

Calling and Separation

As they (prophets and teachers) ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said **separate unto me** Barnabus and Saul for the work whereunto I **have called them**" (Acts 13:2).

The Greek word for separate means, "to sever, to mark off from others by boundaries, or to set apart for a specific purpose of work." The Greek word for called is referring to the ministry gift of the Apostle that Saul and Barnabus stood in. Notice how it is worded in this verse of Acts. "**Separate** (present tense) unto me... for the work whereunto I **have called** them (past tense)." This shows us that Separation comes after our Calling.

We know that this occasion in Acts was where Paul's **separation** occurred, but when was he **called**? Galatians 1:15 tells us that he was called by God's grace from his mother's womb. But Ephesians 1:4 tells us that **we** were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Our calling goes back into eternity past.

Just because you have recently found out what ministry gift you are going to stand in doesn't mean that God just now called you. You were led into a calling which was ordained by God before the foundation of the world. This is all a part of God's plan of predestination.

But we've seen from this occasion in Acts that there is more than a **call** into the ministry, there must also come a time of **separation**. "Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, **separated** unto the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1). We are called into an **office** but we must become separated unto the **gospel**. The calling is of **God**, but we have much to do with the time of separation. When we are called into a ministry we must begin to study the Word of God to show ourselves **approved** unto Him (II Timothy 2:15). Paul spent much time in prayer, fasting and study before he was approved of God and separated unto the work.

Jesus told us “many are **called** few are chosen” (Matthew 20:16). This is because there are very few who will pay the price and humble themselves under God’s hand. Many, after sensing the “call” on their lives try to open their own doors. Paul told Timothy that a bishop should “not be a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (I Tim. 3:6). It is for your own protection that God does not separate you at the time He drops the calling into your heart. You must prove yourself by putting God’s Word first, so He can trust you in the work of the ministry.

When looking for workers in the church, I first desire faithfulness. The Word tells us that above all a steward is to be found faithful. I will many times take faithfulness over qualifications. Qualifications can be taught, but faithfulness cannot. God himself will not reward you for qualifications but for faithfulness. “Well done thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things I will make thee ruler over many” (Mt. 25:23). If you will humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, He will exalt you in **due time** (I Peter 5:6).

If you will be faithful to study, pray and seek God’s will in your calling, the time of separation will come. God promised it to you in due time.

You have just been shown that God calls you before He separates you. The time of separation may be years after you have been called into a ministry. The time of calling is of God, but the time of separation is up to YOU. As you are faithful to study the Word of God and apply yourself to do whatever your hand finds to do, the time of separation will come. God always rewards faithfulness, not just in heaven, but here on earth. He will make you ruler over much in your own ministry, if you will be faithful in the time of the few things.

The reason I even began to study this teaching on calling and separation was because of the lack of the supernatural. With all the teaching on faith today people are receiving more from God than ever before. More people are walking in health and prosperity today than all past years combined. But one area bothered me. With all the teaching on faith today, where are the miracles of the book of Acts? We TEACH about the gifts of healings and working of miracles, but where are they? Where are

the signs which are supposed to follow the ministering of the Word? We see them to a limited degree, but not like the New Testament pattern in the book of Acts.

When I went to the Lord in prayer about it, God showed me Stephen for an example. "And Stephen, full of FAITH and POWER, did great wonders and miracles among the people (Acts 6:8)." The Lord showed me that the church today is full of FAITH, but lacking in POWER. The WORD produces FAITH, but where does POWER come from? When the Lord showed me, he brought a word to me that I had not seen for a long time. The word was SANCTIFICATION. What ever happened to holiness and right living? We're teaching one side of the coin, but the other side must be stressed too. We're full of FAITH but lacking POWER. Faith without WORKS is dead (non productive). We're full of the Word, but our personal lives are full of immorality, lying, and hypocrisy.

We love to quote the first half of the epistles, but leave out the second half. We are seated with Him in heavenly places, all principalities are under His feet, we have been given an inheritance, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and made kings and priests in this life. But what about those closing chapters of the epistles? Aren't they true too? "Therefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor ...let him that stole, steal no more, ...let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, ...but fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, ...neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, ... and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 4:25, 28, 29, 5:3,4,11)." If we're going to live in the first half of the epistles, let's move on to the second half too. Let's balance out the scales, lest we be weighed and found wanting.

I decided to do a study on miracles. The best place to go was the Word, and the best place in the Word was the life of Elijah and Elisha. These two were known for their miracles and little else. What was in their life that we can use today? These two men had the same life-styles that many people of miracles have today. Even though Catherine Kuhlman, Smith Wigglesworth, William Branham, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin, Amy McPherson, and these others might differ on their TEACHING, they all have one thing in common. **THEY LIVED AND DO LIVE SANCTIFIED AND**

SEPARATED LIVES. The key to POWER in the Christian life is HOLINESS. The WORD produces FAITH and SANCTIFICATION produces MIRACLE POWER. These are the two sides of the coin that worked in the life of Stephen.

Sanctification can be seen in the life of Elijah and Elisha. They live separated lives from the world. They called people to repentance from idols, fornication, and apostasy.

In I Kings 19 we see the **call** of Elisha to replace Elijah. Elijah was in a bad mood after queen Jezebel sent him a life threatening note. Elijah ran into the wilderness and fell under a juniper tree. We need to take note that we are often prone to defeat immediately after a great victory. The day before, Elijah had called fire down from heaven on the prophets of Baal. The next day he ran from the queen's note. Many times it is the little foxes which spoil the vine. We can be tripped up by a **little** thing after seeing a victory in a **big** thing. Elijah was feeling dejected under the tree and asked the Lord to die. Now he did not really mean it. If he would have wanted to die, all he needed to do was stay in Jerusalem, the queen would have seen to his death. ELIJAH WAS LOOKING FOR PITY. In verses 5-8, the angel of the Lord (Christ) appeared to him, baked him a cake and brought him a cruise of water. Many times when we are at our lowest, Jesus does something special for us.

The Lord did not intend for Elijah to STAY dejected, but to regain strength and go back to Jerusalem. His job there was not done. But Elijah took the strength of that cake and water and ran forty days and nights to Mount Horeb, the opposite direction of Jerusalem. Elijah was not through having a pity party. In verses 9-14, he repeatedly told the Lord that he was only one left serving the Lord and everybody else had forsaken God. In other words, if having a pity party worked ONCE on the Lord and God provided comfort, maybe it would work AGAIN. But by the end of the time in the cave, the Lord told Elijah that there were seven thousand who have not bowed their knee to Baal, and that He had now chosen Elisha to be prophet in his (Elijah's) place (vs. 16). Never think that you are irreplaceable. God got along fine before you came along, and He will do fine when you are gone. He always has replacements to

fill your slot. Elijah kept pushing the Lord with his pity routine, until the Lord just replaced him with Elisha.

In verses 19-21, we have the occasion of Elisha's call. Remember that Elisha is already called even though he doesn't know it. God knew it before the foundation of the world, and Elijah knew it days before. Elijah found Elisha plowing with twelve yoke of oxen. This tells us that Elisha was a PROSPEROUS farmer. Most men in that day did not have that many yoke of oxen. Elisha was going to have to leave a good job.

When Elijah passed by, he threw his mantle around Elisha. Elisha knew exactly what that meant. I know he recognized Elijah when he saw him coming toward his farm, and was probably surprised when he threw his mantle on his back. But he recognized that God was calling him to stand in the prophet's ministry and carry on the work of Elijah.

Elisha did not hesitate or question, he dropped the oxen and RAN after Elijah (vs. 20). The first thing God is looking for in us is OBEDIENCE to the call. Elisha asked Elijah only one favor, and that was to properly tell his parents goodbye. Elijah said to him, "Go back again for what have I done to thee". In other words, don't follow the call just because of ME. Don't follow the call just because you might be hooked up with some famous minister. Make sure you are in the ministry because you want to follow GOD. Elisha clinched his calling when he went back to say goodbye to his parents, because he SLEW the oxen and BOILED their flesh (vs. 21). HE BURNED HIS BRIDGES BEHIND HIM. There was no way he would go back to farming there. So often we want to follow the Lord and leave a connection or two to the old life, just in case the ministry does not work out.

My favorite part of the character of Elisha comes at the end of verse 21. "...Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and MINISTERED unto him." If I were following a great man like Elijah, and I had just left a prosperous farm and burned my oxen, I WOULD WANT TO KNOW WHAT TO DO FIRST AS A PROPHET. HOW DO I CALL FIRE DOWN FROM HEAVEN? HOW DO I PART WATER? HOW DO I STOP THE HEAVENS FROM RAINING? But Elisha did not do that. He MINISTERED to Elijah. He began to

work in the ministry of HELPS. We must be HUMBLE ourselves under the mighty hand of God first, then He will EXALT us in **due time**. Elisha still had a long way to go before he would be operating in miracles. In other words, Elisha had been CALLED, but he had not been SEPARATED yet. Elisha had to be faithful in the FEW things before God could trust him and make him ruler over MANY.

For a long time I thought that Elisha followed Elijah for only a few weeks or months before he actually stood in Elijah's office. But as I got into this study, I found that Elisha followed Elijah for over TEN YEARS. Can you imagine operation in a ministry of helps for over TEN YEARS? Elisha had to carry Elijah's coat, book his hotel rooms, set up his book table, and carry the luggage all that time. Elisha never performed ONE miracle all those years. We have already seen from I Kings 19 that Elijah was a moody individual. He was prone to self pity and moods of depression. Can you imagine being Elisha and seeing the great man of God in some of those states? I can hear Elijah saying, "everybody has forsaken God and we are the ONLY ones left. I wish we could just die". Can you imagine the shock to Elisha when he first saw Elijah acting that way? "Elijah, what kind of CONFESSION is that?" About that time I can imagine too that the devil made sure that Elisha saw some prosperous farmer in the field with twelve yoke of oxen, plowing just to entice him to give up the ministry and go back to farming. I have never seen it fail yet that a man really sell out to the ministry that he didn't get some offer to go back into the world and make good money. Satan seems to be there strongest in the times of discouragement. But Elisha stayed true to the calling. We are never told that Elisha complained or erred from ministering to Elijah. We can now see why God passed over the seven thousand to choose Elisha. During all those years, Elisha watched and learned from Elijah's good and bad points. He learned what to DO in the ministry and also what NOT TO DO. Thank the Lord for ministers today who will tell where they have missed it. They want others to profit from their mistakes. No one is perfect. James tells us that "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are (5:17).

In II Kings 2 we have the story of Elisha's SEPARATION. Here is the time when he began to actually stand in the ministry that Elijah was to vacate. Just before Elijah was to depart, we see the final temptations given to Elisha to leave the ministry. In

verses 2, 4, and 6, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tarry here (at Bethel and Jericho)”, and Elisha said unto him, “As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.” We know that the Lord does not tempt us with evil, but many times the Lord will question us to see if we really are in faith or presumption. The Lord wants to know if we are really ready to step out or just fooling ourselves. But Elisha showed that he would be faithful, no matter what. It’s often tempting to take off for a while, but we need to know **when** to do that and when **not** to. Elisha knew that the time for Elijah to leave was coming very soon, and that he must be faithful right to the end.

Not only was there pressure put on him through Elijah to rest for a little while, there was also pressure given to him by the sons of the prophets. In Bethel and in Jericho, in verses 3 and 5, the sons of the prophets said “...Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head (authority) today?” And he (Elisha) answered, “Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace”. Elisha had been under the wing of Elijah for over 10 years. After that long a time, there is security knowing that the buck does not stop with you. You always have Elijah to take the brunt of the situation. But now Elisha was going to be taken away from the place of authority and Elisha was going to take his place. In other words, the sons of the prophets were saying, “Elisha, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?” Did you know that your biggest pressures do not come from the world but from RELIGIOUS PEOPLE? Those who have tried this “faith stuff” and failed. These sons of the prophets were trying to provoke Elisha to fear. “What are you going to do?” I like Elisha’s answer. “Yea, I know it, hold ye your peace.” In other words, SHUT UP”. Elisha did not know what was coming up in the future. But he did now one thing. God had taken care of him all this time, and He wasn’t going to stop now. Elisha did not know what was going to happen, but that was not his problem, it was God’s.

There are times I do not know what to do. I do not know what is going to happen. But when tomorrow gets here, God will provide just like He has always done. But what I don’t need, is doubt and fear peddlers. Jesus had to put them out of the room when he raised the little girl from the dead. Many times we have to do the same thing with the words of our mouth. We tell them to shut up IN LOVE.

Then notice what the sons of the prophets did when Elisha refused to accept their fear and doubt. “And fifty of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: (vs7)”. If they can’t convince you, they will stand off and WAIT FOR YOU TO FAIL. I’m sure as they stood there, they were conversing among themselves about Elisha’s “zeal without wisdom”. But my friend when you’ve got God’s Word to stand on, YOU CANNOT FAIL. Elisha had paid the price for all those years and he was not in his plans. To keep his thoughts pure, he had to “cast down imaginations” and “pull every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ!”

In verses 8-10, Elijah split the Jordan river with his mantle and went across with Elisha. This is a very important lesson we must learn. We are not ready to ask God for things until we have first proved ourselves before Him. “If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, (THEN) ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you (Jn. 15:7).” After years of service, Elijah knew he could trust Elisha to make a request based on God’s will. ELISHA DID JUST THAT. “... let a **double portion** of thy spirit be upon me (vs 9).”

Elisha did not pull that request out of the air. It was not just a whim. He had been planning on that request for some time. THE DOUBLE PORTION IS THE RIGHT OF THE FIRST BORN SON. Elijah had no children. Elisha had left his father. Elisha wanted that **hundred fold return** (Mark 10:29,30). Elisha was claiming the right to the double portion because he had become a son to Elijah. This is seen when Elijah went to heaven by the whirlwind. Elisha cried out “...MY FATHER, MY FATHER, The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof (vs 12).”

In verses 13, 14 Elisha received the double portion, and he used the mantle of Elijah and split the Jordan River. His FIRST miracle was the same as Elijah’s LAST. In other words, his ministry took up where Elijah’s had left off. He continued on with the ministry of Elijah, only with more power and demonstration. The Word tells us that if we will stick with the Word that even our enemies will be at peace with us. This was also true in the case of Elisha.

“And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, the spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him and BOWED THEMSELVES TO THE GROUND BEFORE HIM (vs. 15)”.

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