

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The First Spiritual Gift -- Artisanship

by Dan Trygg

“You are to instruct all the skilled craftsmen, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, to make Aaron's garments for consecrating him to serve Me as priest.” Exodus 28:3

“Now Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² ‘See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³ I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and ability in every craft, ⁴ to design artistic works in gold, in silver, and in bronze, ⁵ and to cut stones for mounting, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in every craft. ⁶ I have also selected Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to be with him. I have placed wisdom within every skilled craftsman in order to make all that I have commanded you.” Exodus 31:1-6

“He has also given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. ³⁵ He has filled them with skill to do all the work of a gem cutter; a designer; an embroiderer in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen; and a weaver. They can do every kind of craft and design artistic designs.” Exodus 35:34-35

“So Moses summoned Bezalel, Oholiab, and every skilled person in whose heart Yahweh had placed wisdom, everyone whose heart moved him, to come to the work and do it.” Exodus 36:2

It is interesting that Exodus 28:3 is only the fourth time in the Bible that the Spirit of God is mentioned (Gen. 1:2; 6:3; 41:38), and yet here, already, God is establishing the idea of a Spirit-enabled ability. Actually, this had been hinted at before, in the account of Jacob's son, Joseph, and his ability to interpret dreams. Joseph said that the ability was not in him, but it was God who gives interpretation (Gen. 41:16). It does not refer to Joseph's ability as a “spiritual gift”, but the Pharaoh realized that Joseph's wisdom and insight came because he had the Spirit of God (Gen. 41:38). **It was quite evident to others that *the Spirit of God gave unusual abilities to those indwelt by Him.***

Here in Exodus 28:3 and 31:3, it is quite clearly stated that the skill of these artisans and craftspeople was the direct result of the infilling, influence and enabling of the Spirit of God. This Spirit-enabled ability is most plainly evident in Bezalel and Oholiab. **Notice *the wide range of skills they were capable of doing, and doing excellently.*** This went beyond the mere technical ability of being able to produce or replicate something with their hands, as amazing as that skill would be on its own. **It entailed *wisdom, knowledge and ability in every one of these craft skills, and the use and mastery of a wide variety of mediums.*** They not only were adept at wisely designing artistic works using all of these mediums: gold, silver, bronze, cutting and mounting gem stones, making yarn of various colors and contents, weaving cloth and fine linen, embroidery work, leather work, wood cutting, shaping, and carving, ...they were also skilled and proficient at teaching and overseeing others in making such things of fine craftsmanship. This was important, because the project was quite large and detailed, and would require a great deal of manhours to complete. There would be scores, if not hundreds, of people that would necessarily have to be involved in this project to get it finished in a reasonable amount of time. These men had to have the skills to communicate clearly and precisely how things were to be made, and the ability to oversee the work.

Following are some observations from this passage:

(1.) The Spirit of God can give people unusual and innate abilities to perceive and understand *how* things can work and be made, ...and also the tactile abilities to carry out the vision into a physical reality. These are two different sets of skills, and they don't always coincide. There are people who can understand *how* things can work, but cannot carry them out, ...and there are people who are really good with their hands who don't really have an understanding that goes beyond the most basic tasks.

(2.) The Spirit of God can give people an amazing and unusual ability to envision, creatively design and express beauty in tangible things. Such beauty is awe-inspiring and provokes a response in those who encounter it. This goes far beyond regular craftsmanship, that merely copies and reproduces the designs, conventions and expressions of others.

(3.) These innate abilities must be developed, heightened and sharpened through much practice. Bezalel and Oholiab had more than just innate abilities. They had developed their understanding, skill and vision through many years of practice and experimentation. They had a lifetime of projects, experience and work with all types of materials. Anybody who knew them would not have been surprised that Yahweh identified them to be leaders in this project. There is no substitute for experience. Test-out-by-trial-to-discover what works best, and how things work.

(4.) The spiritual gift of artisanship or craftsmanship is evident by the unusual quality and quantity of such works of skill and beauty. Like all the spiritual gifts, this gift becomes evident to others as they see it being used and the amazing results it produces.