

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#03-0920

Called According to Purpose#1

March 9, 2009

There are some believers that think that *calling* or *being called* is only for those who are called into “the ministry.” The ministry takes on this special aura. This thinking is very unfortunate because we do not find it in Scripture, and it leads to a false understanding of the true calling for every born from above child of God.

According to the Bible, we all are called to minister in the house of God. Often, people refer to “going into the ministry,” as if it were something special that is set apart only for a special class of people. All born from above believers are to offer their bodies as living and holy sacrifices, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship (Romans 12:1). Without exception, every believer has received the seed of Christ; that is, all have received a new life in Christ, and, as such, each is called to minister in the house of God according to the gifts given by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, we all are in “the ministry,” in the work of service (Ephesians 4:12).

Now, this does not mean that there are not those who are called into a more public ministry, such as an apostle or a pastor-teacher. In the New Testament, we find that Paul, in two places, Romans 1:1 and 1 Corinthians 1:1, referred to himself as being called as an apostle. He was appointed an apostle by the Lord Jesus. But in the New Testament, the words *call*, *called*, or *calling* generally refer to all the believers in the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ. Search Scripture and you will discover this for yourself. Jude, in his opening salutation, very simply writes to those who are the called (Jude 1:1). We are the *called*.

There are three Greek words used to refer to *calling*, *called*, and *call* — *klesis*, *kletos*, and *kaleo*, respectively. Their meaning is “invitation,” “invited or appointed,” and “bid or call.” In other words, the call is an invitation. We are invited by the Lord. Isn’t *invitation* an essential part of the gospel once we believe? It is an invitation by Jesus Himself to come to Him, to sit at His feet, to be in communion with Him, to mature in His life, to be counted worthy to reign in His coming kingdom, to overcome and be part of His wife, New Jerusalem. This is the call. The call is to Jesus Himself. When He walked this earth, our Lord cried out:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28 NASB)

“If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7:37-38 NASB)

The invitation is the call of the gospel, and it goes out by the Lord Himself (Romans 8:30; 9:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 7:17-22). He calls (Romans 1:6). It is His calling (2 Peter 1:10). He calls by His glory (2 Peter 1:3). We are called by the Holy One (1 Peter 1:15). And, we are called through His grace (Galatians 1:6, 15).

When we first believe in Christ, He comes into our lives and we are called children of God (1 John 3:1) and become saints by calling (1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 1:7). Some people believe that saints are very special people who become saints after they have done miracles and many great works. Then, they must die and their life must be studied for many years to see if they are worthy to be saints. This is a false teaching.

Saint means that one is set apart, consecrated unto God. Paul told the Thessalonians that they were called in sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:7). The word *sanctification* comes from the Greek word for *saint*. In other words, all believers are sanctified in Christ. Paul tells us:

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30 NASB)

Christ is our sanctification. When we believe, we are placed in Christ who is our sanctification. Sanctification is both an initial act of salvation and a life-long process. We must be continually set apart unto God and conformed to the image of Christ, who is holy. But our being saints is not based on our merits or works. Just consider the Corinthian believers. Paul had to admonish them for their behavior. They were carnal rather than spiritual, and yet Paul addressed them as “saints by calling.” This should forever put out of our minds the false teaching that we are not saints. We are saints, and it is by the calling of God. It is His doing.

However, let us be abundantly clear that being called a saint is not a license to do anything we want, as if there are no consequences to our actions. It does not give us a license to abuse grace, which is called licentiousness (Jude 4). Saints are law-abiding citizens of the kingdom of God.

Now, this calling is tremendous. If our hearts would only grasp how great this calling is, it would change our lives and prepare us for the age to come. We were called out of darkness (1 Peter 2:9). As the gospel tells us, we all were lost in our sins and held in bondage to sin and the wages of sin, death. We had no way to escape. We were held in bondage in the domain of darkness, under the rule of the devil, the adversary of God. But thank God, on the cross, Jesus overcame the domain of darkness and opened the way for us to come out and enter into His kingdom of light. We have been called into His marvelous light, into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love (1 Peter 2:9; Colossians 1:13).

Further, we have been called into freedom (Galatians 5:13); into one body, the body of Christ (Colossians 3:15); into eonian life (1 Timothy 6:12); and into glory (1 Peter 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:14). God has called us into one hope of His calling (Ephesians 1:18; 4:4). What is this hope? **Christ in you, the hope of glory** (Colossians 1:27)! And, we are called to receive an inheritance (Hebrews 9:15; 11:8), even a blessing (1 Peter 3:9). The question is when we will enter into this calling, not if. Let us not forget that this inheritance pertains to entering the coming kingdom of our Lord through the first resurrection and transfiguration that occurs with Tabernacles. Not all who believe in this day will be counted worthy of His Day that is coming. We must press on toward the goal of the out-resurrection (Philippians 3:11, 14).

Do you begin to see how tremendous this calling is? But the good news is that this calling of God in Christ Jesus is irrevocable. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). God will not withdraw this calling. It is set before us continually for us to enter into. Have you been called by God? Has the invitation of the gospel been accepted into your heart? Then you have a calling in Christ that cannot be taken away. God will not remove the calling. But we must enter into this calling. **It is something that we are to pursue and press into.**

This is so wonderful that Paul tells us to consider our calling (1 Corinthians 1:26) and to walk in a manner worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:12). See issues #02-0843 (June 24, 2008), *Walk in a Manner Worthy*, and #02-0846 (July 29, 2008), *Walking and Pleasing God*. It is such a great calling. It is something in which we must walk daily. Our walk must reflect how tremendous this calling is. Even Peter tells us to be diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing us (2 Peter 1:10). Peter gives a way to walk worthily by applying diligence in our faith (2 Peter 1:5-9). See Article #8, April 2008, *Supplying All Diligence*. If we follow this way of diligence, we will not stumble, and the entrance into the eonian kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to us (2 Peter 1:10-11). We are to be diligent with our calling.

It is a matter directly related to the kingdom of the heavens. Although we have been transferred into the kingdom, we are called to daily walk with a view to this kingdom and not choose to walk according to the kingdom of this world. Make your calling and choosing certain by walking worthily and with all diligence. It will lead to blessing and great reward when our Lord comes to establish His kingdom on this earth. He is coming with His reward and for this purpose we are called.