

You Are Called to...

Galatians 5:13 (New American Standard Bible)

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love.

Ephesians 1:18-19 (New American Standard Bible)

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,¹⁹ and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Matthew 28:19-20 (New American Standard Bible)

¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Introduction

The Scripture uniquely uses the word “to call” or “calling” in a sense that it is God who calls out His people. When God calls out His people, He always has some specific reasons for that. E.g., The LORD called out Abraham from Haran his homeland to be the father of faith. He called Moses to bring His people out of Egypt. He also called many prophets to speak to His people His message.

In the New Testament, such tradition continues. Jesus called His 12 disciples to be sent out for the Gospel. In his letters, Paul the Apostle reminds us of God’s calling and His purpose for the believers. So, this morning, we are going to ponder the meaning of God’s calling and His plan for His children in three different passages.

Content

(Three Scripture lessons: Write down ‘Past’ next to Galatians 5:13, ‘Future’ next to Ephesians 1:18-19, and ‘Present’ next to Matthew 28:19-20.). God’s calling covers all three times: past, future, and present.

First, what happened in the past.

1. Called to Freedom (Past): God has called us to freedom in Christ. We are not talking about liberty or freedom in political sense. Rather, we are talking about freedom from the bondage of sin and death. If I had to choose one word that summarizes my entire Christian journey, I would choose the word ‘freedom.’ (what word would you choose for yourself?). I can say to everyone that I have found freedom in Christ. The freedom from guilt and shame. The freedom from fear and anxiety. The freedom from sin and death. Jesus points out and promises such freedom in John 8:32: *and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* In this verse, Jesus Himself is the truth; and when we know Him, Christ sets us free. Indeed, Christ has come down from Heaven to set us free from the bondage of sin and death/from the devil’s oppression through His own death on the cross.

Of course, the same Lord warns us not to use the freedom in Christ to cover up evil (1 Peter 2:16): *Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves* (NIV). Some folks live their life claiming ‘*This is my body. This is my life. This is my money. I will live in any way that I choose.*’ Folks, the object of our life is not material gain or sensual pleasures. It is to enjoy our Father in Heaven and to glorify Him in our lives. Therefore, we should never use our freedom to serve our lusts and desires in the flesh. Instead, we are to use our freedom to serve others in love. How great that verse is for all of us to act out in our daily lives: *serve one another through love.*

E.g., A man visited in Heaven in his vision where he met Jesus. He was delighted to see Jesus. Jesus asked him of one question, which the man later called the Ultimate Question: *Was your action done out of love or out of your own selfish interest? In his own words, what is the motive of my actions? Selfish or selfless?* You know 1 Corinthians 13, a.k.a. the Love Chapter, where Paul talks about some things people can do without love. *If I speak with the tongues of mankind and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good. (v. 1-3).*

The lesson? We can do so many things that are considered good with no love. In other words, for other reasons than love. Then, it counts nothing in God’s eyes. Let me remind you one more time. We are called to freedom in Christ. Thank God for that. At the same time, use the freedom in Christ to serve others in love. Christ did

not please Himself, *therefore*, neither should we please ourselves. Use your freedom to please your neighbors for their good, and to their edification (Romans 15:2-3).

The next verse talks about what will happen to us in future.

2. The Hope of Calling (Future). The hope of calling refers to the hope of resurrection. The hope of eternal life. The hope of inheriting *the riches of God's glory in Heaven*.

Recently I read an article about an atheist chaplain tries to help an atheist death row inmate to face death without God (*An Atheist Chaplain and a Death Row Inmate's Final Hours*, nytimes.com, Jan. 21, 2024).

Since neither of them believed in God, they would not invoke God's help in the last moment. So, the only alternative was to turn to anything else but God. For instance, in the execution room, the chaplain invoked *the spirit of humanity, the peace and love of humanity*, and so forth. But the inmate didn't get what he was looking for: peace and something real to help him to cope with his own death. After reading the whole article, I realized that atheism doesn't or cannot help one who faces death. Why? Because they do not have any substance to provide peace to face death. Neither any hope in the life after death. All they have is the world we live now. Nothing to talk about life after death. Therefore, all they can say to each other is that *we are here for each other and that you are not alone. But we don't know what's out there*. What awaits you out there, nobody knows. It is like 50/50. Like a turn off the electric switch. You're on your own. You will find out yourself and good luck on that.

Thank God, I am not an atheist. I thank God that we Christians do have a hope of resurrection. *If we have hoped in Christ only in this life*, and if there's no resurrection, *we are of all people most to be pitied* (1 Corinthians 15:19). In Christ, we do have a hope of resurrection. We do know what is waiting for us. Resurrection. We do know what is going to happen to us after we die. We will be in the presence of God in the resurrection body forever. To us, death is not final. It is just one chapter closed before we open another one; and we will wake up on the other side in the presence of God, which we call, a life eternal.

Unlike some people who don't believe in God, we don't have to die to find out what's waiting out there for us. Thank God once again for the faith and hope we

have in Christ. E.g., Have you heard about Pascal's Wager on the Existence of God? Between two choices on God's existence, whether to believe or deny it, based on pure probability, Pascal argues for the believing in God rather than the other option. Here's why: If you believe in God's existence and if, in a million chance, there's God, then you gain eternal life and happiness. However, if you reject God, and if, in fact, there's God, you lose everything and risk eternal misery. The other side of coin is true too. If you choose God, and in fact, if there's no God, you have nothing to lose. So, Warren Buffett summed it up nicely saying, "Pascal argued that if there were only a tiny probability that God truly existed, it made sense to behave as if He did because the rewards could be infinite whereas the lack of belief risked eternal misery" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pascal%27s_wager).

The Lesson? Be joyful in hope (Romans 12:12, NIV). Resurrection is waiting for you. You will inherit the eternal glory in Christ.

Finally, let's talk about what God wants us to do here and now.

3. **Commission** (Present)

Christ says, we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14) and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). Christ sends us out to the world with His light, truth, and peace. We are called to carry the good news into the world. What is the good news all about? Christ died for every sinner. In Christ, all will find freedom and hope of resurrection by believing what He has done for them. In Christ, each and every one of them will also find God's unique plan. They will find the truth that God loves them and rejoices over them with singing. We the believers are also called to bring the Kingdom of God into every corner of the world. We are called to change the place where we are into the place where God reigns.

One man I would like to introduce to you this morning. His name was William Wilberforce, the British politician in the 18th century who spearheaded the abolition in the British Empire. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, at age 88, six days before his death, wrote his last letter to William Wilberforce.

"24 February, 1791. Balam. England

Dear Sir:

Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as "Athanasius against the world," I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy,

which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God? O be not weary of well-doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

... That He who has guided you from youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things is the prayer of, dear sir,

Your affectionate servant,

John Wesley”

With God’s help, Wilberforce’s relentless efforts paid off. “In 1807 (note: 16 years after the letter—kc) the abolition of slavery was effected throughout the British Empire.”

(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-2/wesley-to-wilberforce.html>).

The lesson? We have a job to do as believers: deliver the place where we are to God’s reign one place at a time.

Conclusion

We may not be John Wesley or William Wilberforce, yet, God has called each and every one of us into a unique life circumstance where He wants and expects us to be the light and salt of the world. Brighten the corner where you are with God’s light. Begin with your heart. Give it to the Lord. Seek Him with all your heart. Bring the peace of Christ into your home and workplace.

Remember: God has called you according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). You’re called to be God’s agent on earth. Be the blessing of God to all people around you until Christ calls you to His glorious home. Amen. Let us pray.