability, Lord." No! I just responded unto God, letting Him lead me day by day.

I tell you, it didn't take God very long to lead us out of business and into the ministry — where we have been ever since.

Full Surrender

We must say: "Lord, I put my life into Your hands. From this day on, I am Yours to work in and through. Lord, You do what You want with my life!"

Just come to that place of laying aside every care and hindrance. You can't have a dedicated life unto God, fulfilling His call on your life, without giving yourself unreservedly to Him. It doesn't work any other way. You can't have two masters. God does not want second place in your life.

I Corinthians 6:19,20

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

You need to realize how great the call of God is on your life. Begin to respond to His call. Begin, down deep in your heart, to say "yes" to God: "Yes, Lord, I'll go all the way. I don't care what it costs."

Do you have that kind of attitude, or do you have the attitude that so many have: "Lord, after I do this, I will take up your call."

Many times, excuses stand in the way of God's call: "Lord, I can't, because . . ." We fail to see, sometimes, that the more we apply ourselves to the call of God, the more God will be able to work in us and prepare us. He will manifest His grace to do and accomplish that which He has called us to do.

God has many ways of raising up someone to serve Him. He doesn't always work in the same way. Some He takes and calls out of the activities of this life so He can thoroughly train them by the Holy Ghost. Others He calls to Bible school so He can teach them the Word under anointed teachers.

But there must also be something further on our part. There are many who have graduated from a Bible school yet are still unprepared to take up the call and go forth to do His will. Why? Because the Holy Ghost hasn't really gotten hold of them. They haven't surrendered their will to where God can say, "I want you to do this," and they will reply: "Yes, Lord. It doesn't matter what it is that You want me to do. I'll do just as You say."

It doesn't matter how God calls; that is not the important thing. The important thing is one's *response*, getting right down to business and working with all of one's mind and soul to take up that call. Our diligence is what will make the difference. Then God can have His way and bring us forth into that which He has for us to do.

When the pressure is on and you're in the heat of the battle, the devil will try to back you down. He will try to put carnal things in your mind, try to get you to reason with your natural mind. During one of those days, your mind is more on the circumstances than on the Master. You find yourself struggling to get on top with God. There are lots of those days, but it is as we make our determined stand to obey God at any cost that we will have victory over these things.

Tied Down with Cares

Right after God called me, He showed me a vision: There I was with a yoke around my neck. From this yoke went strings in every direction, tied to every conceivable thing. Anywhere I turned to go, there was a string attached that kept me from doing what I knew God wanted me to do. In other words, God showed me that I was yoked to the world, to business — to so many things — and I could go nowhere to serve God in that state.

This is what is wrong with so many. They're yoked down, tied to too many things. If God says He wants you to move to take up His call, you can't because you're tied to something. You are tied right down, and you don't know what to do about it!

In this vision I didn't know what to do. I looked around and saw that I couldn't go anywhere. There were strings tied in every direction. Finally, a hand placed a big pair of shears in my hand. And the Lord said, "If you cut the strings, I'll break the yoke." As I began to cut those strings, the vision ended.

I tried to discern what God was trying to show me. My, I had been in business for several years. I had more irons in the fire than you could shake a stick at. I had two businesses and went to work from early in the morning until eleven or twelve at night, just to keep up with the demand.

How do you stop something that puts such demands upon your life?

God said, "If you cut the strings, I'll break the yoke." One of the first things I cut was the telephone, by going to all the business clients I dealt with and telling them I was going out of business. I said that I wouldn't be servicing them anymore. There were a few who tried to insist that I was still going to do their work. As far as they were concerned, I should let someone else go and preach the gospel. "No," I said, "I'm going to obey God."

As I began to cut strings, I found out I had a lot of them. So many people owed me money. I began to pray and seek God, and He dealt with people to pay what they owed me. This helped me get myself to the place where I could write them off. It took a little season to get all those strings cut, to sell all the inventory and get the business transferred.

It took awhile to get things to where I could apply myself to the call of God, but, finally, the day came when I said: "God did it! The old yoke is broken. I'm free. I'm going to obey the Lord and go do what He tells me to do."

I responded immediately when God told me what to do. I didn't bicker with God and tell Him I'd go sometime later. No, I didn't push it aside.

How long was it going to take? God had said it might take a day, a week, a month, a year! Well, it took me almost six months to move in obedience to His call. I gave up everything — my home, my business — and went forward with God.

God was faithful to me, really moving in answer to my every cry. After I freed myself from every string of the world and business, He not only broke the yoke, but He also opened the door and gave me a small church to pastor.

Eating the Roll

God set me in a place where I could learn His Word. He didn't send me away to a school. He sent me to the "backside of the desert" where He could teach me Himself. Yes, I learned the Word at the mouth of the Lord. The Holy Ghost taught me the Scriptures. That's just the way they came to me!

Preparing for the call of God to many is just a slip-shod thing. They don't have any determination. There is a lack of initiative in their hearts to respond to His call, to go all the way

with Him. There is that old fleshy hang-up: lack of ambition and backbone. But I was determined.

Yes, I was determined that I was going to eat that roll. I was determined to the point where I began to do something about it. When God dealt with me about getting prepared by getting into the Word, I began to respond.

At four or five each morning I got out of bed. Long before daylight, morning after morning, I headed for that little church and begin to seek God, and I'd stay there until I had satisfied my soul that I had my portion from God for that day. It didn't matter how long it took, I stayed there until I was satisfied.

I stood right behind the pulpit so I couldn't fall asleep if I wanted to. As I stood there, God would expound His Word to me. He taught me by the Spirit and made me to understand those things in His Word that I couldn't understand in myself. Those were precious days, but it took a diligence to obey God and get up every morning to head for the church.

I got more blessings from the Lord in those days. I'd go to that old church, and when I touched the doorknob and began to open the door, the Spirit of God would come on me. I entered the church rejoicing and praising God. After two or three hours of prayer, I'd take my Bible and go from chapter to chapter with the Lord.

The precious months I spent in that church changed my life. Like Ezekiel of old, I was truly eating God's Word, and it was like honey in my mouth. As I received the message of God to preach unto a lost and dying world, I began to grow spiritually. The message that I preach and teach today is the very same message God taught me by His Spirit in that church.

Sometimes God has to take a person aside, like He did Paul, and teach them the Word directly by His Spirit. He does this in order to correct many of the errors and traditions — where they have strayed away from the Word to the wisdom of men.

The Turning Point

Don't think we didn't have pressures or battles. After I quit work, things began to get hard, and the pressures got greater and greater, until we didn't even know where our next meal was coming from.

One day the pressures got so unbearable, enough to make anybody want to give up. This was the real breaking point. We were either going to go on with God at any cost, or we were going to go back the easy way, down to Egypt's land. Yes, we had to make a decision.

It was in that hour that we made the best decision we ever made (other than receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour). As we got down in our living room, weeping and crying out to God on our knees, we made a new consecration: "God, we don't care if we have to starve to death. Lord, we're going to stand with you and not turn back under these pressures."

As we made this firm dedication unto God, it was the turning point in our ministry. From that day on, God began to lift us up.

How about You?

How long will it take YOU to respond to God's call?

I encourage you to stand up with the faithful. Stand up with the chosen and launch out in faith. Obey God's leading in your life. Take courage and trust Him: He will fulfill His call in your life. Obey from your heart and He will bless you. Do what He tells you to do, and He will lead you into your ministry.

Don't fear, but obey Him from your heart. If you are afraid of the suffering and hardship that may come from stepping out in obedience, you will never get the strings cut. God will never be able to break the yoke of the world from your neck and get you prepared to take up His calling.