**CALLED OF GOD AND FRUSTRATED**

The difference between the call and the commission

 By Walter Guy

 There are many who have been called of God into a ministry. However, most do not know what to do after receiving their call. They wrongly assume that they have been commissioned by God to do a certain type of ministry. In their excitement at receiving revelation that God has a plan and purpose for them, their zeal takes over and they launch themselves into that area of ministry. They have not recognized, or have not been taught, that there is a difference between the call of God and the commissioning to that call of God to go into that ministry.

 The time between the calling and the commissioning is a period of preparation for that particular ministry. To go forth with just the call is to go forth without proper preparation. Those who do presume that the calling is all that is required and God will do the rest if they just go. Those with traditional church backgrounds may go off to be schooled by man at a Bible college or seminary and then be commissioned by man. They have erred and assumed much also.

 The call is when you are made aware in your soul, or hear in your spirit, that God has a specific work for you to do. The calling which requires a commissioning is usually one of the five “gift” ministries that are listed in Ephesians Chapter 4. There are also other callings and giftings, but these do not usually require the period of preparation before the commissioning occurs as do the “gift” ministries. In fact, much serving, which is ministry, in the church does not require the “call”. Many simply desire to be used of God and make themselves available. These God uses right where they are. They have the opportunity to grow in the Lord, and may later receive a call or commission to a “gift” ministry as they have already been in a sort of preparation by their service.

 This message deals primarily with those that have received a divine call of God to one of the gift ministries; a call that requires divine preparation for service. The first word to those called is to remain in the same place you were when you were called, (please read 1 Corinthians 7:20-24). Do not quit your job to enter “the ministry”. Stay right where you are.

 Acknowledge the call of God and commit yourself to Him who called you. Wait upon the Lord with that calling. As you submit yourself to the Lord, He will begin working in your life the things He knows that you must learn, things you need to experience, and have His character and nature formed in you. God will then begin to lead you in the path of His preparation by His divine guidance. He will bring people, places and opportunities to you. He will open doors and close doors according to His will. It most likely will not be man’s way of preparation for ministry – especially if you are called to be a prophet, a teacher, an evangelist or apostle.

 God will commission those He has called; but only after He has prepared them to fulfill that call. One needs to embrace the period of preparation which follows the calling. We have examples of Moses and Paul the apostle to show us how God works to prepare and then commission those He has called. Many times that period of preparation requires unlearning some things (beliefs and doctrines) and replacing them with what He knows you are lacking.

 Consider first, Moses: he became aware of his calling of God to be Israel’s “Deliverer” when he was at the peak of his Egyptian influence as a Prince of Egypt. It seemed only natural to this stately ruler of Egypt to be a leader, a “deliverer” since He had all the natural characteristics of leadership with the knowledge and experience that man looks up to. However, such were not the qualifications that God knew he needed for the job so he had to go through his period of preparation.

 You may be aware of how Moses set out to become that ‘deliverer” in the strength of his own hand by killing an Egyptian task master who was abusing an Israeli slave. His efforts to fulfill his calling failed miserably and he had to flee the country for his life. It was no accident that Moses ended up in Midian and got tangled up with a bunch of sheep and shepherds. This was God’s divine guidance at work leading him into his needed preparation for the task God had called for him to do.

 Moses became the forgotten Prince of Egypt; out of sight and out of mind to those he was to deliver and of those he would deliver them from. After forty years of preparation on the backside of the desert, living as a shepherd, the lowliest position in society, he finally received his commission from God to do the work he was called of God to do.

 God personally came to Moses with the commission. Moses had gone through forty years of divine preparation. Moses had to learn how to shepherd sheep before he would be permitted to be a caring shepherd of the flock of God. The things Moses learned while being a shepherd were the things he would employ in leading Israel to the Promised Land. Moses’ Egyptian training would not have allowed him to lead God’s rebellious people. If Moses’ previous lifestyle was still in effect, he probably would have killed them all before God would. Instead, as a shepherd after the pattern of Christ, Moses interceded for these stubborn and stiff-necked Israelites when God was ready to wipe them out and begin a new group of Israelites starting with him. By this you can see the value of divine preparation for those called to a gift ministry – because such a ministry that represents Him needs to be performed His way, reflecting His character and nature.

 Moses experienced a great change of character and nature during his time of preparation. From the mighty-armed vanquisher of the Israelite slave to a humble, unassuming shepherd who even doubted his own ability to perform or even speak suitably and didn’t feel he was up to the task. Moses was now ready to be commissioned because he was now totally dependent on the one who called him and commissioned him into service. Moses would have to rely on God’s direction and ability for everything he did; this is how true ministry is to be performed.

 Paul is another example of one called, prepared, and then commissioned into service years later. You are probably familiar with Paul’s call to the ministry while on the road to Damascus. After his encounter with Jesus on the road, who gave him his calling at that time, he went into the city where his calling was confirmed by a prophet; but he was not yet commissioned. Scripture tells that he then went out into the wilderness of Arabia where he obviously spent time in the Lord’s presence. It was during this time Jesus revealed to him how the Old Testament was all about Christ. Paul had to unlearn much of man’s traditions and then be taught the truth in all new revelation which gave him understanding of the things he learned as a student under the law. Now he felt he was ready to begin his ministry.

 When Paul returned to Damascus he immediately did as many do today; he went out to do what he was called to do. Notice that there was no fruit of his efforts. Instead, he almost got himself killed and managed to create real trouble for the church in that city. It seems like this is the pattern for all being called today; because they, like Paul, fail to realize the difference between the calling and the commissioning.

 Paul went down to Jerusalem to try and get some recognition for “his” ministry there. He ran into the same problems until finally the wisdom of the apostles was employed. They recognized his call, but they knew it was not the time of his commission to fulfill that call. They sent him back home, to abide where he was originally, until the time of his commission.

 This must have pained Paul greatly. He thought he was ready. He had the call, and for three years out in the desert getting divine revelation, he thought that he was also prepared; he had so much to tell people about what he learned. (Today many think they are prepared after coming out of Bible School or Seminary). But God’s preparation is not just in knowledge and understanding, it is also in training and discipline, learning to be a disciple; (by the way, the word disciple means one under discipline).

 God’s training is for building character; God’s character is to be built into the vessel He called before He will commission that vessel as his representative. This is because that vessel is to be a representative of Him, not a church, not a doctrine, not a denomination or organization of man. When the commission occurs, it is because that person now has the heart of a humble and true servant; one that is properly motivated and full of the Fruit of the Spirit which is the character and nature of God, (as listed in Galatians 5:22-23 and referred to also in 2 Peter 1:4).

 Paul’s commission was given by the Spirit of God through others who were gifted, called and already commissioned in service:

Acts 13:1-3 – *Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*

When the commission comes, others will know and recognize it. There will be an unquestioned confirmation of that gifting and commissioning. You will be led, placed or directed into that which you have been called and prepared for. The door will be wide open; you won’t have to search to find your place.

 Many who are called try to find “their” place of commission having only received the call. This results in them doing “their own thing”; they are functioning without a commissioning and directive from God. This is foolish and very frustrating. Those who presume upon a ministry without receiving the commission from God are actually walking in rebellion, which is iniquity; man doing his own thing apart from God. They are then numbered among the rebellious because they did not wait upon God for His commission.

 These, even though called but not commissioned, can experience some apparent success in their ministry. This is because God honors and confirms His Word which they use and preach. He is not honoring or confirming their ministry as they suppose. God will not honor rebellion or disobedience; he chastens such in order to bring them to repentance. Such is the matter which Jesus addressed:

 Matthew 7:22-23 – *Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied* (preached) *in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? And in your name done many wonderful works? And I will profess to them, I NEVER KNEW YOU; depart from me you who work iniquity*.

 These people appeared to do great and wonderful things in “their” ministry; but, it was because of the Word and the authority of the name of Jesus which they, as believers, have the right to use. The problem was they were walking in iniquity which is rebellion; rebellion is man doing “his own” thing or ministry.

 Jesus said that he never “knew” them. Jesus did not say they were not saved; instead, He says that they never had an intimate time of fellowship with Him; a period of time that allowed His character and nature to be formed in them; a period of time where they learned to hear Him and to do things His way, being led by Him to do what He wanted. You should understand that the word “knew” used in this passage is the same as when a man “knew” his wife in the most intimate of relationship and she conceives. This is an intimate time of fellowship where two get to know one another so well that they seem to function as one. This is the intimacy that Christ wants with all his people. This is an intimacy that Christ, as Head of the church, MUST have with all those He has called to fulfill a gift ministry just as He would. This intimacy develops during times of closing yourself off from the world an in union with Him in prayer, in close communion and in His Word – an essential part in the preparation for the commissioning.

 The Bible even gives us an example of those who feel compelled to minister and those who seek to hear more of Him:

Luke 10:38-42 – *Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”*

 Those who try to fulfill their calling prematurely become real problems; to themselves, to their families, and to others in the body of Christ – the church. They go about trying to fulfill their call, but it isn’t time. So they find no place to fit in or function. If they force their way into a place, it will cause problems; usually envy and strife will develop. Things will not go well, so they become frustrated and have to move on, most likely into another similar situation until they take time out to go through God’s preparation.

 They will go from place to place, from one thing to another thing, looking for “their” place of ministry. They won’t find it! Not until it’s time; the time of their commissioning. In the meantime, they must go through a period of preparation as did Moses and Paul.

 It will be quite frustrating for them to keep trying to function, seeing results because of the Word, but not having personal acceptance, not finding a place where they can fully function in their gifted calling. Some will begin to question their own calling because they don’t seem to fit in anywhere. There is no recognition of the ministry, even though the mature in the Lord can discern their calling and gifting; (as was the case with Paul and the apostles at Jerusalem).

 Their spirit must be prepared or matured so it can properly represent Christ’s ministry when the commission occurs. The purpose of this is so that true ministry is not performed by the natural man, at man’s will, with man’s ideas and methods; but with the Spirit’s empowerment (anointing). True ministry will be led of the Spirit and performed by the Spirit through those vessels totally yielded to Him, prepared and commissioned – (Zechariah 4:6). This preparation is to get the “man”, (the flesh), out of the way so that all ministry that is done is accomplished by the Spirit of the Lord. Then ministry will be highly productive and bear real fruit. That kind of ministry will always reveal Christ, whose ministry it is. Christ will be given all the glory and recognition; first from those through whom He works, then by those who receive or witness such ministry.

 One of the purposes for this period of preparation is to get the called one to become dependent on Him for their ministry. This causes the called one to cast off human will, effort and understanding. Then they can rely on Him to work through them as they OBEDIENTLY YIELD TO HIM. When one is truly prepared, they will be of a broken or contrite spirit, seeing themselves as incapable, unable to perform and thus totally dependent on Him. They will be as Moses was at the time of his commissioning who said; “Who me? ….you want me to go? ….I can’t do that! ….choose somebody else who is more qualified”.

 A broken or contrite spirit sees itself as lowly, humble, like that of an unprofitable servant, (as in Luke 17:7-10). This is the type of person that God can now use because he is totally dependent on God for the enablement to do the ministry. Then watch God perform mighty feats through such a frail earthen vessel:

2 Corinthians 4:7 – *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*

Those who witness such a servant of God will declare that “this power, this work, this miracle is from God and not of man”; just like they said of Jesus.

 First, God has to prepare the vessel of clay for use; sometimes He has to break down what has already been formed by the hands of man. Then He must begin again to knead that human clay to make it pliable and workable in His hands. Becoming “malleable” in His hands involves going through difficult circumstances and the application of pressures that others, friends, family and church, do not understand. Finally, when malleable, He can fashion the proper type of vessel out of this earthen clay:

Jeremiah 18:3-4 – *Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the potter’s wheel. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.*

 This process is usually very difficult to experience. Pressures are brought against the called one. This is the kneading process, as when the potter keeps pushing his fingers into the clay and squeezing to soften it. The kneading continues until that person finally yields and stops putting up a resistance to what God is trying to do in his life. Such a process is to bring that person to recognize that God is sovereign and that it is He that is working and allowing things to come into that life for the good – (Romans 8:28). Usually, after this process has begun, that person will start to complain about it due to the discomfort to the flesh and soul; “God: what are you doing to me? Why are these things happening to me?”

Isaiah 45:9 – *Woe to him who strives with his Maker: Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What are you making? Or to your work, He has no hands?*

 If, at that time, you have ears to hear in the spirit, you would probably hear the Lord say, “it’s Me working in your life to shape you, to mold you into My image, for My use”. He that has begun a good work in you shall complete it unto the end, (Philippians 1:6); SO YILED AND COOPERATE. This time of preparation can be likened to a “WILDERNESS” experience because it is often a lonely walk.

 Are you called to a gift ministry? Remain and continue in the place of your calling. This refers to your employment, your church and other relationships. Continue doing what you were doing at the time you heard or perceived the call. Do not jump up and rush off to fulfill your calling; you will only make a mess of things, for yourself, your family and others, as was the case with the apostle Paul. If God called you, He will lead you, He will guide you and place you exactly where He wants you for whatever preparation He wants you to have.

 Having received a call of God, daily commit yourself and your family into His hands for His guidance. He knows what you and your family needs, both physically and spiritually. He will direct the affairs of your life to prepare you for the time of commissioning and service which may even take many years. Do not move about on your own as it may delay what He wants for you. Be sure you have heard from God before making any changes. Some actually run away for the call like Jonah did; and you don’t want to go through what he did! Changes will come as the Lord leads; but make sure it is the Lord’s leading; one way to know is that He provides for what He has ordained or directed in your life.

 It is important at this point to have someone of spiritual maturity to fellowship with; one or more who you have confidence in, who can help in counsel, discernment, who can hear from God with you, give confirmation, and help disciple you, (refer to 1 Peter 5:5). Sometimes there is no one or no fellowship you can relate to or share such things with. Again, seek the Lord and wait on Him to lead you.

 Fellowship with others who are mature in the Lord is important also because the enemy will try to “derail” you or get you off track by proposing false opportunities for ministry. You most likely will not be able to have any meaningful fellowship with Christians who are not mature in the Lord because they will not understand what God is doing in your life. Don’t be offended by them, but just understand such will not be supportive of you or even acknowledge God called you.

 DO NOT SEEK A PLCE OF MINISTRY – HE WILL PLACE YOU IN IT, and there will be confirmation when it is time. To do otherwise is to generate grief and opposition. You could also find yourself in a place where you do not belong. It may even be in a place that God has planned for someone else and you are interfering with His plans and doing iniquity. Do not assume that just because you have the call that the available position is for you.

 As maturity occurs, a peace develops, even in troublesome circumstances. Part of what is maturing is your confidence that the Lord is sovereign, in control, and that you have nothing to fear about the circumstances and changes occurring in your life. You have learned to be at rest in Him. He must have mature servants who have entered into His rest; faithful ones to whom He can entrust His power; those of godly character, full of grace to use His Name, authority and power properly, those he knows will honor Him in ALL their ways:

 Proverbs 3:5-6 – *Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.*

 Patience and faithfulness, which is obedience, mark those whom God uses. You won’t miss what God has planned for you and called you for; even if others seemingly pass you by getting into a recognized place of ministry. Do not get jealous of those who seem to be exalted or given positions that you think should have been yours. Just be focused and faithful for your own attitude and ministry as Jesus told Peter:

John 21:21-22 – *Peter seeing him* (John) *saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.*

It was Peter, who learned much from this, who wrote the following to those who God has called to leadership:

1 Peter 5:5 – *Likewise you younger, submit yourselves to the elder. Yes, all of you are to be subject to one another, and be clothed with humility; for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.*

 You must know also that God doesn’t change His mind, even if you “blow it” more than once. If you are human, you probably will “blow it”, maybe even several times. This is the self-discipline part of what God is working on in your life, to complete you for His task.

Romans 11:29 – *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

Philippians 1:6 – *Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

 So we see that for those who are called of God to a gift ministry must wait to be commissioned; they must go through their God ordained period of preparation. Consider also others in the Bible for examples: King David; the prophets Samuel and Elisha; each called long before they were commissioned.

 David was called and even anointed to be King of Israel years before he took the throne and consider what he endured and learned during his period of preparation. And Samuel, called of God to be a prophet when he was still a child but had to be prepared in adverse conditions. Elisha, called by Elijah to be a prophet, but had to be under the tutorial training of Elijah for several years.

 Have you been called of God to a gift ministry? God is faithful to you, be faithful and obedient to Him. Allow Him to work His will and way in your life. He is preparing you as another servant in the manner of Moses, the apostle Paul, King David, Samuel and Elisha. You are called to be part of this company of God’s servants. This time He is preparing YOU for a divine commission.

Galatians 6:9 – *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

1 Peter 5:6 – *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due* (proper) *time.*