

We are Called

INTRODUCTION:

1. The passage this morning before the lesson spoke of how as Christians and members of the Lord's church, we are *called*.
 - A. In fact, the church is *the called out*, or those who have been called out of the world.
 - B. That Christians are called truly makes us unique, different from the world, seeing we are called to a different life with different purposes and goals.
2. There is much assumed and surmised by the religious world about this calling.
 - A. People assign God's calling to all sorts of things with, of course, the intent of glorifying Him.
 - B. I met a man recently who quickly said he believed in God's callings and went on to say he believed he was called by God to play Santa Clause!
 - C. He was a very nice man, but when we step outside of what God has to say about His callings, these are the kinds of things that happen.
3. Assuming and theorizing about the Christian's **calling** is unnecessary because the N.T. addresses it extensively, explaining the...
 - A. Nature of the Christian's calling, or what it is
 - B. Purpose of our calling, or what God intends for it to do in our lives
 - C. Value of the Christian's calling.
4. These are the things I want to look at this morning.

BODY:

- **I. The nature of the Christian's calling:**
 - A. It is a *heavenly* calling (Heb. 3:1 – “Therefore, holy brethren, **partakers of a heavenly calling**, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession”).
 1. Although the focus of this passage is the need to consider Jesus, he states that Christians are partakers of a heavenly calling.
 2. To best appreciate this, we need to consider the contrast of this to Israel's calling.
 - a. Israel was called to leave Egypt and enter the Promised Land, an earthly place, to receive an earthly inheritance.
 - b. Of Christians, however, it is said in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 that God “calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”
 3. This is no ordinary call addressing ordinary matters.
 - B. It is a call that comes by God's own glory and excellence (2 Pet. 1:2-3 – “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who **called us by His own glory and excellence.**”).
 1. God shines his **glory**, brightness, radiance in His gospel call for all who will open their eyes to its message—the message of a loving, graceful, suffering Savior and God—to see.
 2. In addition, He shows His moral excellence in His call to accept the perfect, sinless sacrifice of His own Son that you may be made morally clean by His blood.
 3. There is no call on this earth presented with greater glory and excellence/virtue.
 - C. It is a *holy* calling (2 Tim. 1:8-9 – “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹ who has **saved** us and **called us with a holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity”).
 1. **Holy** – separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God” (**Vine**); possessing a certain distinction and claim to reverence by its connection to God (**Thayer**); dedicated to God, holy, sacred (**BDAG**)
 2. Again, this is no common call. It not about whether you work at a factory or a store, but is a far greater call that affects who we are in every aspect of our lives.
 3. It a call from the Most Holy God that results in the receiver's being made holy and allowing them to approach God and serve Him acceptably.

- D. Of course, for this to be true it must be a call that comes by *God's grace* (Gal. 1:6 – “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you **by the grace of Christ**, for a different gospel”).
 1. If you have been called, if you are a Christian, this rebuke to them should be a warning not to grow to underappreciate the grace by which you are called!
 2. For, that we are able to receive a **holy** calling means it must be offered **by grace**.
 - a. We are all sinners who have fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23).
 - b. So, it could not be based on our works, but on God's unmerited favor (2 Tim. 1:8-9 – “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹ who has **saved** us and **called us** with a holy calling, **not according to our works**, but according to His own **purpose** and **grace** which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity”).
 3. We need to meditate on and appreciate that it was the purpose of God to call *sinners* to Himself so that by His grace we can be forgiven and made holy!
- E. It is a call that comes by the *gospel*, the *good news* (2 Thess. 2:13-14 – “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴ It was for this **He called you through our gospel**, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.).
 1. God has chosen to call the sinners by the gospel, a message proclaimed to all the world, bringing access to salvation to all sinners everywhere!
 2. It is a call that is *gospel*, or *good news*, seeing God calls us to receive His grace that we might gain the very *glory of Jesus Christ!*
- F. What an amazing God that would call such people like us with such an amazing call resulting in such great blessings!
- **II. We are called for God's purposes:**
 - A. Paul told the Christians at Rome that Jesus, God's Son, calls us to be *saints* (Rom. 1:6-7 – “among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; ⁷ to all who are beloved of God in Rome, **called as saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”).
 1. **Saint** comes from the same word translated “holy” and indicates that our call *sets us apart to God, to be, as it were, exclusively His (Thayer)*.
 2. Those who receive God's call are set apart for His holy service—priests requiring holy conduct consistent with God's own character (1 Pet. 1:15-16 – “but **like the Holy One** who **called you, be holy yourselves** also in all your behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”).
 - B. Called into *fellowship with Jesus*, God's Son, who died for our sins.
 1. After speaking of God's work of confirming or establishing us to be blamelessness at Christ's return, Paul reminds us in 1 Cor. 1:9 that “God is faithful, through whom you were **called into fellowship** with His **Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 2. So, God calls us to share, to be in partnership, with His Son who chose to share in our nature so that by death He could set us free from the slavery of sin and death (Heb. 2:14-18).
 3. As those called to be partners with Christ we actually share with Him the status of being heirs of God and His glory (Rom. 8:16-17 – “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”).
 - C. Called to freedom (Gal. 5:13 – “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”).
 1. The Galatians had been troubled by:
 - a. Judaizing teachers that sought to bring them again into the bondage of the Law of Moses
 - b. Teachers who apparently taught that freedom in Christ meant freedom to give in to the desires of the flesh.
 2. So, Paul reminds them that their call in Christ was to freedom.

- a. It was a call to be freed from the bondage of the Law of Moses (Gal. 5:1 – “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”).
 - i. We can look at these brethren in wonder, but they are not so different from us.
 - ii. For, how many of us groan within ourselves, regularly, because we wonder if we have been good enough or have done enough to enter heaven in the end?
 - 1) I am not saying we can ignore the necessity of truth, or the necessity of obeying truth. But in the end what we do is never going to be good enough.
 - 2) The only way we will make it to heaven is to live out our lives seeking out and obeying God’s will as best we can, opening our heart to His truth to direct and correct us, while trusting in the grace of God that comes through Jesus’ blood to forgive our sins and make us whole in His sight!
 - b. But slavery can also come through catering to the sinful desires of the flesh.
 - i. For, as Jesus made clear that “whoever commits sin is a slave to sin” (John 8:34).
 - ii. Thus, Paul says, “do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).
- D. Called to suffer for Christ (1 Pet. 2:20-24 – “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and **suffer** for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. ²¹ For **you have been called for this purpose**, since **Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example** for you to follow in His steps, ²² who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; ²³ and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”).
 - 1. That God calls Christians to suffer for doing what is right is difficult for us to swallow.
 - a. We may not openly disagree with the teaching of this passage.
 - b. But the real problem occurs when we suffer unjustly, having done what is right!
 - 2. When this happens, we must remember that such suffering finds favor with God. For...
 - a. Jesus suffered for righteousness’ sake as our example to follow.
 - b. Though Jesus was sinless, He did not revile when he was reviled and uttered no threats when He suffered, entrusting Himself instead to God to make it possible for us to die to sin and live for righteousness, healing us by His wounds!
 - 3. When we think of a calling to suffer this way, it brings its purpose infinitely higher!
 - E. Called to a greater way of life (1 Pet. 3:8-9 – “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.”).
 - 1. Did you note the similarities between the purpose of our call and the life and purpose of the Messiah’s earthly life who calls us? For, He suffered without repaying evil for evil to bring the blessings of unity, compassion, and love to a lost world.
 - 2. We are called for this very purpose so that after doing so, we too can obtain a blessing in God and eternal life.

III. The value of God’s call

A. God’s call brings hope

- 1. This is so important that Paul prayed for the Ephesians to understand its value (Eph. 1:18 – “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the **hope of His calling**, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”).
- 2. To solidify its importance, He later reminds them and us that before God’s call, all are hopeless (Eph. 2:12-13 – “remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”).

3. God has reversed our fate by his call in Christ that gives hope to the hopeless and brings near to God those who were far away in their sins.
- B. God's call brings light (1 Pet. 2:9-10 – "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has **called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."").
 1. One of the keys to appreciating the value of God's call is to appreciate the darkness in which our sin and ignorance place us.
 2. For, as the passage says, in Christ we are called into God's light, into God's family, being the recipients of His mercy, all of which are missing outside of Christ!
- C. God's call brings eternal life and glory
 1. We are *called to receive eternal life* (1 Tim. 6:12 – "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the **eternal life to which you were called**, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."").
 2. Eternal life includes God's eternal glory, after we have suffered and been perfected (1 Pet. 5:8-11 – "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰ After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, **who called you to His eternal glory in Christ**, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. ¹¹ To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen."").

CONCLUSION:

1. As we conclude, if you are a Christian I want to:
 - A. Encourage you to make your calling sure (2 Pet. 1:10-11 – "Therefore, brethren, be all the more **diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you**; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ **for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ **will be abundantly supplied to you.**").
 - B. "Implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:1)
 - C. For, I remind you that you have been called by a higher calling, one that transcends all others in its nature, its purpose, and its value.
2. But, if you have not answered God's call to salvation, will you answer the call of Christ today in F-R-C-Bp right now as we stand and sing?