

Gifts and Callings

The desire to fulfill His purpose is built into the hearts of all who know the Lord. There has been a lot of discussion among believers about finding one's calling and many have said that God has called me to be/do this or that. This usually sounds good and very spiritual; but, is it what the Lord had in mind? Exactly what does it mean to say that the Lord has “called” us?

The Calling

To understand calling, we need to begin with the purpose or intention of God.¹ In the mind of God, all things were purposed beforehand, including us and the work He designed for us.

Eph 2:10 NASB

(10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

God created us as His workmanship. That means that we are uniquely designed and specifically crafted for the work that we are to do. He also created the work that is His intention for us to accomplish. Both the work and us, as the workers, were in the mind of God beforehand. The work is waiting on us. We have been *called* to do it.

Romans gives us the various steps involved for us as the *elect* of God, *called* according to His purpose.

Rom 8:28-30 NASB

(28) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

(29) For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to *become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

(30) and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

The elect process involves these steps

1. those who have been selected by the foreknowledge of God;
2. these ones are also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son;
3. those who are predestined are called;
4. those called are justified; and
5. those justified are glorified.

¹ For further study on this subject, see the teachings “The Purpose of the Father” and “Developing a Father's Heart”, which are available on the website.

When we are redeemed the Holy Spirit receives from the mind of God what He intends for us to do. The Holy Spirit then begins to make our calling a reality in our life. All that the Holy Spirit does in us is focused on helping us realize the fullness of what God intends for us to be and to accomplish. While the Holy Spirit is our Helper, we must fulfill our role in the process. Nothing gives God greater glory than for our lives to become what He foreknew them to be. God created us for His purpose and when we become what He created us to be, it brings great glory to Him.

Peter tells us that while we have been chosen and called we must be diligent to make it sure.

2Pe 1:10 NASB

- (10) 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;

The things that Peter said that we are to practice were listed in the previous verses and all relate to the characteristics of Jesus becoming a part of us, in other words, we are becoming conformed to Him.

How do we know that we are called? From the verses above, we know that we are called because by the foreknowledge of God we are predestined to become conformed to Jesus. If we are not being conformed to Jesus then we are frustrating the grace of God that called us. [*Please understand that I am not talking about salvation, but our calling and work in the Kingdom*].

The calling is the beginning point, the baseline of our spiritual life. The calling will progress from one context to another throughout the course of our life; but it will remain consistent. The scriptures tell us to remain within the calling in which we were called.

1Co 7:17 NASB

- (17) Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

We see other people operating in different callings and they appear to be exciting and different and popular. We are not to desire a different or new calling, but, instead, remain within the calling in which God called us. That is the only way to be successful in ministry.

We are born into the Family of God by the Spirit. We are called to our work in the Kingdom, also by the Spirit. That calling has to be made sure and its surety is based upon us becoming conformed to the image of the Son. That means that we can be disqualified from fulfilling our full calling.²

However, God doesn't change His mind about our calling.

Rom 11:29 NASB

- (29) for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

2 1 Cor. 9:27. Paul said he kept his body under discipline because he did not want to be disqualified. He certainly wasn't talking about salvation, but was referring to the work that he was called to do.

The Gifts

Not only is the calling of God irrevocable, but the gifts are also. The word for gifts in this verse is “charisma” and means the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The gifts are given to help us accomplish that which the Lord called us to do.

God has called us to work in His Kingdom. The work has already been pre-selected by Him. It is not up to us to decide what we want to do for the Lord. We can only decide if we are going to do what He pre-selected for us to do or not.³

Our calling is fixed, unchangeable. From the time that we are born until we die, our calling was pre-ordained by God. However, gifts can be added by the Spirit at various times according to the need of the circumstances. The gifts are all tools for work. When we receive the Holy Spirit, He brings with Him a fully stocked toolshed and distributes to us any and all tools necessary to do the work of the Lord. As our calling develops (matures) in us and as the job progresses, different tools may be needed for the next stage of the work. We are even told to desire or pursue the gifts, especially prophecy.⁴ However, we need to pursue the gifts *in light of our calling* and not according to what is popular or exciting. It depends on what God has made us to be, our destiny in Him, as to what gifts we need.

Our ministry does not originate from the gifts of the Spirit. Our ministry is consistent with our calling and is the way that we pursue our calling in God. The gifts support our calling. They are the ways that the Holy Spirit empowers us to do what God has called us to do. The functioning of the gifts has to do with making us capable and competent to accurately and consistently pursue the work of God.

Functional Problems with Gifts and Callings

Why do there seem to be so many problems when we try to exercise our gifts and callings?

Calling. We have a problem even defining our calling within the denominational church structure. We sense in our spirit that God has called us to do something but can't seem to reconcile our spiritual senses with the denominational opportunities.

The denominational church only recognizes certain types of “spiritual” ministry: pastor and evangelist. If you can't fit into these, then you don't have a “spiritual” ministry within the denominational church since 80% of the five-fold ministry doesn't exist within their structure.

However, they have all sorts of “church” ministry to keep you busy: nursery, Sunday school teacher, usher, greeter, visitation, bus driver, youth ministry, music, and many more. Most of these would not exist if there was not a denominational structure to begin with, so, I ask you, how many of these would the Lord classify as spiritual service to Him? *[I am not saying that these are not good and necessary. I am saying that they are only necessary because we have built a non-biblical church structure.]* Many believers spend their lives doing busy work for a

3 Ephesians 2:10

4 “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.” (1Co 14:1 NASB)

denominational church and never fulfill their God ordained calling in His Kingdom.

The lack of expressed callings within the denominational churches has resulted in few mentors that are available to help believers discover their callings and learn how to function within them. This lack of mentors has resulted in some confusion and lack of order in many who are trying to walk in their calling.

Our calling cannot be fulfilled within an organizational structure. The Lord designed His Church as a living organism, the Body of Christ. This is spiritual reality not any church organization. Because of His design, our calling relates to His purposes not ours. To accomplish His calling for us we must function within the true Body of Christ as intended and not in some position in an organizational structure.

Gifts. One of the biggest problems in this area is the fact that many people want to pick and chose their gifts. The Lord doesn't allow this. As we said, the gifts are given as tools to be used in accomplishing our work. This could even be tongues. If we refuse to accept tongues or believe that tongues are not necessary then we could be limiting the work that the Lord wants done.

Another big problem is when we think that exercising a gift is our ministry. An example of this is the "healing ministry". The gifts of healing or even miracles is not a ministry in and of itself. They are signs to testify to the Kingdom of God. Placing too great an emphasis on the gifts obscures our calling. The gifts support ministry but they are tools used to further the purposes of God.

It is also a problem when we don't recognize that there are two types of the gifts of God (three if you count Jesus as the Gift of the Father). The first type is the gifts of the Spirit, the *charisma* gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12. The second type is the gifts of Jesus, the *doma* gifts listed in Eph. 4. The *charisma* gifts are the tools and empowerment of the Spirit. They are part of our maturing process in the development of our calling. As our calling matures, we become a *doma* gift of Jesus to His people and workers in the Kingdom of God. As a *doma* gift, Jesus is manifested in His ministry in the area of our calling.