

UNIQUE & UNIFIED

THE CALVARY CHAPEL DISTINCTIVES

Part Three of a continuing series on the Calvary Chapel Distinctives. This issue includes: *Having Begun in the Spirit*, *Ventures of Faith*, and *Church Government*. This article was edited by permission and condensed from Calvary Chapel Distinctives by the late Pastor Chuck Smith. All Scripture is from the King James Version (KJV) unless noted.

Having Begun In the Spirit

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit. 2 CORINTHIANS 3:5-6b

Calvary Chapel is a work that was begun by the Holy Spirit. Every new and great movement of God is born of the Spirit. Yet historically, many such moves of God seem to deviate from the birth in the Spirit to ultimately seeking to be perfected in the flesh. Movements that were once alive in the Spirit can become dead in ritualism.

As the Lord said to Zechariah, **Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts** (Zechariah 4:6b). Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia, chiding them. **Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?** (Galatians 3:3). God will go to tremendous lengths to make certain that His chosen leaders rely on the Holy Spirit and not on their own power and wisdom.

Moses is one example. He felt the call of God upon his heart. He knew that God had ordained him for a purpose, but then he found himself out in the desert for forty years with no self-worth or confidence. Moses initially objected, saying, **Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?** (Exodus 3:11). But God's answer to Moses' objection was **Certainly I will be with thee** (Exodus 3:12).

In the Book of Judges, when the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and began to worship false gods,

God delivered them into the hands of the Midianites. The children of Israel began to cry to the Lord. So the Lord sent His angel to Gideon. And Gideon responded by saying basically, "Lord, You're scraping the bottom of the barrel. My family is poor and I'm the least of the family." He thought he was disqualifying himself, but in reality he was the kind of person God was looking for. God desired a person who knew that he didn't have the capacity or the ability to accomplish the deliverance of a nation—who knew he would have to rely upon the Lord if anything was to be done. God also had to bring Moses to this place of dependence so that He could use him too. When we don't have confidence in our own power, we know that if the work is going to be done, it has to be done by the Lord.

So the Calvary Chapel movement is not the first time that God has used society's castoffs to do a wonderful work. But it's somewhat sad that once God begins to use us, we start looking for reasons why God would use us. We try to become perfected in the flesh. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, **For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called** (I Corinthians 1:26). The purpose of God is to choose those who really aren't qualified, but then to anoint them with His Spirit. Then, the good results are an amazement and a wonder to the world. You see, God wants to work, but God wants to receive the glory for the work that He does. People can only look on, shake their heads, and say, "I don't understand it, but God's anointing is there. God is sure using them."

I wonder how many times the work that the Lord wants to do is hindered because God can't find men who will depend on His wisdom and not their own. Yet I do believe in education. My own life has been a life of study. It's important to be prepared in the Word of God, but not from a purely humanistic standpoint. True education doesn't come from the wisdom of the world, but by the guidance and the wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit.

The only thing that's worthwhile is that you understand and know God. That's why God chooses such totally unqualified people, fills them with His Spirit, and then does a mighty work through them, astounding and baffling the world. Now, how can we be so foolish as to try to find some reason in us to explain why God used us, so that we might glory in ourselves rather than glorying in the Lord and in what He has done?

Paul, writing to the Corinthians said, **For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?** (I Corinthians 4:7, NKJV). Whatever you have, you've received it as a gift from God.

Ventures of Faith

But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. HEBREWS 11:6

It's always exciting to give God a chance to work. The way we discover how God wants to work is to venture out in faith. Step out and see what the Lord might do. But there has to be a guard against presumption. A lot of people fall back on human effort when God's hand obviously is not in it. I've ventured out many times only to discover that God wasn't in it. What do you do then? You retreat. There's a time when God uses a particular kind of a program, but then that time passes. Unfortunately, it's become a tradition for people to try to keep it alive. With God's help we learn to let things die a natural death instead of trying to keep things going by artificial means.

I thank God He has given Calvary Chapels a lot of pastors who caught this vision of simply venturing out in faith. It's a thrill to see how God is blessing when we dare to step out and allow Him to do what He wants to do, giving ourselves over as instruments through which He can do

what He so desires. The eyes of the Lord are still going to and fro throughout the earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards Him. Get your heart in harmony with His, and you will be amazed at what God will do and how God will bless.

Church Government

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. EPHESIANS 1:22

Moses was an earthly leader the people recognized as receiving from God guidance, direction, laws, and rules for the nation of Israel. In the church today we see this structure in a modified form. We see that Jesus Christ is the Head over the body of the church, the One in charge. Pastors need to be like Moses, in touch with Jesus and receiving His direction and guidance, leading the church in such a way that people know the Lord is in control.

Also, like Moses, within the church we have a board of elders who pray with us and support us in seeking the Lord's leading for the church. It's necessary to have godly men who recognize that God has called and ordained the pastor of the church, men who will work with and support what God is directing the pastor to implement. A good board is one of the greatest assets you can have in your ministry. Real elders aren't a bunch of "yes" men, but men yielded to the Holy Spirit. They're a real buffer and protection for the pastor. Their job is to interface with the congregation and deal with any problems that the people may bring to them.

I believe God's model is that the pastor is ruled over by the Lord and recognized by the congregation as God's anointed instrument to lead the church, with the board guiding and directing. Complementing this is the role of the assisting pastors. They are there to minister to the spiritual needs of the people on a daily basis. With these components in place, this creates an effective form of church government. ✚