



Pastor's Page

Returning the Call

As I dialled the phone number I knew that this was going to be a long ordeal. The voice on the other end was not that of a human being but one of those dreaded automated answer machines. I was thanked for calling this particular Insurance Company then asked to listen to the following options. I was then told to press the number that corresponded with my choice followed by the hash key. (I could hardly wait!) I listened dutifully and then pressed a key that I hoped was the hash key (well the star key looks pretty similar to me when I've not got my glasses on!) to hear the voice say "thank you for choosing *widow's pension!*" (ok my finger slipped!) I went through this procedure about 11 times before I was told that this call might be recorded for training purposes! I was more concerned by the fact that "this call was probably costing me a fortune!" I was then informed that I would now be asked some questions for security reasons. Well the first too were pretty easy; date of birth, first line of address, that kind of thing but then they laid the 'big one' on me! In a voice sounding more and more like my Junior school Maths teacher, Ms Automated telephone machine said; "Now, if the letter A is represented by the number 3 and B by the number 4 what is the numerical value of both the 2nd and 5th letters of your Mother's maiden name!!!" ("What!!!!?don't they know I failed my 11-plus exam?!?") I couldn't believe it. Then following about 5 seconds of stunned silence, Ms Automated Telephone Machine calmly said "You have not responded" Well I quickly made amends and hung up!

Following that traumatic telephone call, as is my wont, I analysed the experience and especially the phrase "You have not responded" I wondered about the possibility of God saying the same thing to me. One of the truths regarding the gospel message is that it demands a response. In the book of Acts in the New Testament the apostle Simon Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost and preaches the first evangelistic sermon. The focus of this sermon is Jesus himself whom he tells them is the Messiah, the one that they were looking forward to coming. Regarding him he then tells them that they (the people) killed him, but God raised him from the dead and they (the apostles) are witnesses to this fact. As Peter rams his point home by saying "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Christ" the writer (Luke) tell us that the people were "cut to the heart" and that they said to Peter and the other apostles "Brothers what shall we do?" They knew that they had to respond. Peter said "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38) Three thousand people responded to the message that day and became Christians.

So what about us? It's possible to come to church each week, but never respond to the Gospel! It's possible to hear about God's love and all that Jesus has done for us without ever receiving his offer of forgiveness and new life. It's possible to believe in God without putting our trust in God. It's possible to talk about being a Christian without ever having made the decision to become one. God is holding his hands of love out today to welcome home lost people like us; let's make sure that he won't say of you or me "You have not responded"

15th March 2009