

Discovering My Calling

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's enabling and the Lord's help, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, and if we read again from the beginning, where Paul writes, Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and to our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In the 21st century church, you could say that we hear a lot about the Lord's calling on our lives, because there are many Christians and some young Christians, and they're taken up with the question, what's God's calling on my life?

What's God's calling on my life? And they feel the need to discover God's calling on their life. To the point that it almost becomes this buzzword where you talk about discovering my calling.

Discovering my calling. Now, I'm not, by saying this, I'm not trying to undermine the fact that God does call people into full-time ministry, nor am I trying to minimize the importance of God's call.

But that aside, there are many who talk about discovering my calling. And they ask, what is God calling me to do? What is God calling me to do? But you know, sometimes thinking about that, I think, we think about discovering my calling because we've actually forgotten that as Christians we've already been called.

[2 : 06] We talk about discovering my calling, and yet we've forgotten the very fact that as Christians we've already been called. And you know, this evening, I just want to say from the outset that you don't need to discover your calling.

Because if you're a Christian, you've already been called. If you've repented of your sin and turned to Jesus Christ for salvation, if you're in Christ, in union with Christ, if you're walking with the Lord tonight, if you're a disciple of Jesus tonight, then you've already been called.

You've been called to be a Christian. And you know, this is how Paul begins his first letter to the Corinthians. He reminds the Corinthians that they've been called, and they've been called to be Christians.

But not only the Corinthians, Paul says in verse 2, he says that this calling applies to every Christian in every place. It applies to everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, which means you and me.

This applies to us this evening. And so this evening, I just want us to discover or even rediscover our calling. I want us to remind ourselves, what is a Christian?

[3 : 25] Very, very simply, what is a Christian? Because in this passage, Paul says that a Christian is someone who is called to sainthood, called to share, and called to serve.

What is a Christian? A Christian is someone who is called to sainthood, called to share, and called to serve. So we look first of all at called to sainthood.

What is a Christian? You're called to sainthood. Look at verse 2. Paul says, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.

You know, what we see from the outset of this letter is that Paul describes the Corinthian Christians as those who have been sanctified in Christ, and they've been called to be saints.

And as you know, the words sanctified and saints, they are synonymous. They mean the same thing, because they both come from the same root word that emphasizes holiness.

[4 : 33] And these words, sanctified and saints, they indicate the importance of living a holy life with a distinct lifestyle and a distinct worldview that imitates and emulates the holiness of God.

But you know, what's remarkable is that Paul described the Corinthian Christians this way. Because the thing is, they weren't acting like Christians.

The Corinthian Christians weren't living a holy life that was distinct in their lifestyle and distinct in their worldview from those around them. They were doing the complete opposite. In fact, it's said that the Corinthian Christians were the most carnal Christians that Paul ever had to deal with. Because the church in Corinth, it was a worldly church. It was a church that was obsessed with worldly distractions and worldly desires. And as a result of their worldliness, there was quarreling. There was divisions among the church members. We see that even in chapter 1. We read there, it has been reported to me, this is verse 11, by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

[5 : 42] What I mean is that each one of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Christ, I follow Cephas. There's division among them. But more than that, as you go through the letter, you see that there was immaturity among the Corinthian Christians, which resulted in many sinful activities taking place in the church.

There was sexual immorality. There was homosexuality. There was pride. There was idolatry. There was the abuse of spiritual gifts. They were even getting drunk as they sat at the Lord's Supper.

And you know, if we were to see the actions of the Corinthian Christians, if we were to see them firsthand, we'd probably write off the whole congregation and say, no, no, no, they're a synagogue of Satan.

They're not a Christian church at all. And yet the amazing thing about this letter is that Paul loved the church in Corinth. And Paul loved them simply because Christ loved them and Christ gave himself for them.

And it's because of Christ's love for the Corinthians that Paul sought to remind them of their calling as Christians. Which is why Paul says that Christians are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints.

[7 : 01] Now, when Paul uses these two phrases, he's drawing attention to two experiences in the life of the sinner. He says that first of all, a sinner becomes a saint when they're sanctified in Christ.

A sinner becomes a saint when they're sanctified in Christ. And they're sanctified in Christ by their union with Christ.

They're united to Jesus Christ. And you know, Paul, he loves the concept of union with Christ. Paul writes about it in almost every one of his letters.

And he emphasizes to all these churches, he says, how precious our salvation is because of our union with Christ. Because we're united to Jesus Christ. Paul says that every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, it flows to us all because we're in Christ.

We're united to Jesus Christ by faith. We're in union with Christ. Therefore, a sinner becomes a saint when they're sanctified through their union with Christ.

[8 : 09] They're sanctified in Christ. But more than that, he says, a sinner becomes a saint when they're called. When they're called to sainthood.

They're called, he says, to be saints together with all those in every place who call upon the name of the Lord. And the calling which Paul is referring to is effectual calling.

He's saying that a sinner becomes a saint when they're effectually called and united to Jesus Christ. Now, what is effectual calling?

Well, our catechism describes it so beautifully. And if you don't know this catechism question, memorize it. Because this is how you were saved. Effectual calling is a work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery and enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as he's freely offered to us in the gospel. My friend, a sinner becomes a saint when they're sanctified in Christ and they're effectually called to be saints. A sinner becomes a saint when they're sanctified in Christ by their union with Christ and effectually called to be saints.

[9 : 33] Now, this calling, called to be saints, we have to remember that there are two types of call. Because there's the outward call and there's the inward call.

The outward call is the gracious call of the gospel that goes out to whosoever. And the outward call of the gospel is resistible.

It can be resisted. And we see evidence of that everywhere. We see evidence of people resisting the gospel everywhere. We see it in our homes.

We see it in our own families. We see it in our congregation. We see it even in our community. And my Christian friend, you saw it in yourself, did you not? For you were coming to church for years. You went through Sunday school. You sat and listened to different preachers for many years. And for years you were under the sound of the gracious outward call of the gospel to come to Christ.

[10 : 34] And yet you resisted that call. You suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. You sat under the preaching of God's word. But it just washed over you. It had no effect upon you.

It may have stirred your emotions. It may have challenged your intellect. It may even have pricked your conscience from time to time. But it didn't ever cause you to commit your life to Jesus Christ. It had no effect upon you. Until you were inwardly and effectually called. And the thing about the inward effectual call of the gospel is it's irresistible.

It's irresistible. That's why we call it irresistible grace. Because when the Holy Spirit begins to work in your heart and life, he draws you to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, as the catechism puts it, he convinces you of your sin and misery.

He convinces you that you're a miserable sinner. But more than that, the Holy Spirit, he makes you see. He enlightens your mind and the knowledge of Christ.

[11 : 38] He makes you see that Jesus is a wonderful savior. But he continues to work. He renews your will. And he persuades you. He even enables you to embrace Jesus Christ as he's freely offered to you in the gospel.

My friend, when the Holy Spirit is working in your heart and life, you can no longer resist or refuse.

Because you're brought to the point where you have to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ.

You have to do it. That's where he brings you. The Lord brings you right to that point where you have to submit your heart and life to Jesus. And in that moment, you are effectually called.

You're called from being a sinner to a saint. And as a Christian tonight, you can rejoice. Because you're sanctified in Christ through your union with him.

And you've been called to be a saint. And as a saint, as a Christian, you've been called to live a holy life that is distinct.

[12 : 49] Distinct in lifestyle. Distinct in worldview. And a lifestyle that imitates and emulates the holiness of the God you love. You're sanctified in Christ.

You're called to be a saint. Therefore, our responsibility is to die to sin. And live evermore to righteousness. That's your calling as a Christian.

You've been called to sainthood. And you know, Peter, the Apostle Peter, he put it so beautifully in his letter. When he described the Christian living in a world that is hostile to the gospel.

When Peter was speaking to the first century church, he told the first century church that was struggling. Struggling to cope with the worldliness around them. But he said to them, remember. Remember that you're a chosen generation. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. A peculiar people. And you've been called. You've been called. Why?

[13 : 49] So that you might show forth the praises of him. Who has called you from darkness. Into his marvelous light. Peter was reminding the Christians. That's your purpose.

You've been called to be saints. In order that you would show forth the praises of him. Who called you. That's your purpose. You're to show forth the praises of him.

Who called you from darkness. Into his marvelous light. My Christian friend. We've been sanctified in Christ. And we've been called to be saints.

That's our calling. That's what a Christian is. A Christian is someone who is called to sainthood. But secondly, a Christian is someone who is called to share.

Called to share. So called to sainthood. And secondly, called to share. Look at verse 9. Paul says, God is faithful.

[14 : 46] By whom you were called into the fellowship of his son. Jesus Christ. Our Lord. You know, in this passage, Paul not only reminds us that we've been called to be saints.

He also says that we've been called to serve. We've been called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. And this is interesting.

Because Paul says that a Christian has been called out. And they've been called in. A Christian has been called out. And they've been called in. A Christian has been called out of darkness.

And called into the marvelous light of the gospel. A Christian has been called out from being a lost sheep. And called into the fold of the Good Shepherd. A Christian has been called out of a life of sin.

Into a life of salvation. A Christian has been called out of slavery. Into a life of service. A Christian has been called out of the world. and called into fellowship.

[15 : 47] Fellowship with Christ and the Christian. And you know, Paul's use of language here is fascinating. Because when he addresses the Corinthians, he addresses them in verse 2 as the church.

He says the church of God that is in Corinth. And the word church, we get it, it's the Greek word ekklesia, which literally means called out.

Called out, ekklesia, called out. And so my friend, the church in this community, the church in this community is not this 175 year old building.

The church in this community are those who have been called out. The church in this community are the Christians in this community who have been called out of darkness.

You, my friend, you, my Christian friend here tonight, you've been called out of darkness. Called out of lostness. Called out of slavery. Called out of a life of sin.

[16 : 52] Called out from the world. You are the church in this community. You are the ekklesia. You are the church. But as a church and as a Christian, you've not only been called out, you've also been called in.

You've been called into the marvelous light of the gospel. You've been called into the fold of the good shepherd. You've been called into a life of salvation. You've been called into service, where you serve your king.

You've been called, as Paul says in verse 9, into the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what he says. God is faithful by whom you are called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Paul says that a Christian has been called to share. They've been called into fellowship with Jesus. And this word fellowship, it's a beautiful word really.

It's the Greek word koinonia. Koinonia. The koine Greek was the common language that everybody spoke. Because they shared everything with one another.

[18 : 03] And that's what the word koinonia means. It means sharing. Fellowship. Partnership. Communion. Koinonia. And what Paul is highlighting is that because a Christian is called to be a saint and sanctified in Christ through their union with Christ, a Christian is also called into fellowship with Christ.

A Christian is called into fellowship with God the Son. You are in fellowship with God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you know, in our fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, he shares with us all the blessings and benefits of salvation. He shares with us.

This is what salvation is. He shares with us his righteousness. He shares with us peace with God. He shares with us joy in life, hope in death, the promise of grace by the way, and glory in the end. My friend, when you're called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, he shares with us all the blessings and benefits of salvation. And you know, that's why Christianity and being a Christian, it's not a religion of rules and regulations and rituals.

[19 : 24] This is what makes it wonderful. It's a personal relationship with the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the thing is, as a Christian, you're enabled to have communion and fellowship with him, where he shares everything of his with you.

But you're also enabled to share everything of you with him. You're able to share with him all your struggles, whether it's struggles with sin, struggles with sickness, struggles with sorrow.

He shares everything with you, and you're enabled to share everything with him. You're able to share it with him because you've been called to share. You've been called into the fellowship of Christ.

But you know, is it not the case, my friend, that fellowship with Jesus Christ, it also includes fellowship with other Christians? Because the wonderful thing is, every Christian is in union with Christ.

Every Christian is in fellowship with Christ. Every Christian shares with Christ. Therefore, there's this common bond between all Christians, or there should be.

[20 : 37] There's this union. There's this communion with Christ. And you know, that's why sitting at the Lord's table together is such a blessing. Because we're sitting with others who have not only been sanctified through union with Christ, and called to be saints, but the thing about other Christians is that they love and follow Christ, and they also enjoy communion and fellowship with Christ.

That's why we always have to remember we've been called out of the fellowship of the world, and we've been called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. And you know, Paul makes this emphasize to the Christians in Corinth because there was so much division among them.

Paul stressed the need for fellowship. That they needed to be coming together because they're all one in Christ. They're united in Christ.

But you know, fellowship was impossible when there were still divisions among them. Fellowship was impossible when there was animosity between them. Fellowship was impossible when they weren't talking to one another or making boasts about themselves.

Fellowship would be impossible then. And fellowship was impossible when Christians who had been called out of fellowship with the world were still having fellowship with the world.

[22 : 00] And as we said, that was the sad reality for the Corinthian Christians. They were so worldly. They were too close to the world. They were enjoying fellowship with the world. The world was in the Christian and the Christian was in the world.

But you know, out of love and compassion towards them, Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians and he reminded us, we can't have both.

We can't have both. We can't have fellowship with Christ and fellowship with the world. James writes in his own letter, anyone who has fellowship with the world, who's a friend of the world, is an enemy of God.

And you know, this must have been a big issue in Corinth because Paul mentions it again in his second letter. He says in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, he says to the Corinthians yet again, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship, what koinonia has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial?

[23 : 06] Or what portion does the believer share with the unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of the living God with idols? And Paul says to the Corinthians and to us as Christians, you are the temple of the living God.

We've been sanctified in Christ. We've been called to be saints. We've been called out of fellowship with the world and called into fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Therefore, says Paul, we are to be separate from the world. And come out from among them and touch not the unclean thing. Of course, that doesn't mean we're to isolate ourselves in a holy huddle and become like nuns in a monastery.

Not at all. As I mentioned to you many times before, even on Wednesday evening, separation is not isolation. It's contact without contamination.

That's how the Christian must live. Separation is not isolation. It's contact without contamination.

But my friend, our fellowship, our sharing, our koinonia, it must be with Christ and the Christian.

[24 : 19] Because as those who have been called to sainthood and called to share, were to do as Paul was saying in verse 2, were to call upon the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

And you know, what he says in verse 2, he says, all those in every place who call upon the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He says, we're to call upon his name as the church and we're to do it together in fellowship and we're to do it by praying together, calling upon the name of the Lord, by praying together, calling upon the name by studying God's word together, calling upon the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ by sharing our experiences together.

Because as you know, fellowship with Christ and fellowship with other Christians, it's fundamental to our spiritual growth. How can we grow in our relationship with the Lord and our relationship with the Lord's people if we isolate ourselves?

How can we develop as a Christian if we're not in communion and fellowship with Christ and the Christian? How can we protect ourselves from falling away if we neglect the gathering together of the saints?

There needs to be fellowship with Christ and fellowship with other Christians. And you know, fellowship, it's far more than having theological discussions that are of no benefit to anyone.

[25 : 43] You know, I've been in fellowships before and they just go round in circles trying to answer the unanswerable questions of scripture and they get nowhere. And people say that's fellowship.

That's not what Paul calls fellowship. Not at all. Paul says that fellowship, *koinonia*, it's sharing. Sharing.

It's about sharing Christian experience. It's about pointing out the problems and the pitfalls of the Christian life. It's about highlighting all the joys of being a Christian, but also all the sorrows of being a Christian.

That's *koinonia*. That's fellowship. It's sharing about what the Lord has taught us in order to benefit other people who might be younger in the faith or going through the same experience that we've been through in order to build them up.

Because it's all about building up one another. It's all about iron, sharpening iron so that we're spurred on to faithful and godly living.

[26 : 47] That's what fellowship is about. And that's what we've been called to. We've been called to be saints. And we've been called to share. But lastly, Paul reminds us that as a Christian, we've been called to serve.

Called to serve. So called to sainthood, called to share, called to serve. In verse 1, Paul says, Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus and our brother Sosthenes.

Although Paul, he opens his letter by reminding the Corinthians that he's been called to serve. Paul always knew that before he was called to serve, he was called to be a saint.

And he was called to share. But you know, when Paul introduces himself here in verse 1, I think he makes a valuable point about his calling as a Christian.

Because as a Christian, Paul knew that he had been called out of sin and called into salvation by Jesus Christ. And as a Christian, Jesus was the one whom Paul was to imitate and emulate.

[28 : 01] And Paul always knew that following Christ, it involved denying self and taking up his cross. But you know, Paul also knew that his greatest example of service was Jesus himself.

As the gospel reminds us, Jesus Christ came not to be served, but to serve and to give up his life as a ransom for many. Therefore, a Christian is called to serve.

In fact, as we mentioned on Wednesday evening, speaking about the craftsmen who built the tabernacle, we're saved to serve. We're saved to serve. We're not saved to be stagnant, static, or stationary.

We're saved to serve. We're not saved to be statues who are standing still. We're saved to serve. My friend, if we're not, we're not saved to be even selfish, self-centered.

We're self-seeking. No, we're saved to be selfless, self-denying, and self-sacrificing. We are saved to serve.

[29 : 13] Why? Because, as we said earlier, the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. And if we need to know what service looks like, then all we need to do is look at Jesus.

We need to look at his example. And that's even what Paul told the Philippians. When he told them that they needed to understand what a servant-like heart and mind is, Paul said, look at Jesus.

He says in Philippians 2, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself.

He didn't exalt himself. He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. If we want to know what service looks like, look at Jesus.

As Christians, if we want to know what service is, look at Jesus. He's the example. Our Saviour saved by serving and we've been saved by our Saviour to serve.

[30 : 33] Our Saviour saved by serving and we've been saved by our Saviour to serve. We've been called to serve.

And you know, you might view your service as inadequate or insignificant or even irrelevant. But you know, the Lord doesn't think so.

The Lord doesn't think so. You know, I take great comfort in what Paul says about our calling to serve. He says in verse 26, near the end of the chapter, he says, consider your calling.

Consider your calling, he says. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.

[31 : 40] So that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

So that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. Our service, we've been called to serve, not to boast in self, but to boast in the Lord, to praise him.

That's why we've been called to serve. My friend, Paul says that we've been called to serve. because our service, our service to the king, whether it's presenting, counting money, or cleaning the church, making tea and coffee for fellowships, baking, organizing, doing the creche, Sunday school, being the church officer, speaking to people about their soul, inviting people to church, or praying for people.

That's a great ministry. or encouraging people, or even preaching to people, whatever service the Lord has given to us. Our service is, our service is to be done to the glory of God, for the glory of God.

Our boast, our boast, says Paul, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. It's all to be done as unto the Lord.

[33 : 09] We've been called to serve. And so, tonight, you don't need to discover your calling. You now know what it is.

A Christian, as a Christian, you've already been called. You've been called to sainthood, called to share, and called to serve.

You've been called to sainthood, called to share, and called to serve. That's what a Christian is. That's what a Christian is.

As a Christian, you've been called to sainthood, called to share, called to serve. But for those of you who might not say that you're a Christian, tonight, why are you not a Christian?

You might say, well, I haven't been called. Well, you've heard the gospel. You've heard the call. It's time to come.

[34 : 15] It's time to come. There are no excuse for not being a Christian. There's no excuse good enough for not committing your life to Jesus Christ. It's not about time.

Really, it's not about time that you committed your life to him and cast your lot in with Jesus.

Because, you know, every Christian in here this evening would say it's the best life ever.

Because when you're called, you're called to sainthood, called to share, and called to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we marvel that we are able to be Christians at all, that we take wonder at salvation, and we thank thee and we praise thee that salvation exists, and it exists for the sinner, that the sinner is invited to come and be a saint, a saint not by themselves, but only through Christ.

And Lord, that we would follow, that as thy people, Lord, even here this evening, that we would live our lives for the glory of God and the furtherance of thy kingdom. O Lord, bless thy truth to us.

[35 : 39] Teach us thy way. Give to us even the prayer of the psalmist, where he said, teach me thy way and in thy truth. O Lord, then walk will I, unite my heart, that I thy name may fear continually.

Bless us, Lord, in the week ahead, a week that is unknown to any of us, but we give thanks, Lord, that this is where we are found at the beginning of it, in the Lord's house, on the Lord's day, giving praise and thanks to thee for thy goodness to us.

Go before us, then we pray. Bless us in our being together, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing to God's praise in Psalm 31.

Psalm 31 in the Scottish Psalter, page 243. Psalm 31, we're singing from verse 21 down to the end of the psalm.

Psalm 31. Psalm 31. Psalm 31. Psalm 31. Psalm 31. All praise and thanks be to the Lord, for he hath magnified his wondrous love to me within a city fortified.

[36 : 56] And we'll sing on down to the end of the psalm. Be of good courage and his strength unto your heart shall send all ye whose hope and confidence doth on the Lord depend.

These verses of Psalm 31 to God's praise. Amen. O praise and thanks to the Lord, for he hath magnified his wondrous love to me within a city fortified.

of y Fighter Spirit for O thine eyes, the top I am.

I in my haze had said, My voice yet hurts the wind to leave.

With Christ my moon, my moon. Love the Lord, all ye his saints, Because the Lord doth guard The faithful and he plenteously Proud doers doth reward.

[39 : 18] Be of good courage and his strength.

Unto your heart shall send All ye whose hope and confidence Doth on the Lord depend.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.