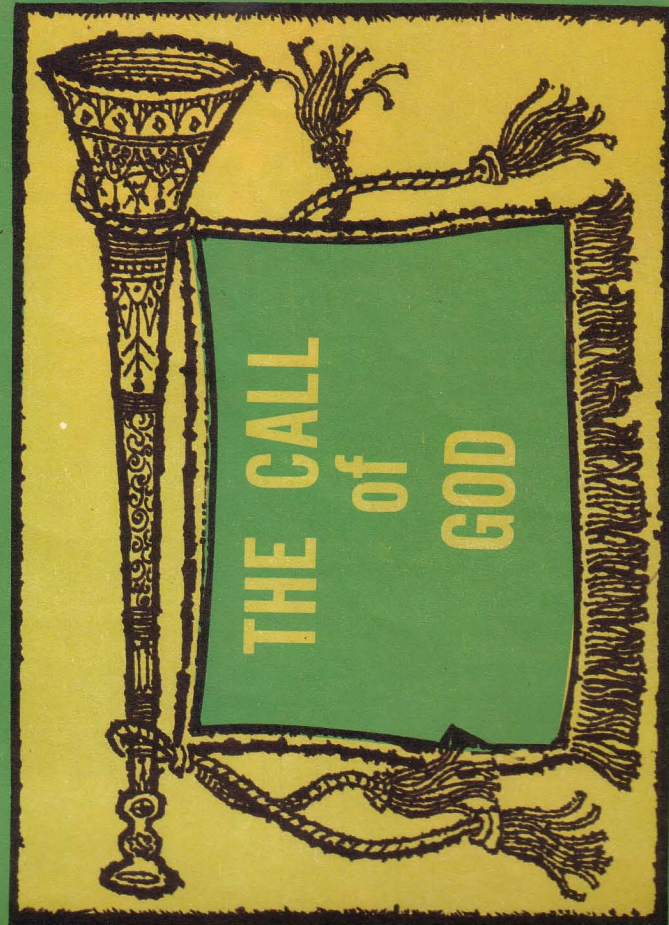


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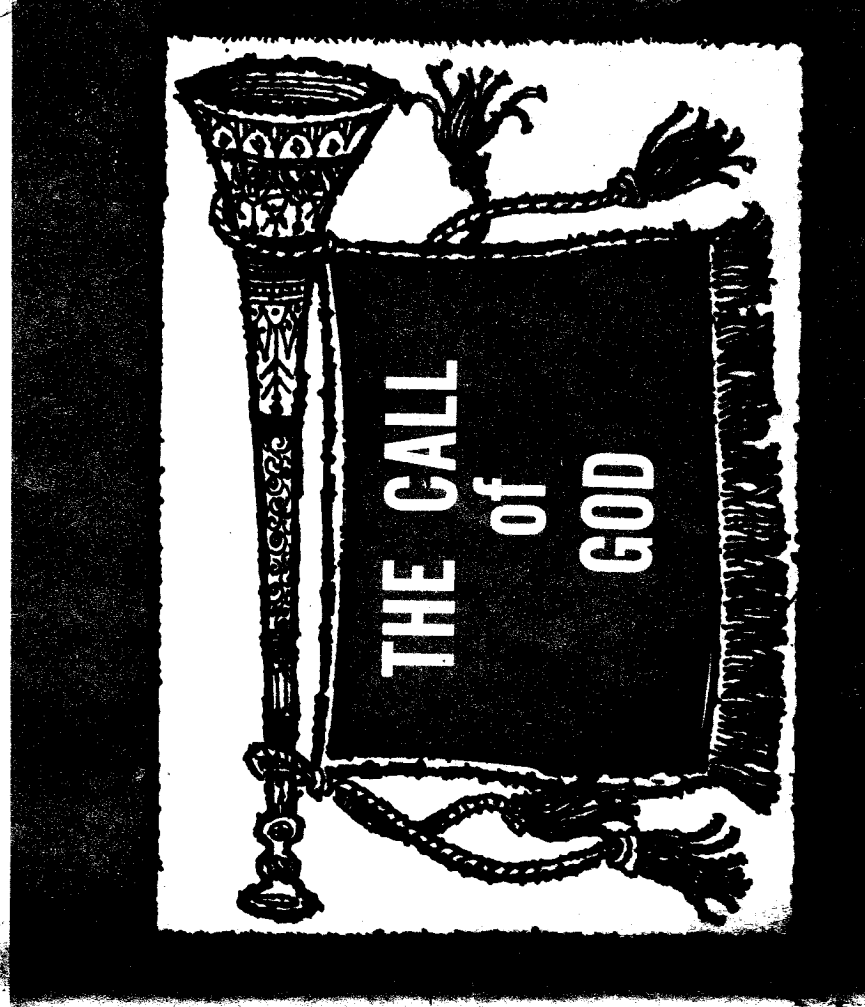
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Every one of us has a part to play. The question is not "is God calling me?" but "to what is he calling me?" 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 makes clear that God gives different gifts to each member of his church, but they are all given to be used for his work. God has a purpose for every Christian life. Our job is to find out what it is and then do it.

How do we find out what God's purpose is for us? God speaks to us and calls us in a number of different ways.

A. Through his Word. This is the most important means. It may be as we read our Bibles privately, or as we hear the Word preached that God will speak to us.

B. Through prayer as we meditate on God's Word.

C. Through Christian friends. God may challenge us through a minister, deacon or through the testimony of some Christian friend.

D. Through circumstances. God sometimes guides our lives in such a way that his purpose for us becomes clear.

Our main problem is unwillingness to hear God's call. Just as wax in the ear makes us deaf to people's voices, so unwillingness and disobedience make us deaf to God's call. If our hearts are willing, we shall always hear God's call to us.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What is God's purpose for my life?
2. What excuses do we make for not obeying God's call?
3. Can a disobedient Christian be a happy Christian?

*The Call of God*

*Graham Ingram*

but "to those who are called...Christ the power of God and wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24). All hear the outward call of the Gospel but only some hear the inward call of the Spirit and respond to the Gospel. Which are you?

### 3. THE CALL TO CHRIST LIKENESS

God's call to salvation is always a call to a life lived wholly for him. The Bible makes it quite clear that you can't become a true Christian and go on living as you did before. (James 2:14-17).

All Christians are called to be saints. (1 Corinthians 1:2). Saints are "people set apart for God". Paul prays that "our God may make you worthy of his call...so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you." (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).

There's a chorus which says,

"Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,  
All his wondrous compassion and purity.  
O, Thou Spirit divine, all my nature re-  
fine"

Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me."

God's purpose is to make <sup>you</sup> ~~you~~ and me just like Jesus. (Romans 8:29). God loves his son so much that he wants the world to be full of people just like him. God puts Christ in our hearts so that, as light shines through glass, he may shine out of our lives. But just as dirty glass spoils the light so sin in me blots out the vision of Jesus.

### 4. THE CALL TO YOU

God's call is an upward and onward call. Like the Israelites in the wilderness we have not yet reached the Promised Land. There is much to do and much to learn before we get there.

20  
21 a/b  
22 a/b

## 1. THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL

In 2 Thessalonians 2:14, speaking of the Christian testimony of the Christians to whom it was written, Paul says "To this he (God) called you THROUGH OUR GOSPEL."

The last command of Jesus to his church was to preach the Gospel and make disciples. (Matthew 28:19-20) ~ The Gospel preached by God's people is the call of God to sinful men, calling them to turn from their sins and have faith in Christ.

We see that in obedience to the command of Christ, Peter preached the Gospel to the people of Jerusalem and called on them to repent and be baptised for the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38) ~

## 2. THE CALL OF THE SPIRIT

Many people hear the call of the Gospel, but not all respond to it. Maybe you, if you are a Christian, heard the Gospel many times before the day on which you finally came to Christ. At first you heard it only with your ears, but then one day you "heard it with your heart." ~

The Gospel preached through men calls to our ears, but the Holy Spirit uses those words and calls to our hearts.

Jesus, speaking to a large crowd of people said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..." (John 6:44) ~ We may hear the Gospel, but only God, working through his Spirit, can give us the desire to come to Christ.

Paul refers to the Roman Christians as "called to belong to Jesus Christ." (Romans 1:6) ~ In 1 Corinthians 1 he speaks of preaching the Gospel to Jews and Greeks. To many it sounded foolish, to others it was offensive

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## CHAPTER 13

### THE CALL OF GOD TO YOU

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

MEMORY VERSE: *"To this end we always pray  
for you, that our God may make  
you worthy of his call..."*  
2 Thessalonians 1:11

experience

The Bible has a good deal to say about the call of God. We have seen examples of God calling particular men who lived in the days when the Bible was written. They make interesting stories; but that was not the purpose for ~~them~~<sup>their</sup> being written. In Romans 15:4 Paul writes:

*"For whatever was written in former days  
was written for our instruction, that by  
steadfastness and by the encouragement of  
the scriptures we might have hope."*

The Bible is a practical book. In it we hear the voice of God telling us what he wants us to know so that we may be the sort of people he wants us to be.

Like the Prodigal son we have all gone away from God into the far country. (Luke 15:13) The Bible says that because of our sin we have become strangers and foreigners to God. (Ephesians 2:12) The far country is a foreign country. In the Old Testament we read of how the Israelites were slaves in a foreign land, Egypt. One of our lessons has been about Moses whom God sent to call them out of that land, and to lead them into the Promised Land of Canaan. This is a picture of God's purpose for all of us. He wants to call us from the foreign land of sin, the dominion of darkness as it is called, into the Kingdom of his beloved Son. (Colossians 1:13) The call comes in a number of ways.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What training and gifts has God given me? What sort of plan do they suggest for my life?
2. How useful have I been to God since I was converted?
3. Why don't we <sup>not</sup> have anyone like Paul in Zambia?

## INTRODUCTION

Someone has said that we get <sup>90</sup> just as far in the Christian life as we want to get. <sup>90</sup> If this ~~is~~ true then most Christians are half-hearted in their desires to advance in the things of God.

The other day I went to the maternity ward of a hospital to see a new born baby. ~~Like all babies~~ It was <sup>very</sup> delightful. <sup>90</sup> The ward was full of ~~them~~ <sup>babies</sup>, yelling their heads off to show how well and strong they were. It was the sort of scene most people enjoy. But if I went again to the same place six months later and found the same babies looking exactly the same, I would be very worried. For babies are not meant to stay babies. They are meant to grow into healthy boys and girls, and one day into men and women.

Yet that is just what we so often find in Christian churches. People who are meant to grow into healthy full-grown Christians remain as spiritual babies. The writer to the Hebrews speaks of Christians in his day who were just like that. He says, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's Word. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the Word of righteousness." (Hebrews 5:12-13).

The aim of these studies is to get Christians out of the nursery into the workshop. The Christian life doesn't end at the beginning. That's common sense. God has a plan and purpose for all our lives. These chapters are intended to help each reader to discover that purpose.

The food on which the Christian grows is God's Word. The guide for our Christian lives is God's Word. The following chapters are,



will not  
therefore, Bible studies. They are meant to be read alongside the Bible, looking up the Bible references given. Without that they won't make much sense, and I shall have failed in my purpose.

My prayer is that these studies will help you and feed you to the end "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:17)

us to be sincere, zealous or even religious. Saul was all of these before he became a Christian.

On the Damascus road God turned him right round in a dramatic experience. (Acts 9:3-4) The proud Pharisee, so sure of himself and what he was doing, was made blind and had to be led by the hand like a little child. (Acts 9:8)

Paul said it was God's grace that called him. (Galatians 1:15) Grace is the attitude of God by which he loves us and gives us his salvation even though we don't deserve it and, like Saul, have been opposed to him. But grace has to humble us first before it saves us. The proud Saul was certainly humbled, but when he was humbled God revealed to him Jesus as his Saviour from sin. (Galatians 1:16, Acts 9:17-18)

By the way some people talk and act we might think that this was the end of God's plan. Paul says God "was pleased to reveal his son to me IN ORDER THAT I MIGHT PREACH HIM AMONG THE GENTILES." (Galatians 1:16) Ananias, the faithful disciple sent to instruct him in the Christian faith, was told, "Go for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the sons of Israel." (Acts 9:15)

No sooner was Saul saved than he was called to service. The sinner Saul became the Apostle Paul. We read, "For several days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And in the synagogues IMMEDIATELY he proclaimed Jesus..." (Acts 9:19-20)

There's no testimony <sup>better than a</sup> like a new testimony, ~~no Christian like a new Christian~~, <sup>There is</sup> a no greater example than a newly converted sinner who is full of the Holy Spirit. Don't wait for some future call. Be the best for God you can be, NOW.

E. He received the best education possible. As a young man he went to Jerusalem and learned from the great teacher Gamaliel. (Acts 22:3)

We should all get the best education we can get. God can use us even with the poorest education, as we saw with Peter, but a dedicated Christian with a good education is <sup>often</sup> ~~more~~ useful than a dedicated Christian with a poor education. ~~We need educated Christians so that they can witness to educated non-Christians.~~

<sup>has more opportunities for service</sup> Saul was a well-prepared instrument, ~~therefore~~, when God called him. If you are young and God has not yet revealed his life's work to you, that does not mean that the things you do at present do not matter. Learn everything you can and get all the experience you can in things that are good and useful. A lazy and bad farmer, or housewife, or school-boy, will never make a hardworking minister, deacon, deaconess or Sunday School teacher.

## 2. GOD'S PROBLEM

Saul had the best preparation possible, but somewhere he went wrong. We are all born into the world with one big flaw in our nature, sin. God may have prepared us to live for him, but that doesn't mean that we want to live for him. In fact our hearts are set against God.

Saul first used all his abilities to oppose the work of God before he was used in the work of God. He helped to kill one of the finest Christians who ever lived, Stephen. (Acts 7:58-8:1) He did everything he could to stamp out Christianity. (Acts 9:1-2, 22:4-5) He said of himself that he was the worst of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15)

## 3. GOD'S CALL

God has made his plans, but because of sin, God has to remake us first, before he can put the plans into operation. It is not enough for

## CHAPTER 1

### THE CALL OF GOD TO NOAH

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 6

MEMORY VERSE: "...Noah was a righteous man blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God."

Genesis 6:9

<sup>about h</sup> Sometimes God calls men to witness to Him in times of very great wickedness and difficulty. Noah was called by God at such a time.

## 1. THE BACKGROUND TO HIS CALL

We learn in Genesis 3 that man rebelled against God and fell into sin. From then onwards all men were affected by "the fall," as we call it. Paul tells us, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

<sup>about</sup> But in each generation God has had his own people, saved by grace, to be a testimony to him. In the time of Noah wickedness was so great and so widespread that only eight people were saved when God judged the world through a great flood. Read 1 Peter 3:20.

The wickedness went so deep that God announced that he would judge the world for its sins. (Genesis 6:5-7 and 11-12)

## 2. NOAH WAS RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD

Before God can call a man to serve him, he has to call him to salvation. We are "saved to serve" but cannot serve until we are saved. All our attempts to serve God before we are saved are useless and unacceptable to him. Noah was already saved when God called him because we read in Genesis 6:8-9:

"He found favour in the eyes of the Lord"  
"Noah was a righteous man"

"Blameless in his generation"  
"Walked with God"

Noah had believed the promises of God. He looked forward in faith to the day when God had said he would send a Saviour. Genesis 3:15 contains that promise although it is not an easy verse to understand. Noah was saved through faith. He had righteousness as a gift from God, just as we must have.

### 3. GOD CALLED NOAH TO BE A PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

In 2 Peter 2:5 Peter refers to Noah as a "herald of righteousness." A herald is someone who either lifts up a trumpet, like the one on our cover, or lifts up his voice, in such a way that everyone can hear. John the Baptist was a herald. He announced with a loud voice that Jesus was the "Lamb of God."

Noah was called to be a herald. He was called to speak loudly and clearly against the wickedness of his generation. He called upon men to repent and turn from their sins.

This is a very difficult thing to do. Most of the Old Testament prophets were "heralds of righteousness" and they were stoned to death because of it. When Jesus wept over the sins of Jerusalem he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!" (Luke 13:34) Jesus was the greatest preacher of righteousness, and they crucified him.

It has always been so with men who preach righteousness. One of the greatest African Christians was a Ugandan called Blasio Kigozi. He was still a young man when he died; but during his short lifetime, he was greatly used by God to bring men to Christ and to bring a spiritual revival to the church. Blasio preached that people must turn away from sin if they are to know the blessing of

A. He was born in a great city, Tarsus, where he could gain education and culture. (Acts 11:39) This fitted him for speaking to kings and clever men later on. (Acts 26:2 and Acts 17:17-18)

B. He was born the son of a Roman citizen. His parents were Jewish, but his father had become a Roman citizen. (Acts 22:25-26) It was probably a privilege conferred on him by the Emperor for some service he had given. It would be the same if some non-Zambian were made a citizen of Zambia by the President because of good service done for the country.

This proved to be a great advantage to Paul's work. Roman citizens enjoyed protection which was not given to others.

C. He was brought up strictly as a Jew. (Philippians 3:5) This meant that he knew the Old Testament very well. It also meant that he was able to preach Christ to the Jews. (Acts 9:20,22)

D. He was taught a trade which proved useful all his life. Every Jewish boy had to learn to work with his hands. Tarsus was well known as a place where cloth was made from goat's hair. Paul was taught to make tents from it. (Acts 18:3) Later on, as a missionary, he was able to do this job to earn money for buying food. God has commanded that preachers and missionaries should be supported by God's people. (1 Timothy 5:17-18, 1 Corinthians 9:14) Some of Paul's enemies, however, tried to say that he was preaching the Gospel in order to get rich. So he preferred to preach for nothing and earn his bread by tent-making. (1 Corinthians 9:3-4, 6-7 and 18) God's people can be very unkind, sometimes, to their ministers. They like to live comfortably themselves but think that the minister should be different. It is a good thing, therefore, for any prospective preacher to have a trade by which he can earn his bread if necessary.

## CHAPTER 12

### THE CALL OF GOD TO PAUL

SCRIPTURE: Acts 9:1-22. *u*

MEMORY VERSE: *"But the Lord said to him, 'Go for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.'"*  
Acts 9:15. *u*

From time to time God calls really great men to follow him. Their call from God is known to everybody and millions of people benefit from it. Saul of Tarsus was one of these. He has been called the greatest missionary of all time.

#### 1. GOD'S PREPARATION

In the letter to the Galatians, Paul, describing his own conversion says:

*"But when he who had set me apart before I was born...was pleased to reveal his Son to me..."* (Galatians 1:15-16) *u*

God's plan for Saul did not start on the Damascus road. It began when God made the world. God's plans are so marvellous that he knows every detail from the beginning. He has a plan for all our lives. In Ephesians 2:10 Paul says,

*"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

God has prepared the way. Our task is to discover what it is and then walk in it.

In Saul's early life there were a number of things which prepared him for his future work.

God. He claimed that the only difference between Christians and pagans in Uganda was that the pagans sinned openly, while the Christians sinned in secret. Men ~~didn't~~ <sup>did not</sup> like to hear this sort of thing and Blasio endured much opposition. He knew the proverb, "He who leads the attack against the leopard *u* gets the wounds."

Before we can undertake such a difficult task, we must be sure of several things.

- a. We must be sure our own sins are forgiven.
- b. We must be sure we are living a consistent Christian life, daily repenting from sin. God's word promises us, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7) *u*
- c. We must be sure that we love the sinners to whom we are preaching righteousness.

#### 4. NOAH WAS CALLED TO A GREAT ACT OF FAITH

Noah's preaching was not successful. Only seven other people, beside himself, were saved. Success is not always the measure of faithfulness, although we should certainly seek to win many for the Lord.

Even though men refused to listen to God's messenger, there was nothing wrong with him or his message. The <sup>trouble</sup> ~~trouble~~ was the hardness of <sup>men's</sup> ~~their~~ hearts. Paul says to the Corinthians, "And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) *u*

So God judged the world by a great flood in which all but eight perished. In order that the eight might be saved God commanded Noah to build a big wooden boat called an ark. Read Genesis 6:13-18.

God also commanded him to make it big enough to carry animals and birds, so that life could begin again in a new world after the flood was gone. (Genesis 6:19-21)

It must have been a huge boat. It is thought that it was 450 feet long and 75 feet wide. It had 3 floors and reached a height of 45 feet. Noah had to build it before there was any sign of rain. He had to take God at his word ~~to obey~~ God in faith. No doubt people laughed at him, but Noah did it. (Genesis 6:22)

Do we obey God when he speaks to us even though we cannot see how it will work out?

#### 5. NOAH WAS SAVED IN THE JUDGEMENT

Read Genesis 7:6-16, 23.

The Bible teaches that the ark is a picture of salvation on the final judgement day. Read 1 Peter 3:20-21 and 2 Peter 3:5-7.

We learn also:

- a. that in the last days of the world men will scoff. 2 Peter 3:4
- b. that there will be much wickedness and little faith. Matthew 24:10-13
- c. that only those in the ark of God will be saved. The ark is the church, God's family, which we enter through faith. Noah built the ark in faith. He and his family entered it in faith.

friends and the homeland which they love. All Christians lose the right to call their time, their talents, their money their own. We are all called to "deny" ourselves for the sake of the Gospel. Some Christian churches have a "self-denial week" when their members are expected to deny themselves something in order to give more money for helping others. Jesus sets the standard that for the Christian every week is a "self-denial week."

In the verses we quoted, Jesus even said that we have to be willing to lose our lives for the Gospel. In the brothers James and John we see that Jesus calls men to different types of suffering. John lived to be a very old man but suffered for his faith. In the last book of the Bible, which he wrote, we learn that he was imprisoned on an island called Patmos because of his testimony. (Revelation 1:9) James, on the other hand, died as a young man. He suffered a martyr's death at the hands of Herod. (Acts 12:2) It doesn't matter much whether we serve Christ on earth or in heaven as long as we serve him where he wants us to be.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Do I spoil my children by making them ambitious for the wrong things?
2. What are my chief faults? What can I do about them?
3. Are Christians called upon to suffer for Christ's sake in Zambia? If so, in what ways?

even our faults can contain something of which Jesus can take hold and turn for good. Their impatient natures made them quick to follow Jesus. In Luke 5:1-11 we read the writer's description of how they were called. Have you ever noticed how each Gospel writer saw different aspects of people and events, so that together they give us a much fuller picture than if there had only been one Gospel?

Luke tells us that James and John were partners with Simon and Andrew in their fishing. (Luke 5:10) How wonderful that four friends should all have responded to the call of Jesus! The fact that they knew each other and had worked together at one job must have been a great help in working together as part of a team of disciples later on. Christian service is team work. If you can get your friends to join you in God's work you will be amazed at the difference it will make.

In verse 10 and 11 we read of their call and response to it. Luke tells us "they left everything and followed him." They had just made the biggest catch of fish ever, a catch they had previously only dreamed about. (verses 6,7,9) But they left the whole lot, plus their valuable boat and tackle, to follow Jesus! Would you have done that? Yet that is just the condition Jesus makes for all disciples. Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." (Mark 8:34-35) Jesus does not necessarily mean that we have to give up everything we have when we become his followers, but that we have to be willing to give up anything which stands in the way of following him wholeheartedly. It may mean our giving up things which other people regarded as a right. If you were to become a preacher, you would almost certainly be poorer than if you did some other job. Missionaries have to leave their families

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Are we "blameless" in our generation; or do we share its sins?
2. Are we warning men even though they laugh at us?
3. Are we in the ark of God?
4. Are we obeying God's call like Noah did?



## CHAPTER 2

### THE CALL OF GOD TO ABRAHAM

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 12:1-5, 15:1-6, 16:1-6,  
17:1-8, 21:1-3, 22:1-14.

MEMORY VERSE: *"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance..."*

*Hebrews 11:8.*

As

~~Is~~ Noah stands out as a righteous man in a wicked generation, Abraham stands out as a man of great faith in a day when there was no Bible, no church, and very few other believers to strengthen his faith.

The Bible describes faith as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is trusting what God says and then acting upon it. My friend may tell me he is a good driver and I may say I believe him. But if I am not willing to get into his car and trust my life in his hands, my words are empty words. I do not have faith in what my friend tells me.

#### 1. HIS OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S CALL

God made Abraham a promise.

*"And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." (Genesis 12:2).*

But before the promise could be fulfilled he had to obey God's call.

*"Now the Lord said to Abraham, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'" (Genesis 12:1).*

Their selfishness and pride one day caused them to receive a further severe rebuke from Jesus and the other disciples. The ambitious mother tried to get her sons a favoured position in the kingdom of God. (Matthew 20:20-21). The sons, full of their own importance, felt sure that they were worthy of it. (verse 22). It's not surprising that the other disciples were angry.

#### 2. A HARD LESSON LEARNED

Jesus used the incident to teach them all a lesson. (Matthew 20:24-28).

In the very short third letter of John we read of him speaking of someone else in a certain church, called Diotrephes, "Who likes to put himself first." (Verse 9). By this time John had learned the lesson Jesus had taught him. The mark of a man truly called by God is that he is humble. The man of the world often seeks advancement that he might have authority over others. In the Christian life we advance to become the servant of others.

Jesus is our best example of this. Urging the Philippians to be humble and lowly Paul says, "Have this mind (attitude) among yourselves which you have in Christ Jesus...who humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:5,8). At the last supper Jesus taught the same lesson by kneeling and washing his disciples' feet. (John 13:5). He took the place of a servant. A call from God is a call to service, not to increase our own importance. It is sad that there are men like Diotrephes in most of our churches, men who like to put themselves first and they do a great deal of harm to the work of God.

#### 3. A CONDITION OF DISCIPLESHIP

If James and John learned one lesson slowly, they learned another quickly. Sometimes

## CHAPTER 11

### THE CALL OF GOD TO JAMES AND JOHN

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 4:21-22<sup>e</sup>  
Matthew 20:20-28<sup>e</sup>  
Mark 3:13-17<sup>e</sup>

MEMORY VERSE: "...Whoever would be great among you must be servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave."  
Matthew 20:26-27<sup>e</sup>

Selfishness and pride often stand in the way of God's will for our lives. In James and John we see two brothers in which these sins were overcome.

#### 1. A POOR START

Jesus seems to have had a remarkable capacity for seeing beyond what people were when he first met them to what they could be. He met men, like Matthew, who had lived lives of open sin and his call led to a sudden and complete change in their lives. Open sins, like stealing and cheating, are often more easily renounced than the "secret sins" of the heart, like lust and pride.

James and John probably came from a very respectable home, but it wasn't altogether a good home. Their father worked at the honest trade of fisherman, and he taught his sons to do a worthwhile job. (Matthew 4:21)<sup>e</sup> The mother, on the other hand, seems to have been one of those silly women who spoiled her sons. Even Jesus gave them a nickname which seems to suggest that they had quick tempers. He called them "sons of Thunder," (Mark 3:17)<sup>e</sup> We find an example of John's impatience in Mark 9:38 and again, of his quick temper, in Mark 9:51-55.

It was a tremendous thing that Abraham was asked to do. He lived in a place called Ur, in Chaldea. The place would today form part of Iraq, near the Persian Gulf. God told him to leave his tribe, leave his family and go to a strange land. God did not even tell him where that land would be until he was on the way. He was to make a journey of nearly a thousand miles to a land called Canaan, which today forms part of Israel. It was just as if you were told to leave home and find yourself in some distant part of Africa, Ethiopia or Nigeria, where you knew no one, and no one spoke your language. For Abraham it was even worse because in those days people did not travel like we do. Even to go a journey of 200-300 miles was an event only second to death itself. *a long, difficult journey*

God had a great purpose for Abraham in Canaan. He was to be the father of a new tribe, Israel, which was to be God's special people. From Israel, the Saviour, Jesus Christ, would be born. Through Christ millions of people would come to have eternal life.

If God asked you to go to a distant place to be a witness for him, would you go? The privilege of receiving the Gospel gives us the responsibility of taking it. Every missionary has to give up his home to go to a strange land. God wants missionaries from every nation and tribe.

#### 2. THE GREATNESS OF HIS FAITH

When Abraham set out on his journey he was 75 years old. God had promised him that *he* ~~he~~ would be the father of a whole new tribe and many nations descending from it. Yet at 75 years of age Abraham had no children at all! Sarah his wife was barren. To believe God's promise in such a circumstance ~~one~~ needs very great faith. *a person*

Abraham's faith was not constant. More than once it failed. Read Genesis 15:2-3. But God renewed his promise, verses 4-5. Because Abraham believed such a difficult thing, the Bible tells us that God "reckoned it to him as righteousness." (Verse 6). Abraham was saved through faith just as we are.

Because Abraham, like us, was not perfect he weakened again. He listened to the ~~doubtings~~ of his wife and obtained a child through another woman. (Genesis 16:1-4). His sin caused much unhappiness. (16:5-6). God has his own way of doing things and does them in his own time. We are not to use wrong ways of bringing about God's purposes.

God was gracious and renewed his promise to Abraham several times. He never lets us down although we let him down <sup>many times</sup>. He always receives us back when we are sorry. Read Genesis 17:1-8, 18:1-2 and 9-14.

Abraham had to wait a long time but God was true to his promise. (Genesis 21:1-3).

<sup>Abraham's</sup> His faith had to undergo an even greater test, ~~yet~~. Was Abraham's love for God greater than even his love for the son for whom he had waited so long? God tested him by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac. (Genesis 22:1-2). God knew all the time that a substitute would be provided. (22:10-14). But did Abraham have the faith to trust God to do the right thing?

In the hour of trial his faith stood firm and God did not ~~let him down~~. It was ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> God's will that Isaac should be sacrificed. God condemns human sacrifice. (Ezekiel 16:1-2, 21). In the incident God was not only testing Abraham's faith but teaching him what would happen when Jesus came. God was actually going to give his son as a sacrifice for our sins. Paul speaks of God as "He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all." (Romans 8:32).

teaches this. Read verse twenty-one of that passage. We don't suddenly become different people if God calls us to some special service. If we have been unfaithful and lazy Christians before, we shall be unfaithful and lazy afterwards. Every missionary finds that out! Nobody becomes different by sailing on a boat from America to Africa or Britain to Africa. The best preparation for God's call is not to wait until he calls but be faithful in what he gives me to do now.

Andrew was faithful before he was called. It's not surprising, therefore, that we find he was a good witness afterwards. It was Andrew who ~~contacted~~ the lad with the five loaves and fishes, which led to the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. (John 6:8-9). It was Andrew who introduced Greeks to Jesus who were seeking after him. (John 12:20-22). Philip seems to have been slow as to know what to do, but as soon as he told Andrew, they were led to Jesus. Andrew was obviously good at dealing with people. We don't have to be good preachers to do that. In fact good preachers are sometimes very bad at dealing with people on a personal level. If we are good at making friends, then we can be greatly used by God to bring people to Christ. Peter brought them in thousands, Andrew in ones and twos. Peter was the evangelist who preached to many, Andrew was the personal worker. Both are needed. After all there could have been no Peter without faithful Andrew.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can I do better the job God has given me to do now?
2. Have I some member of my family who is not a Christian and I have never told about Christ?
3. Is there someone, maybe a lonely person, whom I can befriend and through friendship lead them to Christ?

Saviour of men. (John 1:29-30) ✓ He declared him to be the Son of God. (Verses 32-34) ✓ Andrew, whose heart was prepared by John, now became a follower of Jesus. (John 1:35-37) ✓ ~~It was hard for John the Baptist to lose his followers.~~ Soon afterwards, ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> was put to death by Herod. He was not put to death, however, before he had finished his task. He had been called by God to prepare the way for Jesus. Do we regard God's call as a means of gaining position and popularity for ourselves or as a way by which we can show Christ to men? Faithful John the Baptist led Andrew to Christ.

### 3. ANDREW THE SOUL-WINNER

Notice what happened as soon as Andrew had found Christ. He led his brother to Christ! (John 1:40-41) ✓ He "first found..." Before he did anything else he went to tell his brother. Jesus had ~~not~~ yet called him to be a fisher of men, but because of the wonderful thing that had happened to him, he must tell others. We don't need to be specially called to be a "soul-winner." ✓ Every Christian is called to that ~~job~~ <sup>work</sup>.

Simon became the greater disciple, but Andrew led him to Christ. You may never be a great preacher, you may never occupy any important position in the church, but your faithful testimony may bring a future great leader to Christ.

### 4. ANDREW THE DISCIPLE

Andrew believed in Christ first, but he and his brother were called to service at the same time. (Matthew 4:18-20) ✓ Andrew had some experience first in Christian witness, before he was called full-time. Whether God wants us to carry on in our normal job or to give our whole time to special Christian work, he wants us all to be witnesses. It is through our faithfulness in what we are doing that God gives us bigger responsibilities. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) Jesus

### 3. ABRAHAM'S EYES WERE FIXED ON HEAVEN

Abraham was willing to leave his home, his family and even to give up his son because his eyes were not fixed on the earth. His hopes and his treasure were in heaven. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:21) ✓

There is a Christian song which says:

"This world is not my home,  
I'm just a passing through."

The Bible says of Abraham, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:9-10) ✓

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What step of faith does God want me to take for him?
2. In what things have I been doubting God?
3. Where are my hopes fixed, on earth or in heaven?

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CALL OF GOD TO MOSES

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 3 - 4:20

MEMORY VERSE: *"Now the man Moses was very meek more than all men that were on the face of the earth." Numbers 12:3*  
*"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth!" Matthew 5:5*

Moses was one of the greatest and most successful leaders a nation has ever had. He was a man who had courage enough to stand before a heathen king and demand the freedom of the slaves he kept. Yet the Bible says that Moses was more meek than any other man who was living. Some people think that meekness is weakness. But Moses was not weak. To be meek is to be humble before God. Jesus said that such people will "inherit the earth." God rewards and uses the humble.

#### 1. GOD'S HAND WAS ON MOSES ~~RIGHT~~ FROM HIS BIRTH

God's interest in us doesn't begin when we start to think of him. His hand is upon our lives long before then. The unseen hand guides us from our birth until the day we come to him and acknowledge him.

Moses was preserved from death as a baby by a miracle. The story of how he was hidden in the bullrushes to escape death is well known. You can read it in Exodus 2. God obviously had a purpose for him, but Moses did not know it.

#### 2. GOD TRAINED HIM IN HIS YOUTH

Moses received wonderful training <sup>to be</sup> as a leader. He was brought up as a prince in the

## CHAPTER 10

### THE CALL OF GOD TO ANDREW

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 4:17-20  
John 1:35-41

MEMORY VERSE: *"He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah...'" John 1:41*

If ever there were a contrast between two brothers, it was between Simon and Andrew. Yet Jesus called them both to be fishers of men.

#### 1. THE OVERSHADOWED ANDREW

Simon was such a strong dominating person that he overshadowed Andrew. Simon was the natural leader; Andrew had to follow on. Probably when they were children, it was Simon who decided what games to play, Simon who answered the questions at school, Simon who...always Simon! It's very hard sometimes to have a brother like Simon. Often Andrew was ~~tt~~ even called by his own name. He was "Simon's brother" (John 1:40). When they became disciples of Jesus, Peter was one of the three leaders who ~~were~~ always with Jesus; Andrew was "one of the rest." (See Matthew 17:1 and Matthew 26:36-37)

#### 2. ANDREW THE LEADER

There was one very important occasion when Andrew took the lead. He was the first to follow Jesus. (John 1:35-37, 40)

Andrew seems to have been more interested in religion than Simon. John 1:35 tells us that he was already a disciple of John the Baptist. That means he had been baptised for the forgiveness of his sins. (See John 1:24-28) John the Baptist was a good teacher for he pointed away from himself to Jesus as the

Then one day while he was busy working in his boat not far from the water's edge, he heard that voice again. Inviting, compelling, it came over the water, "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men." (Mark 1:17).

Peter knew there was no more holding <sup>back</sup> out. Religious or not he must obey. We read, "Immediately they left their nets and followed him." (Verse 18). When Peter made up his mind to do ~~a thing~~ he did it.

Peter didn't become a saint overnight. He made many mistakes. God had to do a lot of hard work on his life, chipping rough bits off the rock. He often opened his mouth too quickly and said the wrong thing. (Read Luke 9:28-35, Mark 8:31-33 and Mark 14:66-72). Peter failed very badly in denying his Lord. Yet God was able to use even his failure to make him into a better man. It humbled him, and when he met Jesus after the resurrection, he was a very different Peter. He had denied his calling, but Jesus recommissioned him. (Read John 21:15-17). Simon, the non-religious type became Peter, the Apostle, one of the two greatest leaders in the early church. On the day of Pentecost God used his preaching to bring 3000 people to Christ. God is able to call and use the most unlikely people in his service. What about you?

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Do I know someone like Simon for whom I should be praying?
2. How does God change human lives?

palace of a king. (Exodus 2:10). He had the best education possible. We read in Acts 7:22;

*"And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and he was mighty in his words and deeds."*

But even more important than this sort of training was his spiritual training. However great a man is, if he doesn't know God, he is nobody. Moses needed to be humbled before God. His upbringing in a King's palace could have made him very proud. We know that he had a violent temper. Read what it made him do in Exodus 2:11-12.

After killing the man, Moses ran away. He ran away to a distant land called Midian. (Exodus 2:15). The Bible says, however, that there was something more than fear in what Moses did. Hebrews 11:24-27 says:

*"By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible."*

He had already learned that to be a son of God is more important than being the son of a king's daughter.

In the land of Midian he became <sup>an</sup> a humble shepherd. It was in this humble work that he met with God. God appeared to him in a burning bush. (Exodus 3:1-6).

It is to ordinary people in ordinary places that God makes himself known. We can



hear his call to us in the street or in the bush just as easily as in a church building.

### 3. GOD'S CALL TO SPECIAL SERVICE

God's people Israel were suffering as slaves in Egypt. God wanted a man to rescue them from their cruel masters. Slavery is always wrong.

In 1759, a man was born in England called William Wilberforce. As a young man he became a Christian. He was helped in his Christian life by a man called John Newton. Newton had, as a younger man, been captain of a slave ship. He had forced ~~poor~~ African ~~into~~ ~~his ship and taken~~ them to America to work as slaves. Then John Newton came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. His life was wonderfully changed. He heard the call of God to become a preacher of the Gospel.

William Wilberforce was a great speaker and a member of Parliament (the National Assembly in Britain). John Newton urged Wilberforce to use his gifts and his position to try to get slavery ended. Wilberforce led a great crusade against slavery. In 1807, the selling of slaves was abolished in all British colonies and in 1833 the owning of slaves was forbidden. It was men of God who got African slaves free, just as it was a man of God who freed the Israelite slaves.

When God first called Moses, however, Moses made excuses. He was so humble that he felt he could not do the job. He made four excuses.

a. He said he wasn't important enough.

*"But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt.'" (Exodus 3:11)*

Moses showed a true humility, but we must never make humility an excuse. God can use the "nobodies" of this world better than those

Peter had no time for them. Yet obviously Andrew was excited about something so Simon went with him. (See John 1:42). He went full of unbelief and prepared to mock, but as soon as he met Jesus he knew there was something different about him. There was a strength of character, an authority, which was rare. Yet there was also a peacefulness about him and when he spoke, Simon had to confess like many others that "no man ever spoke like this man." (See John 7:46). Then, ~~those~~ eyes, ~~they~~ seemed to search right into Simon seeing everything about him, and then he said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas (which means Peter)." (John 1:42). What did he mean? Peter...a rock? (That's what the name means). He was hard all right; but hardly someone a religious man would call firm and solid like a rock. If Jesus was looking for a follower he could rely on, ~~in Simon~~ he was making a mistake.

Peter went away strangely moved by the compelling power of this man and yet puzzled.

### 3. THE CALL TO BE A DISCIPLE

Some weeks went by and during that time Jesus began his preaching work. Simon still deeply troubled and yet thrilled by his meeting with Jesus went to hear him. You didn't have to go to church to do that. Jesus went to where the people were and, as they liked to do, they sat on the grass and listened. Even though there was a large crowd you felt as if he were talking just to you. He talked about forgiveness of sins. He talked about a place called the kingdom of God where justice and truth reigned. He talked about God caring about every detail of our lives. (Read part of one of his sermons in Matthew 6:25-34). Simon knew he was getting involved and he was not sure he wanted to be. After all, he just wasn't the religious type.

*was not*

No - Simon <sup>was not</sup> ~~wasn't~~ the type at all to be called by God. Both he and the religious leaders would have agreed on that. What then turned him into a preacher?

## 2. HIS MEETING WITH JESUS

It would have been impossible to live in Galilee when Simon did and not have heard of Jesus. Living in Galilee was something like living near Kariba or Lake Bangulu. It was an area of small towns and villages. Nothing very much happened and so a strange preacher would be news. The farming folk were glad to put down their tools and the fishermen their nets to go and listen for an hour. The women got tired of talking about the same things when they met at the well collecting water or sat around their cooking pots. This was something different. So many ~~a~~ conversations began with, "Did you hear how he...?", and related some miracle of healing Jesus had performed. Jesus was news and even Simon couldn't <sup>not</sup> help being curious about him. After all, this Jesus was not like the rabbis who had spent their lives reading books. He was an ordinary working man who earned his living working with his hands at the carpenter's bench.

Simon had an early opportunity to meet Jesus, even before he became well known. John the Baptist was making the news headlines at the time. Andrew, Simon's brother, who was a very different type was keen on this fiery preacher and went about with him a ~~good deal~~ <sup>often</sup>. So he met Jesus first and one day came hurrying up to Simon very excitedly. "We've found him", he shouted, "We've found him..." "Found who?" asked Simon. "We've found the Messiah." (See John 1:42). Messiah was the title given to the deliverer the Jews were expecting. Their Scriptures promised that one day he would come and be their king and deliver them from their enemies. But there had been many religious ~~cranks~~ who had claimed to be the Messiah and

*fanatics*

<sup>important</sup>  
who think they are "somebody". He is the one who said to Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9). Proud men are of no use to God.

God said to Moses, "But I will be with you." (Exodus 3:12). This is the thing that matters.

b. Moses said he didn't know God's name. How were the Israelites to know that Moses had really come at the command of God? Read Exodus 3:13.

The name God <sup>told</sup> ~~gave to~~ Moses was strange. "I am who I am," he said. (Exodus 3:14). It described God's greatness. He is ~~all~~ the all-powerful one who is everlasting. The people would listen to Moses because the authority of the everlasting God was with him. (Exodus 3:15).

c. Moses made the further excuse that people would not believe him or listen to him. (Exodus 4:1).

God told him that he would do miracles through Moses so that the people would see <sup>that</sup> God was with him. (4:2-9). If we are God's true servants, people will see in our lives the marks of the Holy Spirit's power. They will believe what we say because of the way we live.

d. His final excuse was that he was not good at speaking and preaching. (Exodus 4:10).

God's answer was that if he called a man, he also gives him the gifts to do the job. (Exodus 4:11-12).

In desperation Moses made one last attempt to get out of doing the job. He made no further excuses but simply said, "Send someone else." (4:13). <sup>many</sup> ~~A lot~~ of us say that. We want to see God's work growing. We want to see people being saved. But we want someone else

to do the job. We are like the man who changed the words of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8) to "Here am I! SEND HIM."

God became angry with Moses' refusal to do his will. Even so he promises yet more help. Aaron, the brother of Moses, will do the speaking for him. Just as an interpreter speaks for the missionary who does not know the people's language, so Aaron would interpret the feeble speech of Moses. (Exodus 4:10-16).

Moses obeyed this time. (4:18-20).

Because Moses was so humble he felt he couldn't obey God's call. God showed him that, when he calls, he equips. As Paul said, "I can do all things IN HIM WHO STRENGTHENS ME." (Philippians 4:13).

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Am I humble enough for God to use?
2. What excuses do I make to avoid doing God's will?

## CHAPTER 9

### THE CALL OF GOD TO PETER

SCRIPTURE: John 1:35-42,  
Mark 1:16-18.

MEMORY VERSE: *"And Jesus said to them,  
'Follow me and I will make  
you become fishers of men.'"*  
Mark 1:17.

When Jesus called his twelve disciples, he chose men of very different types. No doubt he wanted to show us that there is room for all kinds in his kingdom. Simon, whom Jesus re-named Peter, was definitely the non-religious type.

#### 1. THE TYPE OF MAN

Simon was the sort of man you took notice of even in a crowd. He was a very big fellow, with huge muscles, developed by hauling in the heavy fishing nets. He was every inch a man's man, immensely popular with the local fishermen and idolised by the young men; but definitely not the sort you found in church. If you had suggested to him that one day he might become a preacher, he would probably have laughed his head off. He wasn't at all like the polished, polite rabbis (preachers and teachers) of his day. He was a rough sort of chap, probably stank of fish and he had nothing you could call culture or education. Swearing came much more naturally to his lips than praying. ~~I doubt very much if he went to church at all.~~ He probably thought religion was all right for women and children but not for real men. The religious leaders of that time were certainly not the sort he would admire. Many of them were hypocrites. They seemed more interested in condemning people than helping them and no doubt Simon had received his share of their criticism.

God put him in a godly home where he could learn of his ways from childhood. (Verse 1) Thank God for Christian parents. Is my home the sort of home where a Jeremiah could be trained?

God spoke to him through his Word. (Verses 2 and 4) Do we love God's word and read it often?

God promised to give him the words to speak. (Verse 7).

He promised also to keep him safe in the midst of danger. (Verses ~~18-19~~ 19) None of us will die until God has finished his task through us. To have God's promises should be enough for anything. He never lies.

God put his hand upon him. (Verse 9) If God calls us and we are obedient, he will put his hand on us. We shall know his touch of power. What once seemed impossible will become a reality because we go in the strength of the Lord.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What human qualities do men of the world value?
2. What human qualities does God value?
3. "If God is for us..who can be against us?" (See Romans 8:31-39).

It's  
doubtful  
that

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CALL OF GOD TO AARON

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 4:10-16, 27-31  
Exodus 32:1-6

MEMORY VERSE: *"And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people."*  
Exodus 4:30

Sometimes God calls one man in order that he might assist an even greater man. Most generals depend greatly on their "second-in-command".

It is hard to take second place, but that is just what Aaron was called to do. Aaron was not as great as his brother, but he was just as essential to the work of God. God never gives all his gifts to one man. If he did, that man would become too proud and so be useless to God. Even Moses lacked one important gift and that God gave to Aaron.

#### 1. AARON WAS GOD'S GIFT TO MOSES

Aaron was the brother of Moses, but for many years they had been separated. Moses lived in Midian, looking after sheep, while Aaron toiled in Egypt as a slave.

We learned in our last chapter how God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. <sup>Moses</sup> He was a very <sup>wise</sup> clever man. He became a great leader. But he was not good at public speaking. How could he persuade Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, if he could not present his case with the sort of speech that would make Pharaoh listen? How could he get the Israelites to follow him if he could not convince them that this was God's will?

God's plans are so wonderful that even as Moses was asking those questions Aaron was on his way to meet him. (Exodus 4:10-14) *e*

We do not know why Aaron was coming to look for Moses. Perhaps he saw that his brother had the ability to lead Israel out of slavery, and he had come to persuade him to do it. I doubt whether he knew what Moses would ask him to do. But God knew the need, and God called Aaron to go to Midian just at the time he was needed. No doubt he put the thought into Aaron's mind to go to his brother. Aaron obeyed. (Exodus 4:27) *e* God never makes a mistake. He always has the right man for the right job at the right time. Think of how Aaron could have spoiled God's plan by disobeying his call.

## 2. AARON HAD TO BE TEACHABLE

God told Moses that Aaron would "speak for him to the people" and that Moses would be to Aaron "as God." (Exodus 4:16) *e* He did not mean that Aaron was to worship Moses. He meant that God would speak through Moses to Aaron, while Moses would speak through Aaron to the people. Aaron was a great preacher, but he was not a great thinker. Some of us are good at talking to people. Perhaps God has made us good at making friends so that people will listen to us. But we feel we cannot talk about Christ because we are not clever enough to study the Bible for ourselves. We find it *so very* difficult to understand. That is why God gave pastors and teachers to his church. He gives them the ability to study his Word so that they can teach it to us, and we can pass it on to others.

Aaron had to be humble enough to be taught by Moses. Do we recognise that God may give knowledge to others so that we may learn? Do we thank God for our pastors and teachers, or do we criticise them?

Yet God knew the sort of man he wanted. It's not "ready-made" products he is looking for. Men who are gifted, strong and able to fight for themselves *don't* usually feel much need of God. They are inclined to trust in their own strength and abilities. God wants raw material that he can shape and use as he wants. This was shown to Jeremiah in a remarkable way. (Jeremiah 18:1-6) *e* We are just clay. God is the one who moulds us into a vessel he can use. We sometimes sing:

"Have thine own way Lord,  
Have thine own way.  
Thou art the potter, I am the clay.  
Mould me and make me,  
After thy will  
While I am waiting  
Yielded and still."

Jesse, the father of David, learned the same lesson. Samuel, the prophet, came to ~~his~~ *the* city looking for a man to anoint as king in place of Saul. He knew ~~it was~~ *it was* to be one of the sons of Jesse. When he asked to see his sons ~~it was all~~ *of Jesse* the ones who "looked good" ~~that Jesse brought~~ *the ones* men admired. The Lord had other plans. He wanted David, the youngest, the shepherd boy whom they all ignored as being of little ~~account~~ *worth*. In 1 Samuel 16:6-12 we read an important lesson on how God judges people. Notice verse 7 in particular.

Are we rather proud of our gifts and abilities? Do other people admire us? Before God can use us, he will have to change us in a way that may be painful. Or do we feel that we could never be of any use to God because we are the wrong type? What God first made he can remake.

## 3. THE MAN GOD PREPARED *Jeremiah*

However unsuitable ~~he~~ *he* seemed, God had been preparing ~~Jeremiah~~ *Jeremiah* for a long time. He chose him for the job even before he was born. (Verse 5) *e* God does a thorough job of preparation for his work.

In the book of Jeremiah, however, it is Israel who is to be punished for her sins. God was to use heathen nations for that purpose. (Jeremiah 1:14-16) *u*

Jeremiah was given the very difficult task of telling the nation that God was going to judge her. (Jeremiah 1:9-10) *u*

## 2. THE MAN GOD CALLED

You would think that God would have called a tough, hard man for such a job, a man who was experienced and not easily afraid, a soldier maybe. He was going to have to stand on his own against a hostile people who would resent his message. (Jeremiah 11:18-19, 21; 18:18 and 20:2) *u*

We learn he was a very young man. (Jeremiah 1:6) *u*

The same verse tells us that he was unskilled in speaking.

Verse 8 indicated that he was afraid.

Verse 17 says he was dismayed at what God had called him to do.

He sometimes got very discouraged in his task and even wished he had never been born. (Jeremiah 20:14-15, 18) *u*

At times he felt as if God had deserted him and he cried out in despair. (Jeremiah 20:7) *u*

He was not allowed to have a wife and family to encourage and comfort him. (Jeremiah 16:1) *u*

Jeremiah was the very opposite of what we would have chosen for such a difficult task. We might well have considered him a weakling. He seems to have been a rather sad sort of person, not the cheerful type most of us like.

## 3. AARON HAD TO KEEP CLOSE TO MOSES

Whenever Moses was by his side Aaron succeeded. The Israelites believed Moses because of the powerful way in which Aaron spoke to them. (Exodus 4:29-31) *u* Aaron spoke with such authority to Pharaoh that the cruel ruler had to listen. You can feel the authority in his words, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'" (Exodus 5:1) *u*  
*Have* ~~It~~ was not Aaron's own authority, ~~however~~, ~~It~~ came to him from God through Moses. Our authority is the Word of God.

God used Aaron in other ways to support his brother. When the Amalekites came to fight against Israel, Moses stood on a hill top with the rod in his hand which God had given him. While he held out the rod the Israelites were certain to win. But his arms grew tired and he lowered his hand. Then the Amalekites started to win. (Exodus 17:8-11) *u* So Aaron, along with Hur, supported the arms of Moses and the Israelites won. (Exodus 17:12-13) *u*

Moses needed Aaron and while he was with Moses, Aaron was useful to God. When Moses was not around, Aaron failed. When Moses was on Mount Sinai speaking with God, Aaron became weak. He listened to the sinful requests of the people to make other gods for them. He made them a golden calf and led them in worship of it. (Exodus 32:1-6) *u* He brought terrible judgement on the people and God's anger on himself. (Exodus 32:21-24) *u* Notice his feeble excuse. He knew he was wrong.

We are sure that Aaron repented of his sin and that God forgave him because he was made High Priest. (Exodus 40:12-15) *u* This was a wonderful privilege. The high priest stood between God and the people offering sacrifice for their sins. When Jesus came he became our high priest. So Aaron and his sons occupied



the place of Jesus until he was ready to take it himself. ~~How wonderful is God's forgiveness!~~ <sup>to</sup> give a sinner like Aaron such a privilege. God had not forgotten Aaron's obedience to his call and his faithfulness to Moses. God is no man's debtor. He wonderfully rewards faithful service.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What gift has God given to me? Am I using it?
2. Am I willing to take second place to other servants of God?
3. What lesson can I learn from Aaron's failure when separated from Moses?

he was

is very wonderful

## CHAPTER 8

### THE CALL OF GOD TO JEREMIAH

SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 1:1-10.

MEMORY VERSE: *"Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord."*

Jeremiah 1:8.

Sometimes God appears to call a man who is not suited for the job, but God knows what he is doing. His ways are not our ways.

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Jeremiah's call was an example of this.

#### 1. THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK

In our day the Middle East, where Jeremiah was born, is a centre of great conflict. Jews and Arabs are set against each other. Jerusalem is surrounded by hostile nations. Even though Jeremiah was born 2600 years ago, things were not all that much different then. The surrounding nations, however, instead of being in alliance with each other against Israel, were in conflict with one another. As they fought it out, Judah (the southern part of the divided kingdom of Israel) in the middle, got trampled on.

The Bible teaches that although it is men who start wars, God sometimes uses them as part of his purpose. The Persian king, Cyrus, although heathen, was yet used in the purpose of God. We learn in Isaiah 45:1-4 that when he fought his battles, God used him to punish sinful nations and to restore the fortunes of Israel.

the king, men who have themselves been forgiven. God wants to tell others of his forgiveness to sinners. We speak best of what we have experienced.

Isaiah needed no pushing. He volunteered, "Here am I! Send me."

How wonderful it is when a man or a woman is so moved by what God has done for them that they are willing to serve God in any way he wants. God loves volunteers.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What is the great need of people where I live?
2. God is always calling for extra workers. What can I volunteer to do for God?

## CHAPTER 5

### THE CALL OF GOD TO JOSHUA

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 14:6-12; 26-30,  
Numbers 17:18-23

MEMORY VERSE: *"And the Lord said to Moses,  
'Take Joshua the son of Nun,  
a man in whom is the spirit,  
and lay your hand upon him.'  
Numbers 27:18"*

God calls some men from right outside the ranks of the church to be his servants. More often, however, he takes hold of young people who are growing up in the fellowship of God's people. Like seeds in a well kept garden their lives are carefully nurtured and prepared. Joshua was such a man. He had the great privilege and advantage of being under the influence of a great and godly leader, Moses.

#### 1. EARLY PREPARATION

We are not told anything about the childhood of Joshua, but we know that he grew up during the time of Israel's pilgrimage from Egypt to the Promised Land. As a young man he had witnessed that amazing scene when the waters of the Red Sea rose up, leaving a pathway for them to walk through. During the years that followed he sat often with his elders around the camp fire and talked of how they had been slaves and of how God had delivered them. He could not escape the fact that he belonged to a special people with a future carved out by God. The evidence of God's hand upon his people was all around him.

No doubt his admiration for their leader Moses had a great effect upon his life. To watch this man of faith and prayer being a father to the nation, standing up against all kinds of difficulties both from its enemies and from criticism within Israel, must have challenged him to follow after God with all his heart. If only older people realised how much their example affects the young.

An early opportunity to show his keenness came when Moses gave Joshua command of a detachment of soldiers and told him to fight against the Amalekites. (Exodus 17:8-9) *e* It gave him a good lesson on trusting in God's strength alone to win his victories. While Moses raised his hands to God in prayer, Israel was on top; but whenever Moses lowered them, Amalek began to win. (Exodus 18:11-13) *e*

The godliness and faithfulness of young Joshua did not go unnoticed. The day came when Moses sent for him and said that he wanted him to be his personal servant. *What a wonder!* privilege to be able to live so close to this great man! ~~What spiritual lessons he would learn.~~ Joshua would learn many spiritual lessons.

His closeness to Moses gave him the greatest experience of his whole life. God called Moses to climb a mountain, called Sinai, that he might speak with him and give him the Ten Commandments. As his servant, Joshua went with him. (Exodus 24:12-13) *e* The glory of God was revealed in such a way on that mountain that it changed the appearance of Moses. His face shone as he reflected God's glory. (Exodus 35:29-30) *e* We are not told what happened to Joshua but such an experience must have lifted him to new heights of faith. ~~It is~~ The New Testament tells us that since the coming of Jesus every Christian may have the experience Moses had, when the Holy Spirit reveals the glory of God in our hearts. Paul says that, "We all, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another." (2 Corinthians 3:18) *e*

## 2. FAITH TESTED

At last the time came when Israel reached the borders of the Promised Land. Tough reliable young men were needed to go on ahead and spy out the land. They would face danger from the enemy; so only men of faith could go. It was natural by now that Joshua ~~should~~ be among them.

God can never use a man until the man sees how sinful and unworthy he is. God shows us our sinfulness to lead us to repentance. He leads us to repentance in order to cleanse us from sin. Isaiah felt himself to be lost but in fact he was "found." *e* His repentance was the means of forgiveness and cleansing. We read, "Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And touched my mouth, and said; 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.'" (Isaiah 6:6-7) *e*

The story is told of an African who had a dream. He saw himself sitting around a large table with many other people. Jesus was walking around the table carrying a large pot. In it was the "water of life" and as he came to each person he poured some into ~~their~~ cup. Coming to the dreamer he leaned over his shoulder as if to pour but instead turned away and moved on. "Lord," the man cried out, "I need the water of life." Jesus pointed to his cup. Looking inside the man saw that it was full already of all sorts of ugly, dirty, creeping things. "But Lord, he cried, "What can I do?" Hearing his cry of need Jesus picked up the cup, drank down all the vileness until it was empty, and then filled it with the water of life. Jesus went to the Cross to drink the vile cup of our sins, so that we might receive new life from him.

## 4. FORGIVEN SINNERS MAKE THE BEST PREACHERS TO OTHER SINNERS

Isaiah saw many angels around the throne of God. *they were* Angels who had no sin, angels who were wonderful preachers. God had all these servants ready to do his will, but he called out, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Verse 8) *e* God wanted a messenger to go and speak to the sinful people of Israel. He could have sent angels but he asks for a volunteer from amongst men. *He wants* It is men who have seen

## 2. IN HIS NEED HE TURNED TO GOD

Deeply moved in spirit by the national tragedy Isaiah did what every Christian should do at such times, he turned to God. He went into God's house to pray. (Isaiah 6:1). Lifting up his eyes, in a vision he saw the glory of the Lord. The earthly king had died but the King of Kings was still on the throne of the Universe. The earthly king had failed, but the heavenly king was glorious to look at and perfect in all his ways. Isaiah saw God surrounded by angels called seraphim, who served him day and night. (Verse 2). Continually they sang of his holiness and his glory. (Verse 3).

It is wonderful to know that whatever tragedies happen on earth, however much earthly leaders fail, God is still in control. He never fails. As a children's chorus <sup>says</sup> puts it:

"God is still on the throne,  
And he will remember his own  
Though trials may press us  
And burdens distress us,  
He never will leave us alone."

When things go badly, look up not down.

## 3. GOD'S GLORY MADE HIM FEEL UNWORTHY

Isaiah's experience of God and his holiness was very real. He felt the power of God all around him. (Isaiah 6:4). No man can get as close to God as that and not feel very small and unclean. If we have a big idea of ourselves, it is because we have too small an idea of God. If we feel we are quite good people, it is because we have never seen God's holiness. When Isaiah saw it, he cried out, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5).

The occasion was marked for him by a change of name. Until that time his name had in fact been "Hoshea," which meant "help" or "salvation." Moses renamed him Joshua, meaning "The Lord is salvation." (Numbers 13:16). Like every man of God Joshua was going to learn how much he needed to lean on God's help and not on his own. Testing was coming. Privileges always bring responsibilities and usually problems. Joshua was to learn very soon that the mountain experience must be followed by testing in the valley.

After spying out the land for forty days, the young men returned. Most of them proved that their faith was very small. They admitted that Canaan was a good land but said that the enemy was too strong to be overcome. (Numbers 13:27-28, 31-33). ~~What~~ little faith for men with such a great God, a God who had delivered them from the Egyptians.

Only Caleb and Joshua had faith big enough for the task. (Numbers 13:30; 14:6-9). Like men of faith in every age they soon found that they were so far ahead of most of God's people that they had to endure opposition. Things were so bad that the people threatened to stone them. (Numbers 14:10). Joshua was learning early to "take his share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 2:3).

## 3. A GOOD SOLDIER REWARDED

Because of their frequent rebellion and unfaithfulness, a curse was put on the children of Israel. They would not inherit the Promised Land. That privilege would be given only to their children. (Numbers 14:10-12). Even Moses was barred from entry. Great as he was, he failed badly at one point. The people were complaining because of lack of water. Weary of their lack of faith he showed anger and impatience with them. He lacked the endurance to go on. (Numbers 20:10-12). It was time for another to take over for the difficult job of leading their children into the Promised Land.

The incident is a great lesson to us all. The greatest men fail. However much we may look to them for an example, we need to remember that there is only one perfect example, Jesus Christ. Keep your eyes fixed on him. The writer to the Hebrews urges us to "run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Joshua had learned much from Moses, but he learned to look beyond men. He had become strong in faith, personal faith. He had been tested and had passed the test. Faithful, almost to the point of death, he received his reward. He and Caleb were the only ones who had left Egypt who were allowed to enter Canaan. (Numbers 14:30) Of the two, Joshua was given the greater privilege. He was to lead those who had been born in the wilderness into the land which had been their fathers' inheritance. We read in Numbers 27:18-23 that according to God's instruction, Moses laid hands on Joshua and appointed him to be his successor. Notice that verse 18 says that Joshua already possessed the "spirit" before hands were laid on him. Joshua became a great leader because he was already well prepared through experience, both in his heart and in his involvement in God's work.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What can I learn through other Christians?
2. What sort of church would my church be if every church member were just like me?
3. In what ways are we like the spies who failed?

## CHAPTER 7

### THE CALL OF GOD TO ISAIAH

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 6:1-8

MEMORY VERSE: *"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'"*

*Isaiah 6:8*

For some men the call of God comes in a dramatic way against a background of crisis. Isaiah was one of these.

#### 1. IT WAS A TIME OF GREAT NEED FOR THE NATION

Isaiah lived in the kingdom of Judah, the southern part of the divided nation of Israel. For fifty years Judah had been ruled by one king, Uzziah. He had been a good king, loved by the people. Throughout his reign the nation enjoyed such peace and prosperity as they had not had since the time of David and Solomon. But in the midst of their riches the people had begun to turn away from God. Uzziah himself committed a great sin. (2 Chronicles 26:16) God punished him for his sin. (2 Chronicles 26:17-21) Nevertheless his fall and his death were accompanied by great national mourning.

It was at the time of Uzziah's death that Isaiah was called to be a prophet. He had loved the king and was deeply distressed by the king's failure and death. He was distressed too by the sins of the people.

Are the people of our country beginning to turn from God as they enjoy the fruits of a more prosperous day? Am I concerned about it or am I sharing in it?

When a father dies in Zambia the first-born son gets the great privileges. Elisha was asking for the first-born's inheritance. Among all the "sons of the prophets" Elisha had stood closest to Elijah, and he wanted to receive the best Elijah had to give. He wanted to share something of the spiritual power he saw in Elijah. Elijah said he had asked a hard thing. (Verse 10). It is good to ask big things of God. William Carey the great Baptist missionary to India said, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God."

Elijah <sup>did not</sup> die. He was carried into God's presence in a chariot of fire. (Verse 11). God gave a special privilege to his faithful servant. <sup>What</sup> a tremendous impression it must have made on Elisha. He missed the great man very much. (Verse 12). But he did not stand by lamenting. He took up Elijah's cloak and began to do the great things Elijah had done. (Verses 13-14). Elijah had gone, but God was still the same. <sup>What</sup> he can do with one man <sup>what</sup> he can do with another. When God's spirit rests on a man, others see it. (Verse 15). Paul said to Timothy, "What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2). He who had learned from another himself became a teacher. This is how God's work is carried on from one generation to another.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Why do churches need trained leadership?
2. What can I do to make sure my church has trained leadership?
3. Am I doing my best to "present myself as a workman approved by God"?

#### CHAPTER 6

### THE CALL OF GOD TO ELISHA

SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 19:19-21  
2 Kings 2:1-15

MEMORY VERSE: "And he took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him..."

2 Kings 2:13

From time to time God gives great leaders to his church, but like other men they die. Someone has to carry on where they leave off. Elisha was called by God to "wear the mantle" (cloak) of a greater man than he.

#### 1. GOD CALLED ELISHA TO CHANGE HIS JOB

1 Kings 19:19 tells us that Elisha was the son of a farmer. His father's name was Shaphat and he seems to have been a very rich farmer. He had many oxen ploughing his fields.

Elisha worked for his father and one day the land would become his. No doubt he looked forward to being a rich farmer himself whom other men would respect.

One day while <sup>Elisha</sup> he was ploughing the fields, Elijah passed by him. <sup>Elisha</sup> He was a very great prophet. He had dared to speak against a heathen king. He had called upon his people to turn from a false religion and to give up heathen practises. So great was his preaching and his power that many people had turned back to God.

Elijah knew, however, that he was coming to the end of his life's work. So as he passed Elisha doing the ploughing, he took off his cloak and threw it over Elisha's shoulders. It was probably a cloak something like the scarlet cloak the Bantu of the Transkei wear or the Ngoni of Eastern Province. Elijah did not



say a word, but Elisha knew what the action meant. It was a custom that when a teacher was about to die, he gave his cloak to his best pupil. By doing so he was declaring who was to take his place.

Some people choose their job, others find that a job "chooses them." Perhaps Elisha would have preferred to be a big farmer, but God had other plans for him. Nevertheless, though God made his will clear, he did not force him to take up the prophet's job. He was still free to obey or disobey. Elisha asked permission to say goodbye to his parents before following Elijah. (1 Kings 19:20).<sup>2</sup> Elijah told him that he was free to do as he pleased. (verse 20).<sup>2</sup> Elisha knew, however, that if God had called him to one job he would never really be happy doing another. So he left his old job and made sure he would not be tempted to return to it by killing his oxen. (Verse 21).<sup>2</sup> He used the meat to give a farewell party to his friends and then followed God's servant. He had taken up a new plough. He was going to work in God's spiritual harvest field. Jesus would have approved of his determination for he said, "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62).<sup>2</sup>

We in Africa have had fine spiritual leaders. Men like David Livingstone were amongst the greatest men of any kind who have ever lived. They began the work of God here, but others had to follow on if the work was to continue. They have not all been so great, but they have filled the gap. God has given leaders, not only from amongst missionaries, but many fine African leaders. The martyrs of Kenya and Uganda stand high amongst the best Christians the world has known. But earthly leaders pass. The day of missionary leaders is almost over. God wants new men to fill the gap. Are you willing to have the cloak passed on to you?

## 2. ELISHA LEARNED THE JOB FROM AN EXPERT

When God calls a man to be a preacher or a Christian leader of some sort, he wants him to study to be a good leader. It is not enough to be called. We need to study God's Word to ~~get to know~~ it really well. We need to learn how best to reach people for Christ. A preacher or teacher can always improve his preaching and teaching by learning from someone more experienced than himself. Paul told the young preacher, Timothy, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15).<sup>2</sup>

Elijah knew the importance of training others to do God's work. Schools for prophets were common in his day. (2 Kings 2:3,4,7).<sup>2</sup> Elisha knew the value of learning from a man like Elijah. He followed him closely and learned the job from him. Indeed, he insisted on staying with Elijah right to the end. (2 Kings 2:2,4,6).<sup>2</sup>

Are we willing to give time and money to study, in order that we may be more useful to God? Are we willing to go to seminary if God wants it? Are we willing to learn from our spiritual leaders? The Christian Church in Zambia will stand or fall according to the quality of ~~its~~ <sup>their</sup> leadership.

## 3. ELISHA WANTED TO BE THE BEST <sup>LEADER</sup> POSSIBLE FOR GOD

Elisha kept close to his earthly leader that he might miss nothing. Right at the end of Elijah's life we find Elisha seeking a better blessing. In 2 Kings 2:9 we read:

"When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.' And Elisha said, 'I pray you, let me inherit a double share of your spirit.'"