

THE CALLING

By

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Christians who have distinguished themselves as faithful servants of God are those who have lived with a sense of God's calling. "By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out into a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out not knowing wither he went (Heb. 11:8). But such a calling not only applies to the well-known heroes of the faith, but to every Christian.

Paul wrote that 'you were called in one hope of your calling' and exhorts: "walk worthily of the calling wherewith you were called" (Eph. 4:4, 1). He reminded Timothy that God who saved us "Called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace" (II Tim. 1:9).

God, as center of and the power over all the universe, calls man to Himself that he might fulfill the purpose for which God created him. When Adam rebelled against God and sought to escape the Creator's judgment by hiding, it was God who came calling, "Adam, where are you?" In these last days He calls through the Gospel, the good news that Christ has entered the stream of human life to take away the punishment for sin for those who believe by undergoing that punishment himself. The call is initiated by God, not by man. Christianity is not a search for a better way of life nor merely a system of values, not yet a set of works we may perform to earn God's blessing, but a calling, a calling to God, to a new life and to an inheritance.

Over against the holy calling of God stands the challenge of Humanism. The humanist begins with self. He calls himself to his own design and own doings. He makes his own laws, although he cannot escape outside influence, including the lives and teachings of Christians around him. Thus in many ways he may even seem to be "Christian" in that some of his morals are high, he may imitate Christian compassion, and his works are sometimes superior to some Christians. Nevertheless, he operates on his own authority and works toward his own self-appointed goal.

The Christian begins with Christ. He does not call himself, but is a partaker of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). He is called by the gospel, the preaching of the word (Rom. 10:17), by the truth of God playing upon the strings of his conscience. His call is from outside of himself; he is called out of himself to that which is above and outside, to that which is beyond his own power, to the eternal.

Called from above and outside his own power, he looks to God for the power to answer the call (I Thess. 5:24, Rom. 8:28, 30, Phil. 2:113). He lives by faith, trusting that the One who calls brings out his best efforts. Knowing that the call comes from God, and that nothing short of fulfillment will suffice as an answer, he constantly reaches forth to that fulfillment. His faith is coupled with works, yet the faith is not in the works but in Him who called. Final attainment to the high calling, to the Creator Himself, can be accomplished only by the Creator.

God's call must begin with God. It must come from God to man. Christ said that he came to seek and to save that which is lost. He came to call sinners to repentance. Faithless theologians have tried to produce an acceptable theology on the basis of man's

quest for God. They treat the Scriptures as a history of man's endeavor to satisfy his religious curiosity. To them the Bible is a book about man's search for God rather than a book about God's call to man. The inevitable result of this approach is a humanist religion, a religion that turns in upon itself. Man in his wisdom knows not God (I Cor. 1:21). God cannot be known only by what He chooses to reveal of himself to man. Man, by starting out from himself, fails to arrive at God, but arrives at a perverted concept of man. The result is the awful state in which he finds himself today, preoccupied with sex, torn asunder by violence and reduced to zombie-life by regulations through government agencies (Rom. 1:20–32).

Modern churches are advancing this condition by encouraging man to answer his own call, in the name of Christian faith. Studies are made to take the temperature of the times, to find what appeal will motivate man in his present sinful state, then using this appeal as the basis upon which man is to make a "decision". Incentives such as the praise of men, acceptance into a popular group, feelings of success and the satisfaction of ego are all employed to encourage men to "make a decision" and to participate in various phases of religious efforts. Men set their own goals and take steps to accomplish them before they have any conception of the high calling of God. In this way the church sets its own goal and extends its own call then goes about answering it. Many would deny this and point to their motto of faith in the Bible — "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak" — and to the great number of "additions" as proof that they are "scriptural". But the fact is that outside of the few hours when involved in public worship and church activity the members have no more direction to God's high and holy calling than does all the world around them. If they attend so many services a week they are dubbed "faithful" regardless of their actual ambition and activity in daily life. The calling to millions of modern church members is simply to the church house on Sunday, and not to God and to His image.

The Humanist may admit there is a God, of sorts, but he sees him as a spectator, as one who not only stands outside the human arena, but who is powerless to intervene in it. Therefore he trusts his own power, not because he has confidence in himself, but because he has no where else to go for help. With every scientific discovery he enjoys a brief period of elation, commending himself and thinking there is evidence of human power and progress. But his ecstasy is short-lived for he soon notices that his condition has not changed. So he sets new goals and issues a new calling, repeating the process over and over again until he is desperately floundering in conflict and chaos.

The Christian sees God as He is, as the One Who not only stands outside the human arena, who is totally independent of it and quite complete without any of us, but as the One Who is mostly concerned with it. He is above and beyond the world, yet "so loved the world" that He manifested Himself to it in the most vulnerable way, as a man subject to all its burdens, sorrows, and temptations, becoming a victim of its sin and violence. God, still beyond and outside His creation, is concerned with everything He created. Not even a sparrow falls without His personal involvement.

This is the One Who had called the Christian to Himself, the One Who is deeply involved in our lives, to chasten us when we need it, to comfort us in our sorrow, to strengthen us in weakness and to guide us in the truth He has revealed.

The calling is positive and absolute. That is, it is not subject to change nor to private and individual interpretation. God calls men through Christ and the apostles

especially chosen for the purpose. In praying for them, Jesus said, “Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word” (John 17:20). “Their word” is given us in the New Testament Scriptures. God’s calling is not a mere “feeling”. It is not a subjective experience. One may say, “I feel called to ...do this or that.” If the feeling is in response to the influence of the Sword God has revealed, the, indeed, he must respond to the call. But every such feeling or instinct must be tested by God’s revealed word. If it does not measure up, then it is not God calling.

All who are called are called to one hope (Eph. 4:4). There is no personal choice of end results. The inheritance is from God and designed by Him. It is a “holy calling” not only because it comes **from** God but because we are called **to** God, to be like God. “We shall be like Him”, John writes (I John 3:2). God calls us to inherit from Himself the immortality attained at the resurrection from the dead. The humanist has no such hope, his only promise is judgment and death.

Christ does not offer a variety of “life styles”, but plainly says that there is **One** way, and He is it. Here is the evidence of the called: they all are trying to learn of Christ, trying to keep His commandments, trying to be like Him. They pay little heed to the attractions of the world; they cannot be turned aside by temptations to gain prestige in the world and do not covet the temporal success seen in the world.

God’s calling is not dependent upon ones wealth nor abilities nor strength. “For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called...that no flesh should glory before God” (I Cor. 1:26, 29). God calls the weak, the poor as well as the strong and the rich, so that nothing is done through competition nor for personal gain, but because each is called by God. Like Moses, Christians with a sense of calling refuse to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world (Heb. 11:25–26).

The called of God are not attracted to the church by the world’s entertainment and have no need of incentives for Christian service other than the simple fact that it is their calling. They do not whine for a Bible that is written down to the third grade level with the meat already ground or removed, but have an appetite for the bread of God that compels them to study and grow in the knowledge of Christ.

Everywhere a multitude of voices are clamoring to be heard. Jesus aid, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). It is not the Christian’s business to go searching for new causes, nor to listen to the multitude. God’s work is done through those who are called by Him, and who through faith obey. In days ahead the voice of antichrist will grow louder and louder. But we are called of God. Let us walk worthily of our calling.

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