

THE CALL OF SWEDENBORG

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The Lord created heaven and earth because He wanted people whom He could love and who would love Him and one another. So when people became evil and no longer loved one another, and no longer loved Him, the Lord Himself came down on earth as a Baby, so that He might work as a Man among people and teach them to love one another and to love Him. And to this day His love for people has never changed, never grown less, and He has never stopped doing everything possible to make everyone an angel who can be happy forever.

Now when He was on earth the Lord called certain men to follow Him. Seeing two fishermen, "Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother," He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." He said the same to James and John who also were fishermen. And although these four men then knew very little about the Man who called them, and did not know that He was the Lord God of heaven and earth, they at once left their nets and ships and followed Him, not only that day, but for the rest of their lives. And you know that as angels in heaven they are still following the Lord.

What magic was there in the Lord's voice that made people follow Him? All He said to Peter and Andrew was "Follow Me. and I will make you fishers of men." Do you hear or see any magic in these words? And you know there were many people who did not follow the Lord when He called them, as, for example, the rich young man. Perhaps you also know that the Lord was born on earth because almost everyone had stopped following Him and had turned a deaf ear to His calling them. He has always, since the days of Adam and Eve in the beautiful Garden of Eden, knocked on the door of every person's house, and called aloud to every person: but many, many people have refused to hear His voice and to open the door to Him.

The truth is that only some people want to hear the Lord's voice. The disciples wanted to hear it, and they obeyed it at once. They left all they had, even their families, and followed the Lord.

Now perhaps you think it would be much easier to hear the voice of a person you can see and easier to follow him, than to hear and follow the voice of someone unseen; but this was not true for the hundreds of people who saw and heard the Lord when He was on earth. For only a very few of those who even listened to Him afterwards left everything and followed Him.

The Lord calls to every man, woman, and child to come to His heaven. But He also calls to everyone to perform a use, that is, to do some special work. And so that we may know this and really understand it, He tells us in His Word of certain people whom He called to do very special work. Examples are Joseph, who was called by the Lord to feed many people during a seven years' famine; Moses, who was called by the Lord to lead a nation of slaves out of Egypt to a land of milk and honey promised to them by the Lord; and Samuel, who was called by the Lord to bring a nation that was fast forgetting its Heavenly Father back to the worship and love of Him.

How do we know the Lord called these people? They have said so, or rather the Lord has told us so in His Word. These men knew the Lord had called them and prepared them from their infancy

for their special work. Joseph knew it, when he said to his brothers, who had sold him into slavery in the land of Egypt, “Do not be afraid, for *am I* in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.” Moses also knew it, when he wrote that the Lord had said to him, “Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” And Samuel knew it and wrote that the Lord called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he had answered the Lord, “Speak, for Your servant hears.”

Now the Lord has told us of another man whom He called to do very special work. This man also was prepared from his infancy by the Lord, but he did not know until he was an old man that the Lord had chosen and prepared him for it. When he was a baby, he had not heard the Lord calling him. Nor did he hear the Lord calling him when he was a boy, or when he was a young man. But when he was an old man, eighty-one years old, he wrote that he had been “called to a holy office by the Lord Himself,” and also that when he was only four years old, he had begun to think about God, salvation, and spiritual affections. And several times he had revealed things at which his father and mother wondered, saying that angels must be speaking through him.

This man was Emanuel Swedenborg. Did you know that he heard the Lord’s voice speaking to him just as clearly as the boy Samuel did, when the Lord called to him, “Samuel! Samuel!”? And did you know that he saw the Lord Himself, in person, even more clearly than Moses saw the Lord at the burning bush?

In a letter written when he was eighty-three years old, Swedenborg said that the Lord showed Himself in person to him in 1743, but he does not tell how the Lord appeared to him then. A year later, in 1744, the Lord appeared again to Swedenborg. This time He asked him if he had a certificate of health, and Swedenborg answered, “Lord, You know that better than I.” Then the Lord told him to “try the spirits.” And then, in the middle of April, 1745, the Lord appeared to Swedenborg a third time. This time He told Swedenborg that the One who was appearing to him was the Lord God, the Creator and Redeemer of the world, and that He had chosen Swedenborg to tell people about the spiritual meaning of the Word, and that He Himself would tell Swedenborg what to write. Swedenborg at once obeyed the Lord’s call. He stopped the work he was doing, not even finishing a book he was writing, and immediately began the work the Lord had told him to do. Many years later Swedenborg wrote that an angel told him the Lord had chosen him because, from youth, he had been a spiritual fisherman.

Now there are many interesting and unusual things about the third time the Lord appeared to Swedenborg and commissioned him to serve as a revelator. Swedenborg was in London. He was eating his dinner in a private room at an inn. He was hungry, and he was alone in the room. When he had just about finished eating, he noticed that the room was growing dark, and soon the floor was covered with frogs, snakes, and other little insects and animals. Then the room got very dark. But suddenly it was light again, and he saw a man, sitting in a corner, who said to him, “Eat not so much.” After this the room got very dark again. That night the same man appeared again. He then said He was the Lord and told Swedenborg about the special use of revealing the spiritual meaning of the Word which he was to do.

Such was the call of Swedenborg. The Lord called him to do a most important work, and Swedenborg obeyed at once, because he loved the Lord with his whole heart. He had loved the

Lord all his life and had shown that love by his desire to learn the truth and by working very hard. But after the Lord called him, he worked even harder than before. Swedenborg not only wrote many books for the Lord, books which are called The Writings or the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church, he also taught thousands of angels new things about the Lord and His kingdom—things the Lord Himself taught Swedenborg. And when Swedenborg published *True Christian Religion*, the last book of the Writings, the Lord told him to sign his name as *Emanuel Swedenborg, Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ*. And truly Swedenborg was a faithful servant and a spiritual fisherman.

Readings: Matthew 4:18-25; *Interaction of the Soul and Body* 20