

Lamentations 3:22-26

October 16, 2022

Ephesians 1:3-10; 3:14-19

Psalm 36:5-10; Psalm 136

## **CALLED TO BE LOVED**

**(# 2 of "It's Your Call")**

**"It's your call!" God is calling you, God has a purpose for your life, and God has a purpose for us together. Will you answer the call or not? Our calling is a gift from God! We don't earn it, we don't deserve it, we don't work for it, we don't bargain for it ... and pray we do not refuse it! Your calling is not your career and is far more significant than a job. **You may have a job, but your real vocation is your calling in life** – that's your purpose for living. And if you're retired from the job, you still have a calling from God.**

**It all begins with the One who created you. Your Creator is in the best position to show you your purpose, your calling in life. Last week I said, "If you want to know God's plan, you must get to know the Planner." This means getting to know who God really is, His very nature. The Bible tells us that God is love. God doesn't just have love, God doesn't just show love, God is love. Love is the character and essence of God. There would be no love in the universe if it weren't for the fact that God, Creator of all, is love. You see, God's love is not based on who you are or what you do. It's based on who He is. And the reason we're able to give and to receive love is because God made us in His image.**

***In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will... Ephesians 1:4-5.* God chose you and loved you because God wanted a family and he wanted you to be in it. It gives God joy to love those whom He has created. This is the starting point for knowing one's calling in life.**

**I. The first purpose of your life is to be loved by God. Just let that sink in. The first purpose of your life is not to serve God; not to trust God; not to obey God. The first purpose of your life is not even to love God. No! The first purpose of your life is to let God love you.**

**This is crucial to understand. Your first duty in life is not to do something; not to learn, listen, pray, give, sacrifice, or to serve. Those are all good things; but they're not the first thing God created you to do. He created you to receive His love. That comes first. This is taught all through Scripture. The book of Jude, begins like this: ***Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James. To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ, Jude 1:1.*** I'm called to live in the love of God. It's a relationship. Secondly...**

**II. You are called to enjoy a relationship with God! The number-one calling in your life is not to a role, it's not to a responsibility, it's not to a bunch of rules, regulations, or rituals, it's not to religion. It's to a relationship. This because God wants you experience His love.**

**People always try to make Christianity a religion, but really it's not. They try to make it about rules, regulations, and rituals all in an attempt to please God. But it's not about that. God sent Christ so you could have a relationship, not a religion; a relationship with the living God. What kind of relationship does God want you to have with Him?**

**III. The relationship that God created you for is to be His son or daughter! *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* 1 John 3:1. When you grasp this amazing truth it will astound you. The King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Creator of the universe, doesn't want you to be his slave, servant, soldier, but His son and His daughter, His child. God wants a family to love and He wants you in it. If you're bored by the statement, "God loves you," then maybe you don't get it. Maybe you haven't experienced the fullness of God's love. If you have, you'd be excited by that. *...I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge...* Ephesians 3:17-19.**

Your number-one calling in life is not to impress God with what you do. Your number-one calling in life is to receive something: to let God love you. He loves you on your good days and on your bad days, when you feel it and when you don't feel it. When you think you deserve it and when you don't think you deserve it. **You cannot make God stop loving you.**

How would your life be different, how would it be transformed if you began to be aware of God's unconditional, continuous, and never-ending love for you? What if that truth penetrated your thoughts each morning? When you accept God's first purpose of your life, that is: when you let Him love you with His deep, unconditional, and eternal love, amazing things happen.

1. **You can feel accepted rather than ashamed.** Too many people go through their entire life avoiding God because they're ashamed. They feel guilty, under condemnation, judged. They think, God is perfect and they're not. So why in the world would anyone want to hang out with a perfect God who's simply going to remind us of all the ways that we've failed? Because that's not who God is. Jesus said, ***For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him,*** John 3:17

When God loves you unconditionally you don't need other people's approval to be happy. The Bible also says, ***There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,*** Romans 8:1. When people criticize me I may learn something valuable from them ... or not. But when they personally attack me and impugn my character, I can laugh it off. Whether you like me or not is irrelevant to my happiness, because I'm not looking for your love. I'm already receiving love I don't deserve from God!

2. **You are bold to bring your needs to God.** We can be bold in our prayers because we're sons and daughters of God. If my children had come to me when they needed money and said "O thou most gracious progenitor of the Thompson family. Thou wonderful observer and keeper of all the family funds." I'd go, "Say what?" Fortunately they usually say, "Hey Dad, I need some money." Straightforward and bold.

The same applies to our requests to God. Our heavenly Father doesn't say I'll pencil you in for next Thursday and we can discuss it. He listens now. It's like when family members call, you pick up the phone immediately. Romans 8:14-15 says, ***All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God! So, you should not be cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family—calling him 'Father, dear Father.'*** The Greek says, "Abba, Father." It's like saying "Dad." The

Bible says that when you come to God in prayer, you can approach Him as your loving dad. ***Now if we are children, we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ... Romans 8:17.*** (*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need, Hebrews 4:16.*)

3. **You can have peace in difficulties you don't understand.** You're going to have a lot of tough things that happen in your life that you don't understand or deserve. You're going to ask "God, why is this happening to me?" You're going to see things happen in the world and ask why? The truth be told, **not everything that happens in the world is God's will.** God hates evil and there's a lot of evil done in the world. God could easily take away evil ... but it would mean taking away your freedom to do it. He could remove all suffering by turning us all into puppets, with no freedom to choose. But He wants us to voluntarily love Him, so He puts up with the pain and evil that results from bad choices. To be made in God's image is to exercise freedom.

Here's another truth: what you need is not an explanation, and God really doesn't owe you an explanation. You need a presence. The presence of God in your life. That's how people can remain calm in the storm. The Bible calls it "the peace that passes understanding." ***The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, Philippians 4:7.*** So many people pray to God, "Oh Lord, please calm this storm in my life ... or in my family, nation, the world." But most often God calms His child in the midst of the storm.

I may not know why this is happening but I do know this: God is good and He loves me, and wants what's best for my life. God's love does not exempt us from pain or suffering in this life. But because I know that God's got my back, I can trust God in those moments when things aren't going well at all.

4. **You can gain the courage to take risks.** Maybe you've noticed: when somebody believes in you, it gives you the courage to accomplish all kinds of things you never thought you could do. Because they believe in you, you are encouraged. I grew up in a family with a grandfather who was a master carpenter and a dad who was pretty good at it. Me, I putter around with my crude, wooden creations. But as a child I remember projects I started and messed up and my dad would say, "That's okay. We can start over." He said we and that gave me courage to try again, knowing he'd be there to help.

This is what your heavenly Father is saying to you today: "You may have really messed up, you're disappointed in your life, but it's okay. Let's get at it, you and me together." One plus God is a done deal. I don't care if you're fifteen or fifty or ninety-five, it's not too late for you to give it another shot.

Some of you may remember the 2007 movie "Amazing Grace" – if you haven't seen it, it's worth watching. That movie probably did more to popularize the story of William Wilberforce, than all the history books. He was a contemporary of George Washington and John Wesley, just to name two famous personages from history. In childhood he was tutored for a time, by an aunt and uncle, in the teachings of the new Methodist faith that John Wesley was spreading through England. Like many though, Wilberforce drifted from faith when he entered the university. After his schooling he entered politics and at a very young age was elected to Parliament. Within a few years that earnest, enthusiastic Christian faith of Methodism re-emerged in his life and it propelled him into his life-long campaign to reform the manners of the English people (improve the

morality) and his ardent battle against the slave trade in the British Empire. When many were indifferent to the institution of slavery or mocked and derided Wilberforce for his efforts, he kept at it, believing that God was guiding him and giving him strength. In the heat of the battle John Wesley wrote a letter to Wilberforce (it is purported to be the last letter Wesley wrote): “Dear Sir, Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as Athanasius contra mundum [against the world], I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy... Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God?”<sup>2</sup> Wilberforce’s tireless efforts at last brought about the demise of the slave trade and finally the complete abolition of slavery in British realms. (Sadly, this scourge of humanity is still with us today, right here in the USA. They call it “human trafficking” but it’s really slavery – smuggled in, kept in bondage to their debt, or sold as sex slaves. Most of these poor souls are being brought over our southern border, and as in Wilberforce’s days, many people turn a blind eye.)

Friends listen to this: ***There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, 1 John 4:18.*** When love comes in the front door of your life, fear goes out the back. When fear departs you really get moving. Nobody knows better than God your true purpose in life; God who is perfect love. Don’t be afraid, accept His love, call on Him in prayer, and the fear will drain out of your life.

Quickly now, let’s review: The first purpose of your life is to be loved by God; you are created to have a relationship with God, as His own son or daughter; when you let God love you as only He can, **You can feel accepted rather than ashamed. You are bold to bring your needs to God. You can have peace in difficulties you don’t understand. You can gain the courage to take risks.**

Now here’s the last thing I want to say: when you become aware of how deeply God loves you...

5. **You’ll be able to worship instead of worry.** This is a good one for me to remember. I come from a long and practiced line of worriers. Worry is acting like you’re an orphan, forgetting that you are His child and how much God loves you. Worship, on the other hand, is the antidote to worry. Worship is simply receiving God’s love and expressing yours in return. You can do it inside or outside of church. Worship is a response to God because He first loved us.

The choice is simple: either you’re going to worry or you’re going to worship. **“If you’re going to worry why pray? If you’re going to pray why worry?”** You either focus on your problems or you look to God. Here’s what Jesus said: *Don’t worry about having enough food or drink or clothing. He’ll give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern. So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today,* Matt. 6:31-34.

That’s the heart of God’s promise right there, and why we’re doing this series. God cares about you, His love for you is unshakable. You don’t want to miss any of the next four weeks as I speak about God’s calling on our lives. All is founded on this one thing: **We are first called to let God love us.** Anything that we may do, that is purposeful and

**useful, flows not from duty, not from guilt, not from pressure, but from God first loving you and me.**

***Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning... Lamentations 3:22-23.***

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<sup>1</sup> Example of humility: Jude, half-brother of Jesus calls himself a servant. He did not presume pre-eminence because of his relationship to Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Metaxas, *7 Men And The Secret of Their Greatness*, (Thomas Nelson: 2015) 47.