

How God Called Me to be a Pastor

by Del W. Wray (Delano)

(The following was my response to a friend who believes that God is today giving special revelation through the leaders of his church (Church of Christ). He wrote: "Del, how would the pastor of your church know that he has been called of God to be his chosen disciple. Would He not reveal this calling to him through revelation or would you maintain that it was through divine illumination?")

I said I would like to tell you how I came to be a pastor. To start with let me explain that I did not receive a direct revelation from God. I got my guidance from the Bible. As I have said earlier we do not need a special revelation from God today, because we have the Word of God the Bible to guide us. Over the years I have people ask me how I knew...for sure if God called me. This is my answer.

First, on May 15, 1960, I heard the Gospel, and I repented of my sin and believed, accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. That day God saved me and my life began to immediately change. I will not labor the details, but I was a sinner with a wicked selfish heart. I lived for myself and me alone. But all that changed. After I was saved people at school began to sense there was something different. My classmates knew how sinful I was and they began to see the change. One reason I changed was that I now had a desire to do what God wanted. That was certainly something new!

How did I know I was saved? This change of life I was experiencing is consistent with what the Bible says about a person being saved, "born again" and receiving the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the new nature of God. God promised as the Bible explains that I would be saved if I put my trust in Him. (John 3:16, Romans 10:9-10) I was putting my trust in Christ and based on God's promise I knew I was saved. (1 John 5:13) You see I believed what God has said in His Word the Bible and I truly believed and put my trust wholly in Christ to save me. I knew I could not save myself and that too was stated in the Bible. (Rom. 3:10) Therefore based on what God said, I by faith received Him as my Lord and Savior. This is exactly what the Bible says to do in order to receive forgiveness for sins and receive eternal life. I believed... therefore I know I am saved and a child of God. Again, let me make it clear. I did not desire salvation, because I did not even think about having God in my life until this day. God through His wonderful grace sought me and saved me. (Rom. 5:8, Rev. 3:20)

These are some of the Scriptures that showed me the way God called a man to be a minister of the Gospel:

2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

1 Cor. 2:11-14, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

John 14:17 "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Rom. 8:9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

1 Cor. 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

1 Cor. 6:19 "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

2 Tim. 1:14 "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."

Second, I began to attend church, First Baptist, in Newport News and as the months went by I gave up, cursing, a filthy mouth and a lot of other sins. I really wanted to live for the Lord and as He said I was to live. (By the way, that has not changed over these past years since 1960) Some sins were a struggle to overcome; others God just took away. I stopped hating people the day I got saved, but it took two years to understand what had happened to me biblically. The sins I struggled over were the ones I enjoyed the most, yet I knew what God said about them in the Bible, I knew they were wrong and I with prayer and commitment finally overcame them.

I read and believed James 1:2, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." These trials have been no fun...but I trusted in God and He got me through each storm and trial of life.

Before I was saved, I tried to overcome several sins on my own because I was afraid for my own best interest. I failed over and over. I now know why. It is the carnal nature, we all are born with, which draws and causes us to do wrong. In other words it was against my very nature to do right, and trying to overcome these things interfered with what I enjoyed. (1 Cor. 2:14)

After I was saved, I started faithfully attending church, Sunday school and all the meeting of the Baptist church I started attending. I started to read the Bible. The more I read, the more I learned in Sunday School, the more I was challenged by the preaching of the Bible, the more my love for God and His Word the Bible grew. In time I was asked to help teach a teenage class as an assistant teacher. The next year I was asked to teach the class full time and continued to do so. I volunteered to lead the youth group. Next, I was appointed to be the young adult Sunday school teacher. I willingly accepted this place of service because I loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him.

All this time I was learning more and more about the Bible. I began to purchase books, Bible study helps and commentaries. They greatly helped but I wanted to learn more. I spent a lot of time in prayer and in fact began to pray almost every moment. I was not engrossed in my job in the shipyard. I prayed about almost everything I did and started going to sleep each night in prayer.

In the early part of 1962, I began to have a desire to do more and maybe even to preach. I wanted to share with others what I was learning in God's word. I wanted other people to know Christ as their Savior and see Christians mature in Christ. At first I was ashamed to even have thoughts of becoming a Gospel

preacher and pastor. Why? I knew the sinner I was, and I also knew I still was not all God wanted me to be. But the desire was there and I could not get rid of it. I told no one, not even my family. I read and studied 1 Timothy 3:1-16. My pastor had read this to me and suggested I study the whole passage when I was asked to teach. He asked me if I was qualified according to these verses to serve. I read the verses 1-7 over and over because they listed the minimum qualifications for a man being a pastor. It said, "*If, a man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*" Then it said "*A bishop MUST. . .*" and God lists the qualifications. I had the desire, but so I carefully and honestly examined each qualification. I began to realize that God had changed my life and I was qualified because of that change He had brought in my life. Still I prayed and pondered over the matter. It was a difficult time for me. I was ready to drop the whole matter and in truth wanted too to some degree, but I also felt that if this was what God wanted me to do, I would submit to him. I never questioned Him.

In June 1962, I went forward at the invitation given at the end of the morning service. It was the hardest thing I had ever done in my life. I was truly worried that I would be laughed out of the church and be totally embarrassed. But I deep down felt God wanted me to announce that I felt God was calling me to preach. I stepped out from the pew and in seconds found myself telling our pastor what was on my heart. His smile was almost a laugh, but I sensed he was not making fun. He stopped the invitation and told the people what I had said to him. He then said that for a long time he too had thought I was being called by the Lord, but would not share this with me not wanting to influence me in any way. My friends were crying and as was many people in the church. My girlfriend, at the time, came down and placed her arms around me and said she too had known this for a long time and that she would stand with me if this is what God wanted. Many in the church, expressed that they too had seen how that God was working with me and felt God wanted me to preach. Several said that they were all waiting for me to make it public and wondering why it was taking so long. As God is my witness I never dreamed anyone else would even consider such a thing as God calling me to be a preacher. This was not new revelation from God, but the outworking of God's revealed truth in the Bible in my life.

I never heard a voice or received any kind of special revelation from God. All that happened was completely in order with that the Bible has to say about how God calls men into His service. I read the Bible, put all my "feelings" to the test of God's Word. Because my feelings were in keeping with the Bible, I took the step of faith that Sunday morning surrendering to my Savior. It as an action based on what the Bible said and I made my desire public. Others too, then came forward after the service to shake my hand and encourage me, saying they had seen God working too. Even to this day, 42 years later (2002), many of these same saints of God stand with me and my call and have been a wonderful source of encouragement. Thus, God "illuminated," His Word in my heart, made it real in my life and I understood and I followed. Illumination means to shed light on something. Revelation means to reveal some new truth. He then confirmed this calling through my friends mother, pastor and fellow believers by the way they received me. My calling was not new revelation, but was based on what God has revealed in His word.

I was 18 years old, working in the shipyard in Newport News during the summer months setting goals for myself and how to achieve them financially. Still I read the Bible and found that when God called a man to special service he always went into training. Jesus trained the disciples for three years, and Paul, even though thoroughly trained in the Old Testament and the secular disciplines, after his call went into Arabia for three years to study before he started his ministry. So, still following the New Testament example, I served in the military for several years and came home and applied to Bob Jones University and took the SAT. I failed the part on English, but they said I could enroll, if I would take a remedial English course. I also had another problem; I did not have the money needed to go to college. Having served in the military I applied under the GI bill and was accepted. Most of my Bible training was achieved under, *Dr. Harold B. Sightler, BA. D.D Litt.D. LLD. Pastor Tabernacle Baptist Church,*

Greenville, South Carolina. There the puzzle began to come together. The Bible is the only book with the absolute truth. All others are pure speculation, theories and fiction!

Again, the Bible was always my guide. While training at Tabernacle Baptist I found in the Book of Romans. Romans 12:1-2, this verse that came to my mind over and over. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* It stuck in my mind that I was not doing anything more than simply giving my all to Christ, which is what every believer should do.

I read Luke 14:25-35, that records Jesus talking to the people concerning those who would seek to be his disciples. *" . . . Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."* The principle in Matthew 6:33, was clear as a bell, *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added."*

In these passages I saw God's clear direction for my life. I agreed with Paul's statement in Philippians 3:7-9, *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things [but] loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them [but] dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."*

God was speaking to me daily ... from His word the Bible. It guided my every step. I gave up home, job and everything to follow God's calling, I was scared to death but God providing the way and faith in Him and His word. I never received any revelation or vision from God, but all that happened was in line with what God says in the Bible.

My life has been one of living in the light of God's Word and blessing. It has not been an easy road. Oft time's things were really hard and under pressure I've wanted to quit. But one thing kept me going, God was always there in every circumstance. I took my strength to continue from reading the Bible. God promised, that as his child, He would never leave or forsake me. I took heart in that revealed truth in God's word. I have applied the principles of the Bible to every situation I have found myself in and they have always directed me in doing what was right and honoring the Lord Jesus. God's word has never failed me.

I have pastored five churches, four of which God allowed me to establish from scratch. I went from being a pastor of a church in Virginia to being a full time missionary in Hawaii to full time evangelism all over this country and many foreign lands. Pasturing and planting New Testament Bible believing fundamental Baptist churches every where God has lead. I was led from southeastern Virginia to mountains of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Texas, California and Maryland. I have preached in several hundred churches in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wyoming, Idaho and all over this great country of ours. I have seen hundreds of people saved through the preaching of God's Word; men, women, boys and girls, seen their lives changed and know them to be living for the Lord still today. Some are in the ministry today. A number of them were Methodists, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Mormon who in hearing God's truth believed in Him and were saved. It was the preaching of the Bible, living by its principles, that has done all this. God honors His Word. When men accept it and believe they are redeemed and gloriously changed.

Yes, I have seen the phonies too. I have seen the deadness and hype in liberal unbelieving churches. I have counseled the distraught and confused members of the cults, trying to get to heaven by their works, church membership, baptism and etc. I have seen the fruit of their false doctrines and seen the shipwreck it makes of men's lives. I too have seen those who put their trust in false gods and religion trying to put up a good front, making great claims for their unbiblical religion. And I have also seen the emptiness in their hearts and lives. I have watched them die trusting in their false prophets, popes, and churches and according to God's own Word, go to hell to await the final judgment, with no hope ever of any redemption (Hebrew 9:26-28) Occasionally, one opens up his heart and out pours all the doubts, fears and hypocrisy he feels. My heart goes out to them. Instead of following God, they follow the leaders of their false churches who are deceiving them. They call themselves Catholics, Protestant, Seventh Day Adventists, Charismatic's, Mormons, Church of Christ, Anglican Episcopal and a host of other names. Their common bond is they all are trying to work their way to heaven or add their works to God's Grace to please God and get to go to heaven. They all ignore what God has clearly said.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

"But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Matt. 9:13)

"He that believeth on me shall have everlasting life." (John 6:47)

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John 11:25) "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses." (Acts 13:39)

As a pastor almost daily I counsel people in my small congregation and around the world through my web site Victory Bible Baptist Church (<http://biblerays.com>) many of them are members of other faiths. I do not offer my wisdom or philosophy, but I present to them salvation through belief and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then I point them to the immutable promises and instructions in the Bible given to God's children. Some have believed and I have been thrilled to watched God change them and come to a peace that cannot be understood outside of being saved oneself. *"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)*

One was a country music disc jockey. He did all he his church required. He lived it to the uttermost, Pentecostal but it could not calm his doubts and fears hidden deep inside where no one could see. The Lord led me his way and I simply shared with him God's Word and His promises to all who believe. He fought it every step of the way, because it was so foreign to all he had been taught. But he did not have to take my word, or the teachings of my church. He had a Bible and he could read it for himself. He turned to his church leaders for help. All they offered was empty rhetoric. They told him he had to work for his salvation by being faithful to his Pentecostal heritage and following the Charismatic church and its leaders. They could give him no assurance of salvation or what eternity held. They said he would find out how well he had done after he died! They even threatened to excommunicate him because he was asking too many questions. Several days after we met, he showed up in our Sunday night service. He said he could find no peace. He said the only peace he had was when he attended our services and was hearing the Bible taught and preached. He said he remembered what he had read in the Bible about how God said a person could receive salvation and assurance of heaven when they died. That night he believed, repented of his sins and received God's forgiveness and eternal life. I still remember his praying and thanking God for saving him and for letting him finally see the truth. The last I heard from him was a

number of years ago, and he was still happy, at peace with God and working so very hard to introduce his family, friends and all he met to the Lord Jesus Christ who changed his life and gave him peace.

Friend, God's word is sufficient and is God's complete revelation to man. I know your church does not accept that Revelation 22:18-19 applies to the whole Bible, but believe it or not, it means just that. The Bible is God's complete and only revelation to man. It gives us the wonderful Gospel (Good News) that if one will believe in Jesus Christ, He will forgive all their sins, and give them eternal life. He promises the one who will by faith accept His word will become His child. This Book with its Good News and warnings was God's final revelation and warning to men to repent and turn to God. He warned not to take away or add to God's revelation. We do not have to go through pastors, priests, prophets, churches or anyone to have God's revealed truth or will for our lives. It has already been revealed in the Bible. But we need to believe and trust the word of God. God will do the rest. God loves the sinner and is seeking to save all who are lost. I hope you will believe God, put away the false empty teachings of your church and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Trusting God's Word! (Prov. 3:5-6)

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