



<sup>1</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: <sup>3</sup> And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, <sup>4</sup> To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, <sup>5</sup> And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. (Ex 31:1-5)

We have been studying the design and features of the Wilderness Tabernacle as given to Moses by God. For every convention of worship for the people of God, His ministers must be duly equipped, called, and installed as such. In our opening five verses of this chapter, there is much that may miss the observation of the casual reader. Of course, no serious student of God's Word should ever take that Word in an attitude of casual abandon. Every Word is tried as silver in the Refiner's furnace seven times.

The principles enunciated, I believe prophetically, in these five verses inform us that God calls His true ministers (no a vocational choice) to the duties that He peculiarly prepares them to perform. Such as are called are filled with wisdom (which they only acquire from a diligent study of the Word), and a deeper understanding of the works of God are correlated over the spectrum of time and \eternity. In the case of the Tabernacle, a man gifted with specific skills is required to both build, and supervise the building, of the Tabernacle. So God always finds His man of whom He has known and prepared from the very first. Bezaleel (meaning in the shadow, or under the protection, of God) may have had no prior suggestion of his calling until the time was ripe in the eyes of the Lord. I believe that a man called of God may lack a full knowledge of the purposes of his calling until God reveals them at the proper time. When Charles Spurgeon took shelter from a terrific thunderstorm one night in a small country chapel, he probably had no clue that he would be led to Christ by a barely literate old deacon, and would leave that chapel as Charles Spurgeon the soon-to-be minster, and not Charles Spurgeon, the lost lad.

At the very outset, let me aver that no man is worthy of the call to the ministry. In fact, none of us – lay or clergy – are worthy the call to be a Christian. So how is it possible for even a profane and drunken sea captain such as John Newton to answer the call of God to the ministry? I believe it is due to a growing and gnawing unrest in the soul to obey the small, still voice that persistently nags at his heart. If disregarded, it grows to the point of a painful roar that can no longer be ignored, and the man succumbs to the call. Though no man is worthy, God will make such a man worthy by the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ to serve in the Lord's Holy Work. God has even reached down to the vile reprobate on skid row to issue His call to orders. Such men of

low estate may amazingly rise to the top rung on the ministerial ladder when they have become humble clay in the hands of the potter. Their love for God is multiplied by the level of decadence of their previous state just as the woman of questionable repute ministered to Jesus at the house of Simon: *Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.* (Luke 7:44-47)

The calling of a man to the ministry is an unfolding call that spreads from the called clergyman, to his aides in the ministry, and then to the laity at large who are called with equal force to execute the Words of the Lord in His Kingdom. This is illustrated in the next several verse: *“6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee; 7 The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, 8 And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, 9 And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, 10 And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest’s office, 11 And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.”* (Ex 31:6-11)

There is no more effective means of learning than that which we call ‘experiential.’ This is the strength of traditional Anglican worship. It is participatory! All present have a voice in the prayers and responses of the Prayer Book. There was a time when each worshipper, coming newly as a child (or an adult convert), stumbled and stammered at the majestic language of the Prayer Book forms, or the reading of the King James Bible; but, hearing the words read over and over, their vocabulary became subconsciously elevated to the grandeur that God deserves in His people. It was an experiential learning that a young child, sitting beside his father and mother at worship, Sunday after Sunday, learns, absorbs, and internalizes over the years of development.

You will note in the above verses that much of the work, though led by a called minister, is accomplished by many hands of the congregation. The women will weave and embroider the veils and curtains of fine silk and wool; the men will perform the heavy tasks of smelting and forming the metal for the altars and Laver, etc. Each member of the Body of Christ has a role to play, and each is important.

*12 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.* (Ex 31:12-13) God reinforces His Commandment to keep the Sabbaths Holy. Was this to serve as a sign to those outside that these were the people of God? Not at all! This was not the salient purpose for observing the Sabbaths. That purpose is given in the text itself! *“that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.”* Being holy ourselves in obeying the Commandments of God does nothing for the souls of those without the camp, but it does have an educating and spiritual impact on our own souls in knowing God and drawing nearer to Him.

*14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his*

people. *15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.* (Ex 31:14-15) Does the sentence of death seem harsh for violation of the Sabbath? It is not, for without obedience to God, we all deserve death and, in fact, are dead in trespasses and sins already. << The temporal observance of the Lord's Day (Sunday) as a day of rest and worship carries on the physical benefits of the Sabbath observance; but the spiritual observance of the Sabbath was not annulled by Christ, but made more compelling since every day is a Sabbath rest for the Christian who allows all of his works to be those of Christ working in our members.

When I check my Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, I discover that the word, perpetual, is not time dated. I am told that it means "continuing forever." *16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.* (Ex 31:16) Jesus did not cancel a single jot or tittle from the Law, but to fulfill that Law. He made the law more stringent spiritually since a law obeyed with reservation is not spiritually beneficial. Not only do we not physically commit adultery, but Christ tells us that even the desire is the same as the act. The same goes for hatred and murder. Our spiritual Sabbath is daily!

We are not saved by our perfect obedience to God, since no man is without sin; but we are definitely saved unto good works that give evidence of our salvation once we have committed our souls to Him. *17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.* (Ex 31:17) Our good works after grace give evidence of that grace.

*18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.* (Ex 31:18) Of what vital importance to our souls is a thing written with the very Finger of God! How many recorded times do we observe that the Lord wrote with His Finger? Can you answer without looking to the end of this devotion?

God has written with His Finger FIVE times according to Scripture. He writes upon the two tables of stone here in Exodus 31:18; again He restores His Law on Tables of stone (that Moses had broken) in Exodus 34:28; again in Daniel 5:5; and twice in the Gospel of St John 8:6 & 8. When God writes with His very Finger, we had best take notice just as did the accusers of the woman taken in adultery. Of course, His Immutable and Eternal Word is written by the hand of His scribes at His very command, and, therefore, carries equal weight.

