

THE CALL OF GOD

“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:10-11)

Obviously, the people to whom Peter was writing had received a “calling” from God.

WE MUST BE DILIGENT

Note those to whom Peter wrote his first letter: **“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.” (1 Peter 1:1-2)**

His second letter is also addressed to those who belong to God: **“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” (2 Peter 1:1-2)**

Like the loving Father that He is, God has given us everything we need. **“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” (2 Peter 1:3-4)** Note that “evil desires” are not escaped by “warnings” but by “his very great and precious promises”.

Those who received this letter were not “lukewarm” and “irresponsible”. They had a faith that was precious and also a knowledge of both God and Christ. Peter still urges them, however, to be even more diligent and to “make every effort” to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-8)**

If anyone reading this letter refused to “make every effort” to grow, Peter offers this warning: **“But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.” (2 Peter 1:9)**

Peter, by inspiration, adds the word “therefore” to the following words to make the connection with what he has already said: **“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make**

your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:10-11) This, as you recall, is the text with which we began this lesson.

Those who first received these words obviously understood the nature of their “calling”. They had put their hand to the plow and were not to look back (Lk. 9:62). Having added to their faith the powerful ingredients of goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, they were assured that possessing these qualities in increasing qualities would keep them from being ineffective and unproductive.

Remember - **“...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Heb 11:6)**

THE GENERAL CALL

What does it mean to have a “calling” from God? Does everyone receive a call from God? How can I know if I have a calling from God? How can I find out what my calling is? To find an answer to these questions let us go to the Holy Bible. While scholars may disagree on the answer to these questions, please prayerfully consider the following Scriptures.

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim 2:1-4)

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' ” (Acts 17:24-28)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:16-17).

“He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15-16)

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” (John 6:37)

Based on these and other Scriptures, it seems that::

- God created all mankind and wants all men to be saved.
- We can also infer that there is a general ‘invitation’ or ‘call’ for salvation to all mankind.
- We also note that God not only created all mankind, but also determined where everyone would live. Further, God designed man so that he would seek for Him.
- We must not forget that God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- It is also clear that Jesus sent His Apostles to preach the Gospel to everyone in the world.
- It is also comforting to note that whoever comes to Jesus will never be driven away.

A SPECIFIC CALL

In addition to a general call to salvation for all mankind, God also gives specific calls.

Jesus, for example, had many disciples who followed Him. Out of these many disciples He chose twelve for a special calling. Note! **“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:” (Luke 6:12-13)**

Jesus told the apostles.

- **“Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” (John 6:70)**
- **“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.’” (John 13:18)**
- **“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit” (John 15:16)**

In addition to the original 12 apostles, Jesus also called Paul to be a part of this select group. Paul made this clear to the Galatians:

- **“Paul, an apostle — sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead” (Gal 1:1)**

The word “apostle” refers to one who is sent. Thus in Scripture we have 3 levels of apostleship. (1) Jesus was sent by God and thus has the unique calling of being the apostle of God (Heb.3:1). (2) The 12 also had a unique calling as they were specifically sent by Christ. Jesus promised that they would sit upon 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). (3) There were also other apostles who were not sent our directly by God, or by Christ, but by the church. Barnabas was this kind of an apostle (Acts 14:14).

In addition to apostles, God has also appointed, or given a special calling to others in the church:

- **“And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.” (1 Cor 12:28)**

THE CALL OF GOD IN HISTORY

While God could easily do things by Himself, He has “chosen” to “call” men to work with Him in accomplishing His work on the earth.

- God called Adam to work and take care of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:15).
- God called Noah to build an ark and preserve life upon the earth (Gen. 6:9 - 22).
- God called Abram to leave his country and family and promised to bless all the peoples of the earth through him (Gen. 12:1 - 3).
- God called Moses to deliver His people from Egypt (Ex. 3:1 - 10).
- God called Aaron to be the High Priest (Ex. 28:1).
- God called Joshua to take the place of Moses (Deut. 31:7, 8; 34:9).
- God called a series of Judges to deliver His people from bondage (See Judges 3:9; 15; 4:4, 6; 6:11; etc).
- God also called men to be prophets like:
 - Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1 - 10).
 - Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1 - 6).
 - Ezekiel (Ez. 1:3).
 - Amos (Amos 7: 14, 15)
 - Etc.

GOD’S “CALLINGS” SEEM FOOLISH TO THE WORLD

“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.” (1 Cor 1:26-30)

The following examples could easily be multiplied:

- All shepherds were detestable to the Egyptians (Gen. 46:34), yet God called a shepherd named Moses to deliver His people from slavery. He even commanded Moses to take his shepherds’ staff with him when he spoke to the Pharaoh (Ex. 4:17).

- God called Gideon to be a Judge even though he was from the weakest clan in Manasseh, and he was the least in his family (Jud. 6:15). Further, God instructed him to reduce his army of 32,000 down to 300 (Jud. 7:1 - 8).
- Amos was not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet. He was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore-fig trees (Amos 7:14). Yet God called Amos to be a prophet to Israel.
- Jonah was a racist who hated the Ninevites, yet God called him to preach to them (Jonah 4:1 - 3). Interestingly enough, he was one of the most successful preachers ever as the whole city of Nineveh repented in sack cloth and ashes (Jonah 3:1 - 10).
- The original twelve apostles were all common men with no earthly credentials.
- Once, when the disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest, Jesus called a little child and had him stand in their midst. Then Jesus said: **“I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 18:3-4)**
- History confirms that not many wise by human standards have been called by God to positions of leadership in the church.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

One reason why God calls those considered weak and foolish, is that by doing so He receives more glory. Please consider:

- **“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.” (Isa. 42:8).**
- **“For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.” ((Isa. 48:11)**
- The Ten Commandments remind us that God is a “jealous God” (Ex. 20:5). He not only forbade the making of idols, He even forbade the construction of an altar with “dressed stones” as using a tool would “defile it” (Ex. 20:25). Nothing is to detract from making God the focus of our worship!
- The reason why God had Gideon send so many soldiers home is clear. **“The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her” (Judg 7:2)**
- Christian workers can learn an important lesson from King Herod. **“On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.” Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.” (Acts 12:21-23)**
- We repeat! Nothing is to detract from making God the focus of our worship. The Corinthians were so disrespectful of God that their church meetings did more harm than good (I Cor. 11:17). They were told that anyone who took the Lord’s Supper without recognizing the body of Christ would eat and drink judgement to himself (1 Cor. 11:29).
- Christian worship is an awesome experience. Jewish worship, by comparison, pales into

insignificance. Note: **“You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?” (Heb 12:18-26)**

- **“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Col 3:17)**
- **“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18)**

HOW DOES GOD CALL PEOPLE INTO HIS SERVICE?

Remember! God is a God of infinite variety. Every star differs from every other star in glory (1 Cor. 15:41). Every person has unique finger prints, facial features, and personality. Every snow flake has it’s own special design. The following examples of how God has called people in the past does not limit God in any way. Obviously, God can call people into His service any way He wants to!

- God called Abram to leave his country, his people, and his father’s household (Gen. 12:1 - 2). If he would do this, God promised to lead him. Perhaps God will also call you to leave where you are and lead you where He wants you to be.
- God called Moses in association with a burning bush that was not consumed (Ex. 3:1 - 10). Perhaps God will call you in association with something that is supernatural.
- God called Samuel into His service with a voice that sounding like a human voice (1 Sam. 3:1 - 14). God, of course, can also call you into His service this way if He wants to.
- God called Jephthah to be a Judge by having the elders of Gilead choose him (Jud. 11:1 - 11). Perhaps you will also be called into the service of God by means of elders.
- God called Joseph to go to Egypt by means of a dream (Matt. 1:20). Perhaps God will also call you to a special ministry by means of a dream.
- Peter felt called to fill the vacancy left by the death of Judas by his understanding of the Scriptures (Acts 1:15 - 21). Perhaps God will also call you by your understanding of the Scriptures.
- When men were needed to serve tables, the Apostles urged the church to select seven men, full of the Spirit and wisdom to meet this need (Acts 6:1 - 6). Perhaps God will call you into

- His service by means of the church seeking to meet a need.
- When the Apostles heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God they “sent” Peter and John to Samaria (Acts 8:14). Perhaps the leaders of your church will also send you on some special mission.
 - Even though Saul of Tarsus was destined from his mother’s womb to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15), God gave him a specific call in a blinding vision on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1 - 18; 22:1 - 16; 26:1 - 20). Perhaps God will also call you by means of a heavenly vision.
 - Jesus taught His disciples to pray that God would “send out” workers into his harvest fields (Matt. 9:38). The word translated “send” is “ekballo” which is translated 56 times in the KJV as “cast out”. It is used to describe the way that Jesus “cast out” the money changers from the Temple (Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:15; John 2:15). Perhaps God will disrupt your routine and “cast you out” into His service.
 - When Jesus healed the demon possessed man we are told: **“As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. “ (Mark 5:18-20)** Perhaps God will also “call” you to “go home to your family” and tell them what God has done for you.
 - The Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to their work during a time of fasting and prayer (Acts 13:1 - 3). Perhaps the Holy Spirit will call you to some special work during a time of fasting and prayer.
 - Paul wrote to the Philippians that God was working in them both to “will” and to “act” (Phil. 2:13). God first gives the desire, then the ability. Lydia, for example, had the “desire” to invite Paul and his company into her home. Then God gave her the “ability” to make it happen (Acts 16:13 - 17). If God wants to “call” you into His service, perhaps He will first give you the “will” to do it, and then empower you to “act” on that desire.
 - Peter was called to preach to Cornelius by means of a heavenly vision (Acts 10:9 - 23). Paul was also called to preach in Macedonia by a vision (Acts 16:9, 10). Perhaps God will also call you by means of a heavenly vision.
 - Philip was called by an angel to go to a deserted road (Acts 8:26) It was here that he preached to and baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch. This is one way the Gospel came to his home in Africa. Perhaps God will send an angel to call you to some special service.
 - God does not have to call those who are qualified, for He has the power to qualify anyone He calls.
 - In short, God can call you into His service any way He wants to!

HIS YOKE IS EASY

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt 11:28-30)

- A yoke is for work. But when Jesus gives you a yoke, it is “easy”. That is, it fits you well. When you take His yoke, you will enjoy the work you do for Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts for the common good (1 Cor. 12:;7). The Bible word for “gift” is “charisma”. It comes from the Greek word “chara” which means “joy”. In other words, you have joy when you are using the gift that God has given you.
- When God adds believers to the Body of Christ He assigns to everyone a function to perform. **“But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.” (1 Cor 12:18-20)**
- It is important for every member of the Body to function as God intends them to: **“The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Cor 12:21-28)**
- With practice a man can learn to walk on his hands, but it is not “easy” to do so. It is, however, easy to walk on your feet. So it is not only important for every member of the Body of Christ to function, it is also important that every member of the Body functions in the capacity that God has called them to.
- When any member of the Body ceases to function as God ordained, the Body is handicapped.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AT ROME

Please consider the following Scriptures:

“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.” (Rom 12:3)

Note that these inspired instructions are for “every one” and not just for leaders.

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Rom 12:4, 5)

This is the same example used to help the Corinthians understand their “calling” from God. There is only “one body” but “many members”.

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.” (Rom 12:6)

The word translated as “gifts” is “charismata” which is the same word used in 1 Cor. 12:4 to describe “gifts” given by God to the Corinthians.

“If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” (Rom 12:6-8)

Note that seven “gifts” are listed. Remember that these “gifts” are for “every one of you”! Let us consider them one at a time.

- “Prophesying” - The word for “prophesy” literally comes from two words: “pro” which means “forth”, and “phemi” which means “to speak”. It means “to speak forth.” The prophets of God spoke for God but did not always predict the future. For example **“Then the Lord said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country.” (Ex 7:1-3)** In this regard, every “preacher” is a “prophet” who “speaks forth” the message of God. Every Christian is to speak for God, but some in the Body are especially gifted to do so.
- “Serving” - This word for service is “diakonian” from which we get our English word “deacon”. Every Christian is to serve, but some members of the Body are especially gifted in this regard.
- “Teaching” - This word is “didaskon” from which we get our English word “didactic” which refers to teaching. Every Christian is to teach something, but some members of the Body are especially gifted to teach.
- “Encouraging” - This comes from “parakalon” which literally means “by the side” and “to call”. When facing problems it is always helpful to have a true friend called to your side to give help. “Encourage” gives courage. Discourage takes courage away. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to come along side us and give us encouragement (Jn. 14:16). Every person with the Holy Spirit is an encourager, but some members of the Body are especially gifted to do so.
- “Contributing” - This comes from “metadidomi” (meta = with and “didomi” = to give). Every Christian is to share, but some members of the Body are especially gifted in this regard.
- “Leadership” - This comes from the word “proistamenos” which literally means “to stand before”. Shepherds do not “drive” their sheep, they go before the sheep and “lead” them (John 10:4). We are to obey our spiritual leaders as they someday will be called upon to give an account of God’s flock (Heb. 13:17).
- “Showing mercy” refers to the ability to feel sympathy for the suffering of others. While everyone is to be merciful (Matt. 5:7), some are especially gifted in this regard.

The practical nature of these spiritual gifts has been illustrated by seven people sitting around

a table. Each person has a different spiritual gift. When someone accidentally spilled a pitcher of milk, each gifted person has a different initial reaction.

(1) - The prophet is gifted to speak. His immediately reaction is to acknowledges the obvious: “You spilled he milk and it is running all over the table and the floor. Now you can’t drink that milk, and furthermore we are going to have to go to the expense and trouble of getting more”.

(2) - The person with the gift of service has an entirely different initial reaction. To him the important thing is not to say anything, but to immediately grab a cloth and start cleaning up the mess.

(3) - The teacher has still another initial reaction. His gift enables him to analyze the situation and see why the milk was spilled in the first place.

(4) - The encourager gets up, walks around the table to be alongside of the one who is guilty.

(5) - The one who is gifted to contribute has still another initial response. To him the most important thing is to share his milk with the one who has none.

(6) - The leader immediately sees the need of organizing everyone so that such mistakes don’t happen in the future.

(7) - The person with the gift of mercy immediately sympathizes with his hurting friend and reminds him that we all make mistakes.

In this simple illustration we can easily see the need for every gift. Like members of One Body, each gifted person works with other gifted people toward a common goal. Remember! You are the Body of Christ and each one of you is part of it (1 Cor. 12:27).

FINISHING OUR ASSIGNMENT

- As we have mentioned before, Jesus had a “calling” that was ordained by God from before the creation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20). There were repeated attempts to kill Jesus but God protected Him “because His time had not yet come” (see Jn. 7:30; 8:20, etc.) Finally, however, on the night before Calvary, Jesus said “the time has come” (Jn. 17:1) and as He died on the cross He said: **“It is finished”** and bowed his head and gave up his Spirit (Jn. 19:30). There is something eternally satisfying about “finishing the work” God has given us to do.
- Paul too received a “call” to carry the name of Christ before the Gentiles, and their kings, and the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Over the course of his ministry there were many attempts on his life, and many close calls when he was near to death. Finally, however, Paul finished his course and was therefore ready to die. He wrote to Timothy: **“For I am already being**

poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2 Tim 4:6-8)

- **Faithfulness until death is not only for Jesus and Paul, but for everyone: “Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev 2:10)**

There is something eternally satisfying about completing our “calling” given to us by God. Take, for example, the story of Venerable Bede. He is said to be the first person to translate any of the Scriptures into the Anglo Saxon language. He died Thursday, May 26, 735 A.D. On that night he had the satisfaction of completing his translation of the Gospel of John.

His last days were difficult. He suffered frequent attacks of breathlessness and two days before his death his breathing became more difficult and his feet began to swell. His scribe was a young man named Wiberht. The night before his death the dying man stayed awake to pray. At three o’clock p.m. he asked for the box that contained his few possessions and gave them away. Then he completed his translation and asked Wiberht to help him raise his head that he might gaze upon the place where he usually prayed. He died chanting “Glory be to the Father, and the Son”. He too had fought a good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith.

May we also complete the course and finish with joy the calling we have received from God!

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