

Our Calling

2 Thessalonians 2:13—15

The last lesson was a study on the topic of election (often synonymous with predestination). Although it is traditionally taught that election is about salvation, it actually is about service. God does not elect, or choose, people to go to heaven or hell. His desire is that all men be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11) so it seems silly to think He would mark certain people for salvation, making the rest unable to respond positively to a plea to believe the Gospel.

Another term that is often misunderstood is “calling.” This term, like that of election, is often defined by the traditions of men rather than from Scripture. We need to trust the Bible as our source of information, not on how man has defined what God is telling us. A major source of misunderstanding comes about by reading such books as *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young. She uses this term to indicate that God is calling upon her, much like when a person comes calling at your door. She confuses the biblical term “calling” with our word “visiting.” Her book has lead many down the wrong path of Christianity by indicating that we can experience God by waiting for Him to come and visit to give us words of encouragement or enlightenment. Instead of knowing God through His Word, we are told to experience God by listening for His still, small voice. The problem is that people accept their own thoughts as if they are words from God.

Calling

There are thousands of books and articles on how to discern the call of God. Many say determining the call of God requires that you read the circumstances that happen in your life, figure out what the Holy Spirit is impressing upon you, seek the council of others, look into our deepest desires and get insight from Scripture. A good number of these people say that you need to learn to read the signs. These are the very same steps people use to determine God’s perfect will for their lives. In fact, most believe that being called by God IS finding His will. We just need to discover what God is calling for us to do and we will be in His perfect will.

Those who say they have received a specific calling are part of a very special group of people. Abraham received a “call” to leave his homeland to a foreign country (Genesis 12). Jonah received a special “call” to reach out to Nineveh with the admonition to repent (Jonah 1). Moses was “called” to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 3:10). Gideon was “called” to save Israel from the Midianites (Judges 6). David was “called” to be King of Israel (1 Samuel 16:12). Isaiah was “called” to be a prophet (Isaiah 6:5—9) as was Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4—7). The Disciples were “called” into ministry by Jesus (John 15:16). Paul was “called” to be the apostle to the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:1). All these people have one thing in common; God came directly to them and “called” them for a particular ministry. But, what about the millions of people who did not hear specifically from God? Does everyone have a special and specific call, or does that pertain to only a select few?

Many people understand a call from God to be something almost mystical in nature like a voice out of heaven or a special sign that directs a person what to do. These are biblical concepts, like Paul (Saul) hearing the voice of God and being blinded by a bright light (Acts 9), or Gideon asking for and receiving the sign of the fleece (Judges 6:36—40). Many use these instances as examples of how to discern the call of God. Unfortunately, these biblical examples are not designed for us to follow. They are examples of God, supernaturally

reaching down to humans for a special task. These “callings” are very uncommon and infrequent and should not be used as a guide as to how God is at work today.

Call to unbelievers

Unbelievers are the focus of a specific type of calling. 2 Thessalonians 2:14 speaks of being called through the gospel. Those who accept the call will not need to go through the Tribulation. This call is being broadcast unto all men and open for anyone to respond (1 Corinthians 1:9). Once this call is responded to, that person is secured into the Body of Christ and will then be under the “high calling” of walking in a worthy manner and serving God faithfully (Colossians 3:15).

The Believer’s Call

The believer, in this dispensation, is also subject to God’s call. Most understand this call to be a specific call into ministry, such as pastor or missionary. It seems that the call always concerns being called into some aspect of ministry, but never into a secular vocation. Most people would probably have to say they never had experienced a call from God as to where He wanted them to serve Him.

This restrictive thinking comes about because of a general misunderstanding of what a call actually is, which is fueled by inaccurate teaching. Our best source of teaching comes directly from Scripture, in particular, Paul’s 13 books. God’s call to a believer concerns service. We can see this from 2 Timothy 1:9 that shows salvation comes before the call. We are saved then called to live a holy life.

This ties in with Philippians 3:14 that shows Paul pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” God had a high calling for those of us in the Body of Christ. This high calling keeps our sight in the heavenly places, not on this earth. All members in the Body of Christ have this call from God to live a life of eternal worth and to serve Him for all eternity. Contrast this with a low calling, which would keep us focused on this earth. This isn’t the life we are called to live. A high calling demands we serve Christ from the position we currently occupy in the spiritual realm, the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). This is the calling for all of us in the Body of Christ. We are not to be looking for a special, individualized calling beyond that.

It appears that just as believers in Israel will be given more responsibility on this earth for faithful service, we will realize the same in the heavenly places for faithful service while alive on this earth (Luke 19:11—26). This is why Paul emphasized the importance of giving our lives as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1—2), and for running the race to win (1 Corinthians 9:24—25).

Many believers are waiting for God to call in an unmistakable manner so they know exactly what to do with their lives. They are looking for some extra-biblical sign or leading so they know His will. Ironically, by doing this, they are actually missing out on God’s call and His will for their lives. God’s call and His will for believers in this dispensation are both contained in Scripture and revolves around godly living. Those who reject Paul’s 13 books as being exclusively given to the church in this dispensation are missing God’s call and perfect will. God’s will for us today will not be found in the Old Testament, in the four Gospels, Hebrews; James; 1, 2 Peter; 1, 2, 3 John, Jude nor in Revelation. Anyone who seeks God’s will in those books will be led astray. Paul is the only writer who was given information on how to live lives that are pleasing to God in this Age of Grace.

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