

CALLED, CHOSEN AND FAITHFUL

This paper is an extension of the subject matter covered in Mark Robertson's paper ["Who is God Calling Now?"](#)

My opinions on these topics do not necessarily represent Mark's opinions on these related subjects to the ones covered in his paper.

Contents

- The Difference Between Being Called And Being Chosen
- Did Israel In The Old Testament Have Access To The Indwelling Of The Holy Spirit?
- Why Did God Choose Israel?
- What Makes One A True Christian?
- Is The Process Of Being Chosen By God Selective?
- What Does It Mean To Be Faithful?
- Should You Try To Convert Others?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING CALLED AND BEING CHOSEN

As correctly pointed out by Mark in this paper being called and being chosen by God are two completely different things. We are **PLAINLY TOLD TWICE** that "many are called but few are chosen" (**Matthew 20:16, 22:14**).

The calling is the invitation which is offered to everyone within earshot (or eyeshot) of the gospel. It's imperative for us, as a church, to do all we can so as many people are within earshot of God's truth and that as many as possible can be persuaded and have the opportunity to be drawn to God.

I wholeheartedly believe everything that Mark has to say in the concluding remarks of his paper that I quote here:

"The invitation that God is giving to mankind is a wonderful opportunity and available for **all who will soften their heart to respond**. Remember that God "**commands all men everywhere** to repent"!

"If we have a wrong understanding that teaches that only certain people are being called, we can become self satisfied, slack and lazy in God's work. We can lose the passion. And make no mistake about it, the passion we feel inside must come not just from being filled with wonderful knowledge for ourselves – it must be a fire to do a work and make a difference!

"If we have a wrong understanding that it is ok just to broadcast a message and send out a warning then we are really missing the main tenant of the scriptures. The scriptures *command* us to go beyond just preaching the gospel – we have to **make disciples of all nations**. If the results are not there from our preaching, then we need to work harder – not congratulate ourselves for simply sending out the message.

"The role of a Christian is to help **break the blindness** upon people by teaching and spreading the Gospel. We are to convert them to God's way. To do so requires serious

effort and persuasion - especially to an increasingly hard-hearted world turned against God. But it can be done. If Paul could convince some of the hard-hearted Pharisees to turn to God, then anything is possible.”

Now how we, as a church, go about persuading others to understand and act on the truth I'll touch on in the last section of this paper.

The calling is the invitation which is offered to everyone within earshot (or eyeshot) of the gospel. To be chosen by God is a separate act of God that He does as people respond to that calling or invitation (**John 6:44**).

My own personal view on this is that the calling is a general invitation to all people who hear the gospel including our young people in the church where God gives them a partial understanding of His truth. It's also an invitation to become a converted member.

It's then up to those who are called to respond to that calling at their own pace and if they respond enough then God chooses them and gives them a much fuller understanding of His truth.

Even today, many in the Church of God in their literature still get these two processes confused, blending them into one. The terms called and calling are sometimes used for things which are **NOT** true for just the calling or general invitation.

DID ISRAEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT HAVE ACCESS TO THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Herbert Armstrong in his chapter on the Mystery of Israel in his book “Mystery of the Ages” said that Israel in Old Testament times was denied the Holy Spirit [and spiritual salvation as a result] and that they were only offered physical, material blessings.

He said that only a select few (such as some of their prophets, judges and kings) were given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit since the extra help of the Holy Spirit was needed for the jobs that God had in mind for them. What proof is there that Israel was denied access to the Holy Spirit with the exception of their prophets and certain others?

In **Numbers 11** we read: “So the Lord said to Moses: 'Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that *is* upon you and will put *the same* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear *it* yourself alone'...Then Moses said to him [Joshua], 'Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets *and* that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!'” (**Numbers 11:16-17, 29**).

Moses wished that God would give His Holy Spirit to all of the people but it appears that he realized God had decreed that only a select few would be given the Holy Spirit to help them fulfill special jobs that God had in mind for them.

The apostle Peter when he spoke of the Old Testament prophets said that “the Spirit of Christ...was in them.” (**1 Peter 1:10-11**) David also mentioned that he had the Holy Spirit (**Psalms 51:11**).

Aside from this select few, there was also a faithful minority throughout Old Testament Israel's history who kept the letter (and much of the spirit) of God's law (**Romans 11:2-5**). Did these people have the Holy Spirit in them also?

God's spirit gives us spiritual understanding and helps us to keep His law (**1 Corinthians 2:11, 2 Peter 1:4**). Prior to a person receiving God's spirit and it being **IN** them the Holy Spirit can work **WITH** a person and help them to obey God.

Let's notice this distinction in **John 14:17** where we read:

"The Spirit of truth, [which] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it]; but you know [it], for [it] dwells **WITH YOU** [Present tense] and **WILL BE** [Future tense] **IN YOU.**"

The apostles had the Holy Spirit working with them but it wasn't in them until after Christ was resurrected.

After Jesus was resurrected we read in **John 20:22**: "He breathed on *them*, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

During Christ's ministry the apostles had the Holy Spirit working **WITH** them but we are plainly told that it wasn't **IN** them until after Christ was resurrected **EVEN THOUGH THE DISCIPLES WERE FAITHFULLY OBEYING GOD AS BEST AS THEY COULD!**

Before they followed Jesus, Peter, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael all followed John the Baptist when he was preaching and baptizing towards the southern end of the Jordan River which was a long way from where some of them lived in Galilee (**John 1:40-46**). They were presumably baptized by John along with probably quite a number of the 120 disciples who received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost after Christ ascended to heaven.

If the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was generally available to all the faithful minority of Israel in the Old Testament age then this delay of receiving the Holy Spirit makes no sense whatsoever.

While those disciples in Christ's time had to wait for the indwelling of the Spirit there were a few alive during Christ's ministry who were part of that select few that Herbert Armstrong mentioned. John the Baptist, his mother Elizabeth (**Luke 1:41**) and Simeon, who held Jesus when He was circumcised (**Luke 2:25**), all had the Holy Spirit. There were presumably others who died during Jesus' lifetime. They were given the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill an event we read of in **Matthew 27:51-53** where many saints who had died were resurrected and went into Jerusalem as a witness to those who saw all the events associated with Jesus' death.

In **Romans 8:9-11** we read: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His...But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

Even though the Holy Spirit can work externally with people to better obey God as they respond, only the indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes us eligible for the first resurrection and a part of His true church.

If all the faithful minority of Old Testament Israel had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit there would be no need of a new covenant to replace the old covenant. The old covenant did not include the promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and thus spiritual salvation.

We are told in **Hebrews 8:6** that Jesus “is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on **BETTER PROMISES.**” The new covenant is established on **better promises.** If the old covenant included the promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and thus spiritual salvation then in what way could the new covenant be based on better promises?

Christ said in "I **WILL** (future tense) build my church" (**Matthew 16:18**). If the faithful minority of Old Testament Israel had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit then Christ would have already built His church through the faithful minority of Old Testament Israel.

As best as I can tell from the scriptures, the faithful minority of Israel in the Old Testament age who did strive to faithfully obey God as best as they could had access to the Holy Spirit working with them but, except for a select few, they were denied, **just for this age only**, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They will have their chance to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the next age. This is probably the case for many zealous people in mainstream christian churches also.

We see this also with our unbaptized young people in the church today. God calls all men to repent and He is seeking a personal relationship with all people who will seek after Him. Many of our young ones who aren't baptized yet, have repented, strive to wholeheartedly obey God, often do many terrific acts of service and they already do have a close personal relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit is working with them but they do not yet have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In the book of Malachi God speaks of why He created marriage and His views on the problem of marriage and family breakdown in Israel. To Old Testament Israel the prophet Malachi wrote: “But did He not make *them* one, **having a remnant of the Spirit?** And why one? He seeks godly offspring” (**Malachi 2:15**).

Based on what we have just covered the remnant of the Spirit He gave them was access to the Holy Spirit to work with them to help them to better obey Him which He also offers our unbaptized children (**1 Corinthians 7:14**) though not the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which would come at a future time.

God gave them that help of His Holy Spirit working with them because He seeks a godly offspring. He is reproducing Himself through mankind and He wants parents to raise children who will respond to Him and live a godly way of life. Even though the indwelling of Holy Spirit would be denied to them until another age He still wanted them to live a repentant life and have a personal relationship with Him.

The more godly character that they built in that age the easier it will be for them when their chance at spiritual salvation will come later in the future. The same could be said for so many of the wonderful dedicated people in mainstream christianity who may not have fulfilled the conditions in God's eyes to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Any character and depth of relationship with God that they have in this age the better and easier it will be for them in the world to come when they have their chance at salvation.

WHY DID GOD CHOOSE ISRAEL?

If God denied ancient Israel the opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit and spiritual salvation in Old Testament times then why did He choose Israel.

There are three reasons that I can find for why God chose Israel.

[1] To be a model nation that would encourage other nations to want to come under God's rule.

In **Exodus 19:3-8** we read: "And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel...if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. **And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...** So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do.'"

He said that they were the least of nations when He called them out of Egypt and that He was going to remain faithful to His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to make of them a group of influential nations (**Deuteronomy 7:6-8**). God called them not because they deserved it but for a service which would ultimately benefit all mankind.

In **Deuteronomy 4:6-8** God told them: "Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, **Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people. For what great nation *is there* that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God *is* to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation *is there* that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"**

God wanted a free, obedient and happy people free of the many burdens governments put on people. Other peoples would look at them thinking, "How can we be free from the burdens our governments put on us" and from that could spread the idea, "Hey, let's worship Israel's God. Let Israel's God be our king." It was God's intent that the whole world be blessed through the descendants of Jacob.

This right kind of example that would influence those in other nations has only happened at brief times in Israel's history – both ancient and modern - but that is not the end of the story. This purpose will be fulfilled in the future in the millennium and beyond. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the future will help make all the difference.

[2] To write through the painful lessons of experience that only living God's way leads to happiness and breaking God's laws only brings misery.

Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them. That's why God has had the history of Israel recorded for us. Their lessons of experience showed time and time again that only living God's way leads to happiness and breaking God's laws will only bring misery.

The apostle Paul wrote the following in **1 Corinthians 10:1-11** to show how their examples have been recorded for our benefit so we don't repeat their mistakes:

"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink..."

“Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. **Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.**”

On this point Raymond McNair writes: “They were divinely chosen to serve as an example for the rest of humanity of what happens to those who obey or disobey the Creator God. As one Jewish man painfully remarked in the aftermath of World War II, 'Why doesn't He choose someone else for a while?’” (America and Britain in Prophecy, p.4).

[3] To prove that even with the knowledge of God's laws and every other advantage that man still needs the Holy Spirit to live by God's way of life.

Herbert W. Armstrong in Mystery of the Ages wrote:

“Educated men and scientists today [say]... 'Give us sufficient knowledge, and we will solve all problems and eradicate all evils -- we will create utopia!' Up to that time [the Exodus], mankind had been denied spiritual knowledge and fulfilment from God. God now decided to give them knowledge of His law -- His kind of government -- His way of life! He was going to prove to the world that without his Holy Spirit their minds were incapable of receiving and utilizing such knowledge of the TRUE WAY OF LIFE.

“He was going to demonstrate to them that the mind of MAN, with its one spirit, and without the addition of God's Holy Spirit, could not have spiritual discernment -- could not solve human problems, could not cure the evils that were besetting humanity. The nation Israel would be his guinea pig to demonstrate that fact...

“Here was a people of almost clear racial strain, and the God believing heredity of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. Two requisites make a human whatever he becomes in life: heredity and environment. Heredity involves what has been inherited by birth in such areas as health, intelligence and character tendencies. Environment includes all external influences and self-determined motivations -- whether good or evil. Heredity -- if of good and high quality -- may start one off at an advantage. An inspiring environment, uplifting influences and right self-motivation may further improvement...

“God started his chosen nation off -- even though brought out of slavery -- with all the natural advantages of a [quality] heredity. God pulled them out of slavery and gave them a new and fresh start. One might say they had everything God-given going for them” (Mystery of the Ages, p.140-141).

God knew that they would break the covenant and prophesied so (**Deuteronomy 31:20-21**). That would not be the end of the story though. He prophesied a time when God's kingdom comes to this earth where they would have another chance again at being faithful to Him and this time with the indwelling of His Holy Spirit which would make all the difference (**Hebrews 8:8-12**).

WHAT MAKES ONE A TRUE CHRISTIAN?

At the beginning of this section I want to make something perfectly clear about my attitude on this particular topic. If my views here are incorrect and appear too restrictive on what makes one a true christian I will not be disappointed.

As far as I am concerned, if there are many more people at the first resurrection outside the general guidelines offered here I will be delighted. When it comes to who will qualify for the first resurrection, as far as I am concerned, **THE MORE THE MERRIER!**

Mark wrote: "What we have to ask is – Who is the Father drawing? As we have seen, the Father will draw anyone who responds to the invitation!"

God is drawing thousands and perhaps millions who are responding to the gospel of the kingdom. A large segment of those in Protestant / Evangelical churches do believe in the Second Coming of Christ and that He will bring His kingdom to this earth.

So many of these are responding to what they are diligently reading and studying in their Bibles and do their best to obey God to the best of their knowledge.

God is drawing them into a relationship with Him as they respond to Him but does this automatically mean that they have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? What general principles do we find in the Bible as to how **GOD** judges what makes one a true christian?

The first point we have to look at are what are the conditions that God sets down for us to receive the Holy Spirit?

In **Acts 2:38** we read: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The two conditions are repentance and baptism. The word "baptized" here is untranslated from the Greek and means full IMMERSION.

Only a small segment of mainstream christianity baptize properly by IMMERSION. This appears to rule out a very large segment of mainstream christianity though a significant minority do baptize by immersion.

We have a notable example in the Bible of people receiving the Holy Spirit BEFORE being baptized. That is the story of the conversion of Cornelius, the first New Testament gentile convert, and his household.

After Peter saw the miracle of them receiving the Holy Spirit Peter then said: "'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days" (**Acts 10:47-48**).

Even though they had received the Holy Spirit Peter commanded them to be baptized with water. This exception was not to be taken as the rule. This is the only example of such an event in the New Testament and needs to be seen as the exception that it is and not the rule.

The other condition is repentance. What is the level of understanding and repentance required for God to give His spirit to those who are baptized by immersion and want to live God's ways to the best of their ability?

This is virtually impossible to say. There really is no way we can have a one size fits all approach to the level of understanding and obedience required for someone to be a christian. It's not our job anyway. That's God's job, not ours, to judge which people are His.

In **2 Timothy 2:19** we read: “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘**The Lord knows those who are His,**’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’”

In another paper called “A Way of the Heart” Mark makes these excellent comments:

“The Pharisees were keeping the technical rules - even more than what was required - but their heart was WAY OFF BEAM. It is possible to keep all the rules and be totally wasting your time! And yet this same issue of a way of rules versus a way of the heart is where so many Christian people go astray. They correctly see that Christianity is a way of the heart so they toss out the rules! They say that God's commandments and laws and holy days are done away. They lose perspective. It IS all a matter of the heart! But without God's laws how can we ever test our heart to see if it is on track?

“It all seems to revolve around the matter of the heart. It doesn't matter if you are 5 years old, whether your baptized or not - God is intently interested in what goes on inside your heart more than anything else. David and Samuel were chosen in their youth - before they received the Holy Spirit - because of their hearts.

“It's the heart that is the key. God gave us these laws - not to test us or try us - but so that we can live a happy life. They are a guide to our heart. It's not a burdensome set of rules (**1 John 5:3**). God knows our heart - but He wants us to also know its true status.”

As Mark points out the Pharisees were keeping the technical rules in some respects more than most people such as the Sabbath and Holy Days but they were way off beam because they were doing it all for selfish and self-righteous motives. While they kept the technical rules of the Sabbath they weren't really keeping the Sabbath properly at all because of the way they were burdening others with their rules. They weren't using the Sabbath to build a closer relationship with God because they were still the same carnal, selfish men when the sun set on the Sabbath. Jesus also said they broke the fifth commandment in order to keep their traditions (**Mark 7:11**).

We are all at different levels of understanding and obedience. There is a principle we can draw out from the parable of the talents where in **Matthew 25:29** Jesus says: For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.”

He makes a related statement in **Luke 16:10** where He also says: “He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much.”

God holds us accountable for what we know. Someone with much less knowledge of matters of obedience in God's law may have a closer relationship with God and a better heart than someone who obeys more than him in many matters but is slack and disobedient in some of the many other matters of obedience his fellow brother doesn't know about.

In fact, he may resist and grieve the Spirit so much in refusing to repent on one or two matters of obedience (**Ephesians 4:30**) that he might lose the spirit altogether as Paul was careful not to let happen to him (**1 Corinthians 9:27**). One example could be if a preacher hypocritically rationalizes that it is OK and not a sin when he commits sexual immorality.

God has given Satan 6000 years to deceive mankind for a purpose to write the lesson in pain for all the world for all eternity to know that **SIN HURTS** before He takes control of the rulership of the world and brings it peace and true happiness.

At this time people in this age have the three pulls of self, society and Satan so very few respond to the calling of God. God's church was prophesied to be a small flock (**Luke 12:32**).

God only needs so many to assist Christ ruling in the millennium **BUT He is open to choosing as many who wholeheartedly respond to the Church of God's work of preaching the gospel and teaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).**

Are there minimum laws or beliefs that God requires of someone to be a member of the true body of Christ?

One common answer to this question in the Church of God is the Sabbath and Holy Days.

While the Holy Days are one sign of God's people to say that it is a bare minimum requirement even for those who don't know about the Holy Days is a bit of a stretch. Historically we recognize the Church of God (7th Day) of the time that Herbert Armstrong came into the church as a genuine part of the true Church of God yet, for the most part, they only kept the Sabbath and not the Holy Days.

When it comes to the Sabbath one is on a bit more safer ground. The Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments which are the famous ten BROAD guideposts of right living. Anyone in the world who has a basic understanding of the scriptures knows the Ten Commandments which make it VERY PLAIN that the seventh day is the Sabbath.

Those in mainstream christianity have the Bible and are clearly accountable on this point of obedience along with some of the major false teachings they believe - teachings that are not in the Bible.

There are some major falsehoods taught by mainstream christianity which lay members in mainstream christian churches can figure out are wrong if they are genuinely open to the spirit of truth and they are diligently reading their Bibles.

In **John 16:13** we read: "When [it], the Spirit of truth, has come, [it] will guide you into **all** truth." We have to ask the question of those who go along with those false teachings: "Why doesn't God move them out of those false teachings if they are so dedicated and have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?"

God's spirit can work powerfully with people such as those in mainstream christianity even if they do not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We should be grateful for the contributions that they make when we can discern that God is blessing and working with them in certain ways and be open to using those things that they contribute that can help us within the church.

I'll conclude this section with a story from Herbert Armstrong's Autobiography (Volume 1) that shows that we are accountable for what we know and that God looks on the heart when it comes to how much He works with us:

"It was but natural to look upon the man whose prayer God had so miraculously answered in healing my wife as a 'man of God.' So, even though I felt sure this truth [that the resurrection was on Saturday NOT Sunday] was proved, I wanted to be doubly sure. Also I sincerely wanted to share this wonderful truth with the man whom God had used in sparing my wife's life.

"So I walked down to the old Billy Sunday tabernacle, out past 82nd Street, where this man was caretaker, one evening, very shortly after my wife's healing. This 'man of God' promised he would study my article and give me his opinion. Then a few nights later I returned to his living quarters in a corner of the giant tabernacle. For several minutes other subjects occupied the conversation.

"But did you study into my article about the day of the resurrection?' I asked, since he avoided mentioning it.

"Well, yes, Brother,' he replied, 'I took it to our pastor and we went over it together.'

"Well, did you find any error in what I wrote?' I persisted.

"Well, no, Brother,' he admitted, 'we couldn't find anything wrong with it. It does seem to be according to the Scriptures, but Brother, we feel that studying into that kind of subject is likely to be dangerous. It might get you all mixed up. We feel it would be better for you to just forget all about that -- just get your mind clear off of that. There are more important things for you to think about and study into. It's best to just keep your mind on Christ.'

"But,' I rejoined, suddenly disillusioned, 'if the resurrection was on the Sabbath, and not on Sunday, the only reason anyone has for Sunday observance is gone. Don't you think we might be breaking the commands of God and sinning, if we ignore such a truth?"

"Well, now, Brother,' he tried to reassure me, 'that's just the trouble. You see how it could get you all upset. All the churches observe Sunday. We can't start to fight all the churches. Now we are saved by GRACE, not of works. We think there are more important things in salvation than which day Christ rose on, or which day we keep. This could just get you all mixed up. It could be dangerous. Better just get your mind off of such things.'

"I walked back to our home on Klickitat Street in Portland, grieved and sorrowfully disillusioned. I had had a lot of confidence in this man. Now here he was, admitting I had brought him a new TRUTH, proved by the Bible, yet rejecting this LIGHT -- and, more, advising a newly converted man who had confidence in him to reject THE WORD OF GOD!

"Arriving home, I happened to turn to **Hosea 4:6**, where God says that because we have rejected His knowledge, He will reject us.

"A week or two later I walked back out past 82nd Street to the huge old Billy Sunday tabernacle. This thing had weighed heavily on my mind. This tall, uneducated, plain and simple man had been an instrument in God's hands not only in saving my wife's life, but also in opening our eyes to the truth of God's healing power. I felt deeply grateful. I hoped that even yet I might help rescue this man from the consequences of rejecting God's revealed knowledge. I found him in the big auditorium. He appeared dejected, downcast, worried.

"Brother,' he said, on looking up and seeing me, 'Brother, something terrible has come over me. God has left me. He doesn't answer my prayers any more. I don't understand what has happened.'

"Poor man! I understood what had happened. He had been a trusting and deeply sincere, if simple, man. God had used this man. God used him to bring my wife and me the knowledge that God actually performs miracles for those who trust Him -- He heals -- if we obey and believe. And how many other people God had helped through this man's prayers I did not know.

“Evidently, until God used me to test him by bringing to him a new truth, he had not deliberately rejected truth nor disobeyed God's commands knowingly. God looks on the heart, and until this man followed his preacher in deliberately rejecting light and truth from God which he acknowledged to be truth and which led to willful disobedience, his heart was honest and sincere in his simple way. But he had rejected God's knowledge. And now God had rejected him! His prayers were no longer answered.

“He was now guilty of disobedience of God's Law. And God reveals through John that ‘whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and DO those things that are pleasing in HIS sight’ (**1 John 3:22**). This man no longer complied with the divine conditions. Yet, if ever I met a man who had the ‘gift of healing’ spoken of in **1 Corinthians 12:9**, this man had had it.

“God had used him to bring to us a truth. We accepted it, and began to walk in it. Then God used me to take to him a truth. He acknowledged that it was the truth. He had seen it proved. Yet he rejected it, and walked in disobedience instead of in the light! God used this man no more. Of course he had MUCH to learn, had he continued as an instrument in God's hands. True Christians must continually overcome, and GROW in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ” (p. 340-343).

IS THE PROCESS OF BEING CHOSEN BY GOD SELECTIVE?

The invitation or calling of God is not selective but is the process of being chosen selective?

In **Acts 2:38-39** we read: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the **promise** is to you and to your children, and to **ALL** who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

The promise of receiving the Holy Spirit upon fulfilling the conditions above is to **ALL** who God calls. We would have to conclude that the choosing stage is not selective in the sense that He is open to choosing as many who wholeheartedly respond to the Church of God's work of preaching the gospel and teaching the whole counsel of God.

God does not blind or hinder anyone who might respond to the truth in this age. Having said that, does this automatically mean that God is not selective in giving **extra** help and choosing those He might want above others who might be more responsive?

One possible example of this is Samson. He was a hard-headed man who was foolish and disobedient in a number of ways including marrying outside of Israel. He was much less responsive to God than probably many other people who God could have used.

Regarding Samson, the Good News Bible Reading Program has this to say about him: “God can use the most unlikely of instruments to accomplish His purposes, even the very weaknesses and sins of men. If this is so with the weaknesses of God's servants, how much more when His servants purge themselves of sin and weakness and become truly holy and spiritually strong!”

In **1 Corinthians 1:26** we read: “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise.”

This verse says that God ends up with the foolish and not the wise of the world. Is this just the result of circumstances since the rich and wise of the world are less interested in the things of God or is there selectiveness on God's part? That a reason for the choosing is

given implies intent and some selectiveness but it's impossible to be sure from this verse alone.

Both Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 1:5**) and John the Baptist (**Luke 1:15**) were chosen by God in the womb **BEFORE** they even had the opportunity to choose God's way or not. God can know the personality of someone from the womb and know whether one will be a mild, responsive type or a wild one (eg. Jacob and Esau). These two examples are quite intriguing.

A modern day example of someone apparently being chosen by God before he had the opportunity to make the choice to accept it or not is the example of Herbert Armstrong who relates this story to us in his book "Mystery of the Ages":

"In a matter of days after our marriage, while living in Chicago, my wife had a dream so vivid and impressive it overwhelmed and shook her tremendously. It was so realistic it seemed more like a vision. For two or three days afterward everything else seemed unreal -- as if in a daze -- and only this extraordinary dream seemed real.

"In her dream she and I were crossing the wide intersection, only a block or two from our apartment, where Broadway diagonally crosses Sheridan Road. Suddenly there appeared an awesome sight in the sky above. It was a dazzling spectacle -- the sky filled with a gigantic solid mass of brilliant stars, shaped like a huge banner. The stars began to quiver and separate, finally vanishing. In her dream, she called my attention to the vanishing stars, when another huge grouping of flashing stars appeared, then quivering, separating and vanishing like the first.

"As she and I, in her dream, looked upward at the vanishing stars, three large white birds suddenly appeared in the sky between us and the vanishing stars. These great white birds flew directly toward us. As they descended nearer, she perceived that they were angels.

"Then,' my wife wrote a day or two after the dream, in a letter to my mother that I have just run across among old family pictures, 'it dawned on me that Christ was coming, and I was so happy I was just crying for joy. Then suddenly I thought of Herbert and was rather worried.'

"She knew I had evidenced very little religious interest, although we had attended a corner church two or three times. Then it seemed in her dream that Christ descended from among them and stood directly in front of us. At first I was a little doubtful and afraid of how he would receive us, because I remembered we had neglected our Bible study and had our minds too much on things apart from his interests. But as we went up to him, he put his arms around both of us, and we were so happy! I thought people all over the world had seen him come. As far as we could see, people were just swarming into the streets at this broad intersection. Some were glad and some were afraid.

"Then it seemed he had changed into an angel. I was terribly disappointed at first, until he told me Christ was really coming in a very short time.'

"At that time, we had been going quite regularly to motion picture theaters. She asked the angel if this were wrong. He replied Christ had important work for us to do, preparing for his coming -- there would be no time for 'movies.' (Those were the days of the "silent" pictures.) Then the angel and the whole spectacle seemed to vanish, and she awakened, shaken and wondering!

"In the morning, she told me of her dream. I was embarrassed. I didn't want to think about it, yet I was afraid to totally dismiss it. I thought of a logical way to evade it myself, and still solve it.

"Why don't you tell it to the minister of the church up on the corner,' I suggested, 'and ask him whether it means anything.'

"With that, I managed to put it out of my mind. Let me say here that in about 99,999 times out of 100,000, when people think GOD is speaking to them in a dream or vision in this day and age, it is pure imagination, or some form of self-hypnotism or self-deception. But if this was a vision from God, like Jonah, I tried to run away. But subsequent to this, in God's due time, God dealt with me in no uncertain terms, even as he had dealt with Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, Andrew, Peter and the apostle Paul" (p.12-14).

We read in **1 Corinthians 2:11**: "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God."

We read in **Psalms 110:10**: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*."

It takes God's spirit working with someone's mind to help people to even understand and properly comprehend God's truth. The difference between someone who God has, at least, partially opened their minds to understanding the truth and those who don't have God's spirit helping them to understand the truth is like chalk and cheese.

Some intelligent people who may even want to understand it "just don't get it" as if it's a foreign language compared to someone less intelligent who genuinely wants to understand and is responsive to that truth.

Some intelligent people may even want to understand the truth but if they are not in a responsive attitude God's spirit may not work with them to help them understand that truth of His. One can also add to that other barriers such as being entrenched in false teachings, prior cultural understanding and so on.

To those who God sees have special talents and characteristics that He wants for a specific purpose, He can work on those people's minds more powerfully to bring them into the church as opposed to those who are less responsive than others who seem to be seeking God more.

I have heard a number of examples when hearing how some were converted that seem to indicate that this is so. If there is sufficient proof for this (I quoted Samson as a possible example before) I believe these are more the exception than the rule. Most come in proportional to their own responsiveness as God works with them and draws them to Himself.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FAITHFUL?

In **Revelation 17:14** we read the following: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

We have already looked at what it means to be called and chosen. The part of the process is to be faithful.

In **Matthew 24:13** we read that "he who endures to the end **shall be saved** [Future tense]." We have to endure to the end – that is the end of our life to be saved.

If we continue to regularly strive to overcome sin and confess our sins when we stumble we will continue to have the Holy Spirit. We can lose the Holy Spirit by deliberately turning from God's way of life or from neglecting to live God's way.

“It is only the one who QUILTS and GIVES UP (**Hebrews 10:38**) -- who REJECTS God, and God's WAY, and rejects Christ as his Saviour -- who neglects or turns FROM this direction of GOD'S WAY, in his mind and heart (in his inner INTENT) who deliberately and intentionally in his mind -- or, from continued neglect -- TURNS FROM Christ -- who is lost“ (Just What Do You Mean...Conversion?, p.15)

In **1 Corinthians 9:27** Paul wrote: “But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

Paul knew that he could lose the spirit of God if he gave up and turned his back on the calling by choice or by neglect.

In **Hebrews 2:1-3** we are told: “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.”

On this subject of being faithful to the end I strongly recommend the reader to read Mark's paper [“Lessons from Asa”](#) that shows how and why he and many of the other good kings of Judah stumbled late in life. It was a consistent pattern with many of them.

It was a problem that could have been avoided if they had followed the formula that God outlined in **Deuteronomy 17:18-20**. This formula can also make a difference to those of us who will be kings and priests in the World Tomorrow. It can be the difference in whether we will also stumble later on in our christian life or endure to the end.

SHOULD YOU TRY TO CONVERT OTHERS?

For this final section I'd like to first quote from the Autobiography of Herbert Armstrong (Volume 1) and his chapter “Trying to Convert Relatives” (chapter 19). After that I'd like to compare his comments with those of Mark's in his conclusion.

“God made every human a free moral agent. Thank God! -- no one has power to force on you any unwanted religion. Every individual makes his own decision. A religious difference between husband and wife is a serious handicap. The Bible forbids a converted person from marrying an unconverted.

“But if such difference already exists, do not make matters worse by talking religion to your mate. Do all your talking to God in prayer. Let your mate see your happy, pleasant, cheerful, joyful, loving WAY of life -- not hear your arguments or nagging! Allow your mate complete religious latitude and freedom -- whether to be converted, religious, irreligious, or atheistic!...

“Do you know how the Apostle Paul won individuals to Christ? Not the way people attempt to do it today. He said ‘I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.’ When he talked to an unconverted Jew, do you suppose he spoke as a Christian thinking he is ‘witnessing for Christ’ would do today? Do you suppose Paul said to the unconverted Jew: ‘Have you received Christ as your personal Saviour?’

“No, that is not the way Paul spoke to unconverted Jews. Paul said: ‘Unto the Jews I became as a Jew’ (1 Corinthians 9:22, 20). Paul spoke to others from their point of view! He

talked to a Jew just like another Jew -- from the Jewish viewpoint -- showing sympathy and understanding of the Jews' way of looking at Christianity. Paul did not arouse hostility -- he put it down, so that they were sympathetic toward him, not hostile. He became as a Jew, 'that I might gain the Jews.' Even so he gained only a small minority, yet it was a large number...

"One of the first principles of successful advertising I learned early in my career is that to get results you must first learn the attitude of your reading audience toward whatever product or service you are advertising. You must not antagonize those whom you expect to persuade. You must approach them from their point of view -- not from yours, especially if your viewpoint is contrary to theirs. To win them to your point of view, you must approach them from their viewpoint. Otherwise you only arouse hostility..."

"If you believe God's truth, and your husband or wife does not, NEVER TALK RELIGION to him or her. If your mate normally thinks and speaks only of material and worldly things, then you must speak of material things to your spouse.

"If the World Tomorrow broadcast has, probably because of your own aggressiveness in trying to get your mate to listen, become a sore spot, go off to some private room to hear the program. Keep the volume turned down. Make every effort NOT to antagonize your husband or wife. And again, when you talk about it, talk to God in prayer. Let your mate see your good conduct, in a manner that he or she will naturally approve. Avoid every hostility. Be pleasant. Keep cheerful. Be happy. Radiate JOY! Give LOVE and warm affection! Do everything to cause your husband or wife to like you! THAT IS THE CHRISTIAN WAY!" (p.346-349).

In his conclusion Mark wrote: "The role of a Christian is to help **break the blindness** upon people by teaching and spreading the Gospel. We are to convert them to God's way. To do so requires serious **effort and persuasion** - especially to an increasingly hard-hearted world turned against God. But it can be done. If Paul could convince some of the hard-hearted Pharisees to turn to God, then anything is possible."

Is there a contradiction in these quotes? No. Though there can be times on the odd occasion when a more provocative approach may be appropriate, the way that we present the truth to most people should be a **SOFT** sell.

That is, we do our best to understand what interests the person we hope might be persuaded and relate the truth of God as it applies to their background and interests. If they are not interested don't force it or push it on them.

Another point we need to think about is that often we can be so low key and hide what we believe to the point where we might even miss out on an opportunity to explain what we believe to others.

We should not act in such a way that we are ashamed of what we believe or ashamed of the church. Jesus said in **Mark 8:38**: "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels".

We should be open in a natural way and tone down in a more low key way only if we sense others around us feel uncomfortable by it.

Jesus Christ sums up the right approach the following way in the Sermon on the Mount with these words: "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all

who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works [not hear your arguments if they aren't interested] and glorify your Father in heaven” **(Matthew 5:14-16)**.

In conclusion, we should do our best to understand what interests other people in the world and relate the truth of God as best as it applies to their background and interests. If they are not interested don't force it or push it on them.

With God's support, the more we work with Him in this great commision, the more He can and will open up more people's minds to His truth and we can make many more disciples in all the world!