

# *Defining the Call of God*

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*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.*

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## INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we have been called out of the darkness into God's marvelous light. Our calling is holy and heavenly for it comes from the Lord who is above and in all. It is not something we do to bring about social change and to provide a decent life for ourselves and for our families; indeed, that is the purpose of an *occupation*. But our call is a *vocation*, a lifestyle ordered by the Word of God.

God desires that we bring forth fruit unto godliness, but this will only happen when we allow our lives to be defined by the Word of God. Having this definition produces tremendous stability deep within the soul, which results in an outward application of the truth we receive.

When we operate in our vocation, we abide in a heavenly call empowered by the Holy Spirit through the Word of grace. As a result, our lives will be fertile ground for a full production of all

the fruits of the Spirit. The inward qualities of lowliness and meekness and the outward expressions of longsuffering and forbearance will bring forth unity among the brethren with great peace.

## *Chapter One*

# WALKING IN A VOCATION

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:1-6).

The apostle Paul, writing this epistle from prison, begins the fourth chapter of Ephesians by using the expression, “beseech” (*parakaleo*), which means to call near, to invite, to entreat. He is calling us to cross the bridge from analysis to action, from theology to spirituality. In other words, we are being called to go from knowledge that produces morality (human good) to a

revelation of doctrine that produces a practical lifestyle in the Spirit (divine goodness).

The first three chapters of the book of Ephesians lay the foundation of sound doctrine. In chapter four, the Holy Spirit beseeches us to enter into the practical application of that doctrine.

Paul beseeches us to “walk worthy” of our vocation. “Walk,” the aorist active infinitive of *peripateo*, means that at a point in time, we are to produce the action of ordering our behavior in God’s divine purpose. “Worthy” is *axios*, which means “having the weight of another.” In other words, we must bring everything we know to God’s scale of balance. We should have a balanced walk on the scale of grace.

When God says to “walk worthy,” He means keep going, keep moving, keep progressing, don’t stand still. We must grow and not quit. We do not go backward and forfeit what God has called us into, rather we walk balancing what we hear and what we know with how we live.

### ***The Call to the Assembly***

“Vocation” is *klesis*, an invitation or a divine summons. “Ye were *called*” is *kaleo*. Why is this important? Because a church is a gathering of ‘called out ones’ (*ekklesia*). We must get this truth

into our hearts! Church is not someplace where you just decide to *do* something, like choosing a profession. There is power in the *call*.

For example, in John 11:43, Lazarus had been dead and in the grave for four days. Jesus called to him and said, “Lazarus, come forth,” and Lazarus came out of the grave! The power was in the *call*, in the words that Jesus spoke. Some Christians, however, just decide to *do* something without acknowledging God’s call. But that’s not what Ephesians 4 is teaching. Some scholars say that “vocation” speaks of having doctrine as a profession, a trade, or a class of life. You may need an occupation to make a living, but you need doctrine so you can live. Your occupation must serve your vocation, or it won’t be any good at all. I don’t care how noble or how rich your occupation is; it must relate to your call.

### ***A Royal Priesthood***

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Christianity is not something I just “take

up.” Being a pastor or a missionary is not something I just decide to try. Becoming a member of Christ’s royal priesthood is not something I decide to do one day, like choosing a job. Certainly there is nothing wrong with any occupation, as long as it doesn’t prevent me from serving Jesus Christ in the process. Paul made tents to provide for his material needs. But my *first* call is to make doctrine my profession in life, my trade as a human being.

I bring a revelation of doctrine into application for practical living, which develops my understanding of how to think, choose, initiate, and respond in the details of life. This is my vocation.

Walking worthy of my vocation will make me a good husband, a good father, and a good pastor. A heavenly vocation will make me a good student and a good friend. It will make me someone very valuable to the community. In fact, I will be valuable anywhere I go because I have more than a trade, more than a craft. I have a vocation. It is my *life*, and that’s the key.

### ***Called to Intimacy with Christ***

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto

the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are *called*, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:22-24). The key word in this passage is "called." I've been summoned; I don't have an option. Through the Church, God issues a universal call to the whole world: that men everywhere would repent (Acts 17:30). We are to proclaim that call.

We are called ones. This is why we don't get weary in well-doing. We accept the fact that we are called; we don't struggle with our moods. And along with accepting the call comes the provision for maturity and stability. We preach the Cross, and to those who perish it is foolishness; but to those who are saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Think of it. God, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Lord of everything has given each of us a personal call. And according to Ephesians 4:1, we have a personal accountability and responsibility to that call. First, Paul builds us up in how to think with God, how to derive our thoughts from Him. Then he brings us into the privilege of experiencing God's life. It is not a list of rules or a standard for conduct, but we are called to have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

## *Chapter Two*

# SUMMONED TO WARFARE

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19b). The “standard” is to live by every Word of God in the life of the Spirit (Matthew 4:4). It is reflective thinking with precise illumination of how Christ thinks. This standard is the truth that sanctifies us in John 17:17.

Having God’s standard means that if God has called me to go to Bible college, by God’s grace I will not quit after one semester due to a lack of finances. I will find a way to pay my bills because I know how to pray. I will not quit; I will walk forward in my call understanding that my occupation must always be submitted to my vocation, which is a life of categorical doctrine in the power of the Spirit.

During times of war, nations often reserve the right to summons young men into military

service. It is difficult to imagine that someone would respond by saying, “I would rather not go, if that’s okay with you.” On the contrary, though people do defer for various reasons, the call to military service is taken very seriously. How ironic that people can so casually say no to God, exalting self above the Word of God.

As believers, our walk must have its source in Bible doctrine, not in human good or natural disposition. Some people get saved yet never grow in their walk with God because they rely on their upbringing, their natural disposition, and their natural understanding of moral light. They stabilize at that level and never learn how to derive power for their walk through thinking accurately with God with categorical doctrine in the power of His Spirit.

### ***Maintaining a Vision***

We cannot let our personal vision be weakened. Let’s grow from strength to strength in our valleys. Leave the wilderness filled with pools of living water, instead of old, dried-up places (Isaiah 35:6-7). We go from “strength to strength” (Psalm 84:7), “faith to faith” (Romans 1:17), and “glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). As we are decreasing, Christ is increasing (John 3:30).

Notice what the Word of God says in Romans 8:30, “Moreover whom he did predestinate [because He foreknew who would choose His Son], them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Our calling came *before* our justification and our future glorification.

The reason that we will not go back into the world, that we will not make carnal choices, is this: *We stand on the fact that we have been called.* Second Timothy 1:9 calls it “a holy calling”; Hebrews 3:1 says it is “a heavenly calling”; and Philippians 3:14 calls it “a high calling.” “Holy” means to be separated unto categories, having spirituality with godliness. “Heavenly” speaks of having positional truth above the chief demon of the air (2 Corinthians 10:5; Ephesians 6:12) and the demons of the dust (James 3:15). “The prize of the high calling” speaks of our entrance into maturity to experience the phenomenal rewards of Jesus Christ.

We have a heavenly calling, not an earthly one. The call comes from Jesus Christ, not from men, and everything in our life must submit to that call. It should be every Christian’s vocation and emphasis. Our vocation is to have doctrine as our profession and trade so we can live by

every single Word of God. Then, when we face Jesus Christ individually at the Bema Seat, it can be said of each of us that we honored the mandates of the Word of God. We honor and live up to our vocation, using rebound when we make mistakes and fail, as all of us do.

In Matthew 17, Peter, James, and John were on the mountain with Jesus Christ when He was transfigured. But after that glorious experience, they had to go down into the valley. Their call for that hour was to be in the valley.

### ***Quickened to Grow***

“Even when we were dead in sins, [He] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:5-6).

We couldn’t quicken ourselves; we were quickened by the *call*. When we were dead, we were quickened with Him, raised up with Him and seated with Him. *The power was in the Word that called us*. This is so important to understand, because the average Christian does not know how to abide in his calling (1 Corinthians 7:20).

Don’t change your vocation and place your occupation above it. Don’t treat Christianity and

receiving sound doctrine as a second-rate experience.

### ***Seeds Sown on the Inside***

Titus 2:10 speaks of adorning “the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” This principle means that our vocation springs from the Word of God within us.

Consider this with me. When a farmer puts a seed into the ground and buries it, there will be a season where there is no evidence of growth. Then the sun will shine and showers will come. The seed germinates and begins to grow though it’s hidden. Then finally, a little sprout pushes its way through the ground. For a time, there was no evidence of growth. But through the changes of weather and the process of time, the seed grew. God nurtured it because His life was in the seed.

The Word of God is an incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23). The seeds of the Word of God that go inside our souls have God’s life in them. Just as the seed in the earth goes through changes because of the weather, we go through various patterns of thinking and behavior in response to what goes on in the world around us.

Sometimes we may become incompatible with our Creator and stray outside of God's boundary lines of the Word into transgression. Still, the sunshine and the showers from heaven come down to nourish that incorruptible seed within us. It may appear that someone you love is not growing, and you may think they are not going to make it. But it's just a matter of time before the life in the seed causes the little green shoot to break the surface of the ground.

Even when there is no evidence of growth in the lives of those around you, it doesn't mean that they are not growing. The grace of God is working inside them and they will bring forth fruit, which is evidence of growth, in due season. Remember, it is the grace of God that teaches us how to grow.

## Chapter Three

# CHRIST'S WALK IN US

In Christ we have our heavenly standing (Ephesians 2:6; Romans 5:2). In Him are the riches of grace. All of His ways are perfect. In *us*, however, Christ must have His earthly walk—a true expression of His character as He dwells in us and manifests Himself through us, His body.

*In us*, Christ has His walk on earth (2 Corinthians 6:16). That is the call of God, and the call is in the Word. Our vocation is His Word, categorical doctrine—how to think as He thinks while we grow in grace, rebounding when we fail.

How are we to walk? “With all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2). “Lowliness” is *taipeinophrosune*, meaning that inwardly I think and live in the spirit of grace through humility produced by the Holy Spirit when I take up the Cross. Lowliness springs from a true esti-

mation of myself. Lowliness is what I am like inside as I think in grace, which is unmerited favor. It is thinking in love with a humility that is produced not by self-effacement, but by the Cross of Calvary. I experience the truth of my death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, and this produces humility in the presence of God who indwells me: “I will  *dwell in them, and walk in them...*” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

### ***Meekness***

Next, we are to walk with “meekness”—*kaipraotes* in the Greek. No one who depends on human good and natural disposition is meek. People who get angry in a moment have never had the Spirit’s fruit of meekness. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, *meekness*, and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23).

Meekness, then, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that brings in a divine disposition. It is produced by being humbled and accepting retroactive positional truth for personal application and experience as I accept my vocation in the power of His Word. The truth of my position is retroactive, because two thousand years ago I was crucified, buried, and resurrected *in Christ*.

Meekness is in-wrought grace that takes over the capacity of my mind, emotions, conscience, self-consciousness, and volition. It renders my old sin nature dormant because of the activity of the retroactive truth of Calvary.

In myself, I can never produce meekness. If I have the right genetic makeup and moral training, I may try to counterfeit it through human goodness and natural disposition, but I can never produce genuine meekness.

### ***Longsuffering and Forbearance***

Lowliness and meekness are produced in us through the words and power of the Holy Spirit, which give us the ability to abide in the call. Then we are called to walk with “longsuffering.” The Greek word in Ephesians 4:2 is *makrothumia*, not *hupomone*. *Makrothumia* has to do with how I relate to people, while *hupomone* relates to circumstances. Longsuffering is an outward production of the Spirit. God gives us the capacity to be patient and suffer long in relationships with people. There is no reaction, no negativity, no eye-for-an-eye or tooth-for-a-tooth attitude.

Next, the Word of God says “*forbearing* one another in love.” Forbearance works itself out joyfully, happily, peacefully, and kindly. We fore-

bear because of in-wrought grace, humility, and our retroactive life in the Word and the Spirit.

Now our state can correspond to our standing; our walk can reproduce our talk. All of a sudden, we realize that our position now becomes our condition. Our fellowship with each other relates to our relationship with Christ through the Finished Work.

We forbear one another “in love” (*en agape*). This means that love itself is forbearing. This is an obligation in missionary service, but it is something no one can do in his own strength. The Christian who forbears will benefit by having love work in him—a direct result of the Word of God working in his heart.

When a Christian who forbears in love receives the Word, he can accept people in love (Romans 15:7). They bear afflictions (2 Thessalonians 1:4), and they endure hardships (1 Corinthians 4:12). This is the fruit of forbearance, the mechanics of forbearing in the Word of God.

Peace in the soul doesn’t just happen. Neither does lowliness or meekness just happen. Without surrender to God, there can be no conversion. After conversion comes consecration. Then, as I concentrate on the Word, every room in my soul receives the Spirit of the Word and

the Word of the Spirit. Finally, as I apply the truth that Christ has conquered *for* me, as me, on the Cross, then I can be more than a conqueror in this life (Romans 8:37).

### ***Keeping Unity***

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). Unity doesn’t happen by itself. It happens when a Christian practices Ephesians 4:1-2. “Endeavouring” (*spoudazo*) means I am always to choose positively regarding the call, walking worthy with all lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance. As I make right decisions, the truth will take its place in my experience, *keeping* the unity of the Spirit. “Keep” is *tereo*, which implies that I guard and keep a close watch on the unity God has given through the Spirit by making right choices. I choose the thing that will bring me into an eternal purpose among all the members in particular, in the Body of Christ.

So, as we keep the unity of the Spirit “in the bond of peace,” tranquillity is produced because our mind is stayed on God (Isaiah 26:3). Also, “in every thing by prayer and supplication” we make these requests known to God (see Philipians 4:6-7).

## ***One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism...***

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4). The hope of our calling originates in us through our fellowship with the Holy Spirit and a doctrinal lifestyle.

Ephesians 4:4-6 speaks of seven unities: “...one *body*, and one *Spirit*...one *hope* of your calling, one *Lord*, one *faith*, one *baptism*, one *God* and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Why is there so much division throughout the churches of Jesus Christ? It is because people do not take the summons seriously; therefore, they do not define the call of God for their lives.

## ***Controlled by the Spirit***

The Trinity dwells within each of us. If the one Spirit is controlling the one Body, and one Father is above all with one Lord (the Son) executing the Father’s plan within us, then why is there so much division? First Corinthians 1:10 tells us that Christ cannot be divided. Yet division takes place when the Holy Spirit isn’t allowed to take control and the Father’s plan is forgotten. The Son’s characteristics and the Finished Work are neglected, the Holy Spirit is

grieved, and Christianity is reduced to limited dimensions because the whole counsel of God is ignored.

We must begin to take on the *whole* counsel—every Word of God—and grow in it until we finally become mature in practical application of “one faith,” which also speaks of categorical doctrine, for faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

The “one baptism” speaks of the Holy Spirit baptizing each of us into the Body of Christ at the point of our salvation. The Holy Spirit baptizes us into positional union with Jesus Christ. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

## CONCLUSION

More than ever, we need to realize our vocation as it is expressed in us through the Word of God by the Spirit. Our analysis of truth must become applied doctrine in the details of life. Paul beseeches us to walk worthy of the call so that we would be transformed by the revelation of doctrine, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith...unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Our call is not something that we subjectively respond to in human ability and emotion. It is a summons defined from heaven. It is holy, and it sets us apart in this world as we walk in obedience by faith in the Finished Work.

Within us, a great work is being accomplished. We are being steadily transformed as faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word. This definition in our souls will bring outward victories and a great testimony to the faithfulness of God.