

Romans 8:28.
Ephesians 1:18-19.

October 9, 2022

IT'S YOUR CALL

Do you believe that God still calls people today? Do you believe God has called you? Is God still calling you but you haven't realized it? The truth is, God has been calling people for thousands of years. Our world, our lives, would be in much better shape if more people would heed His call. For the last several weeks we've focused on our true identity found in Christ. The most important questions you can ask yourself are: Who am I? Who do I want to be? With whom do I belong? And why am I here?

Today I will begin a series of messages focusing on our answer to that last question. We'll take a closer look at our purpose in God's plan. Let's always remember that if we want to know God's plan, we must get to know the Planner himself. "We slander God by our very eagerness to work for Him without knowing Him,"¹

Knowing Him begins with answering His call ... It's your call.

Called For A Purpose

One of the great promises of the Bible is in Romans 8:28. We just heard it. *...we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him...* That's great news: God can bring good out of even bad things that happen, for those who love Him. But most people stop with that thought. Let's hear the whole verse: *We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been CALLED according to his PURPOSE.* Calling and purpose go together; and they both come from God. That's what we're going to focus on in the next several weeks.

What do you think of first when I say the word "call, make a call, get a call, be called?" A lot of people think telephone. Maybe you think of calling out for pizza or something like that. Maybe you think here's another interruption, or here's some bad news, or it's another one of those robo-calls to sell you something.

But let's say the phone rings one day, you thought it was an interruption or bad news, but somebody was calling to tell you, that you had just inherited several million dollars. You wouldn't want to miss that call, right? Now what if God called you? Would you send His call to voice mail? What if He texted, or emailed? Would the email go to SPAM and the text be ignored?

The Bible is filled with the stories of God calling people: from Abraham to Jesus' disciples... and God is still calling people, like you and me. The New Testament word used for "call" is the Greek *καλεο*. This common word is used over a hundred times in the New Testament to refer to your purpose in life, your mission in life, the reason you exist; the reason God created you; what you are here for.

When the Greek N. T. got translated into Latin (the language of ancient Rome) the word used for calling was *vocatio*. We get our English word "vocation" from this. [It's related to the words *voce* and *vocare*, which are Latin for voice and to call. We also get the English words *vocal* and *vocalize* from these words.] The Bible is telling us that our vocation and our calling are the same thing.

Here's the problem: today the word "vocation" has been stripped of its connection to God and reduced to mean my job, my career. 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. And if you're retired from the job, you still have a calling from God.

So, let's look at the dimensions of God's call for your life; why you are alive and what you're supposed to be doing with the rest of your life. When you understand God's call, you develop incredible hope and discover fantastic blessings. Today I want to share seven important reasons the Bible gives us for responding to God's call.

1. My Calling Is A Gift From God!

I don't earn it, I don't deserve it, I don't work for it, I don't bargain for it. It's a gift. *God ... has SAVED US and CALLED US to a holy life - not because of anything we've done but because of his own purpose and grace, 2 Timothy 1:9.*

God gives you what you need, not what you deserve. The fact is, God knows all the things I've done, even when I was ignoring His call, or thumbing my nose at Him, God was saying I love you anyway. This leads us to the second point.

2. I Am Called For God's Purpose!

The calling is not mine but God's. God did not make you just for you. Until you understand that, you'll have trouble making sense of life. It is God who best defines your purpose: not you, or your parents, or your boyfriend, or girlfriend, or husband or wife. God made you, for His good purpose. *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do, Ephesians 2:10.*

In the original Greek the word for workmanship is ποιεμα. We get the English word "poem" from this. You are God's poem. You are God's work of art. Some Bible translations say, "You are God's masterpiece." Don't think you're a masterpiece? Then you don't realize how much value God has put on your life. You and I are not junk because God doesn't create junk, Jesus didn't die for junk, and the Holy Spirit doesn't live in junk.

We were not put on this planet just to breathe and take up space and die, or just to be consumers, or laborers for others, or gatherers of wealth, fame, and power. God expects us to make a contribution with our lives. This life contribution is part of our calling.

Here's where it gets interesting. God made us all different and gave us different callings so that everything in the world gets done according to His plan. No one person has it all; no one person, or even an elite group can take the place of God. And another thing: a job or career makes a living. A calling makes a life. Jobs and careers may change but God's call does not.

3. God Called Me Before I Was Born!

Don't underestimate what God wants to do in your life. *I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born!* Isaiah 44:2. This says a couple of things.

First: You are not an accident, but created and called by God. Why is that important? Because if you think you're an accident you'll go through life accidentally, living without purpose. You're not an accident and you have a purpose. "I am your Creator..." God says.

Second: You were known to God before birth. You were in God's care even while you were growing inside your mother's womb. When you feel like your life is out of control with no purpose, remember that you are in God's care and He had his eye on you before you were born. Even if nobody else cares for you, God does. *It pleased God in his kindness to choose me and call me even before I was born! What undeserved mercy!* Galatians 1:15. [Turn to the person next to you and say, "You're God's masterpiece!"]

4. My Sins And My Mistakes Don't Change My Call.

I'm so glad for this one. It doesn't matter whether you messed up your life or somebody messed it up for you. No matter how screwy it got, how difficult it became, God's call on your life is still there.

St. Paul says, *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief,* I Timothy 1:12-13.

I like that phrase "I acted in ignorance and unbelief." That's like saying I did a lot of dumb stuff growing up. How many of you would admit you did a lot of dumb stuff growing up? ... That's apostle training. Congratulations.

Your sins and your mistakes don't change God's calling. The sins of other people against you don't change God's calling. Some of you have been bruised, battered, or beat up by the world or life. Maybe people have been unfair or unfaithful to you, or used you. But that did not change your value and that did not change God's call on your life. You are still God's workmanship, God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. God says I can take all the ugly stuff in your life and bring good out of it if you'll let me.

[In the 1970's Chuck Colson was assistant to the President of the United States of America, and a powerful man. He was intense in his partisanship and disliked by many in D.C. He got involved in a scandal – Watergate. A judge sentenced him to prison time for his part in the Watergate scandal (to the delight of many). Before he went to prison a respected friend introduced him to Christ. He became a believer, even as his world came crashing down around him. But God had a plan. In prison Colson saw the need for people to know the Lord, and he started Prison Fellowship. It's now in 150-160 countries and has blessed millions of people. Out of that grew another ministry called "Angel Tree." He died in 2012. His funeral was held at the Washington National Cathedral, attended by journalists, writers, human rights activists, congressmen and women, officials from the administrations of Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. When God created Chuck Colson, he had a purpose for him. It is too bad Chuck had to go from the White House to the jail-house to discover God's calling. But thank God he did. Have you discovered God's call for your life yet? What are you waiting for?]

5. God Empowers What He Calls Me To Do.

God does not call the qualified. He qualifies the called. Neither does God give us a calling commensurate with our resources. He gives us the resources commensurate with the call, even if I don't yet know all the details of my calling. *With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by*

his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith, 2 Thessalonians 1:11. God gives the power to do the good works He's calling you to.

6. My Calling Connects Me To Others.

My assignment from God, my purpose, the dream that God has for my life, includes other people. Calling and community go together. God Himself is community – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God made us to live in community. *None of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone!* Romans 14:7. We're called into God's family and that makes us a church. *Brothers and sisters, you are holy partners in a heavenly calling,* Hebrews 3:1. That's why church is so important: you need to be connected with God and other believers.

Let's review: My calling is a gift from God; I'm called for God's purpose, not my own; God chose me before I was born; my sins and my mistakes don't change my calling; God will empower me to do what he calls me to do; my calling is connected to others. And here's the last point...

7. Responding To God's Call Brings Rewards.

***I press toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus,* Philippians 3:14. For those who live out God's call the reward begins here with the contentment of knowing who you are and what you're supposed to do, and it continues when God shares with you His kingdom and His glory for eternity.**

God has made you and me to do important things here on earth through opportunities and relationships. There's a sign in my office that says, "God put me on this earth to accomplish a certain number of tasks. Right now I'm so far behind I'll never die."

So then, *...live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory,* 1 Thessalonians 2:12.

Answer the Call!

I spoke earlier about answering the phone if God called. The fact is God has already called... called YOU. Are you going to answer? Ignore it all you want. God just keeps on calling. You must decide: Am I going to answer God's call? Will I learn what I am here for and spend the rest of my life learning to do that? Or will I meander through life grasping for meaning and purpose in all the perishable ideas of the world?

If I knew something more important to speak about, I wouldn't waste your time. I don't know anything more important than what I plan to talk about in the next several weeks: purposeful living.

I hope you won't want to miss any of this. Attend church – in-person or online - for the next six weeks; hear all these messages. Reflect and pray and discuss with others. Read all the Bible references and practice what you learn at home or at work. *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has CALLED you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe,* Eph. 1:18-19.

¹ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*, Oct. 3.