

Elements Of Motivation (Part 5)

Our High Calling

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In this series we have so far covered the fear of God, vision, hope, and obligation. There must be a great hope, and there must be a deep sense of obligation. To these we are going to be adding "who we are." We must understand who **we** are.

Sometimes it seems as though all of life's time is divided between just two activities: work and play. One is looked forward to with eager anticipation, and the other very frequently is not looked forward to with very much anticipation. When it is viewed in that manner, the major difference between the two is one of attitude.

Work is frequently that attitude in which the expending of time and energy is perceived to be drudgery, or a necessary duty. It can even be perceived as an evil which one must do before one can spend time doing something that is more pleasurable. Work is therefore generally viewed in a much less favorable light than play. One result is that work leaves us feeling drained. Sometimes work leaves us in a cross attitude, hardly being able to wait until we can get away from it.

On the other hand, we may expend a great deal more energy playing than we would ever think of spending in work. We finish it feeling tired, but also exhilarated and wishing that we had more time to spend doing it. We hate to stop, but the necessity of other things impinging upon our time makes us stop.

You may have heard the story about the contractor who was seeking to advance one of his workers into a supervisory position. He asked two bricklayers the same question, but received two very different replies. These replies revealed which man had the greater vision, and thus perceived work in an attitude far more likely to produce more and better work.

The question he asked the first man was, "What are you doing?" He replied, "I am laying bricks." He asked another man the same thing, and he replied, "I am building a beautiful building." The first man only saw that which was immediately before him. The second man not only saw what was immediately before him, but he saw it in relationship to the end result.

In John 4 there is a very interesting story in regard to Jesus, to work, and to attitude. I am going to show you here what a difference an attitude can make.

The background on this is that Jesus' ministry was gaining attention in Judea. In fact it was gaining so much attention He began to be concerned things might conclude too quickly here. He needed to get out of there and begin doing some preaching somewhere else. In an effort to avoid arousing even more attention and having a direct clash with the Pharisees, He moved His work out of Judea and went north into Galilee. The shortest route to Galilee went through Samaria, through the land of the hated Samaritans.

John 4:3-4 He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.

The *King James Version* says, "And he must needs go through Samaria." Modern English would say, "He *had* to go that way." Let me explain. There were two ways from Judea to get to Galilee, and either one of those two roads would take Him there. The one went *around* Samaria, and the shorter one went *through* Samaria, and so He had a choice which way to go.

The way the apostle John wrote this it could indicate He was led to choose the shorter route rather than take the longer one; thus when John wrote it he said, "He had to go that way." No, He did not *have* to go that way, but it looks as though God *led* Him that way, and so then He went directly through Samaria.

John 4:6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

By the time the Jesus and His disciples reached Jacob's well, Jesus was exhausted. Most of the modern versions fail to give the force of His tiredness, because it takes a greater number of English words to parallel what the Greek says. They say that He sat down just as He was. That is very literal. In more modern terminology it means that He wearily *flopped* down! It sounds almost crude when it is said in relationship to Jesus, but He wearily flopped down. What is indicated is that His tiredness was much more than the tiredness that would accrue to somebody from traveling. There was mental exhaustion there as well.

I think it is very easy for us to fall into a pattern of thinking of Jesus as the all-conquering and mighty Messiah who summarily swept aside every obstacle in His path, almost as if they did not exist. But John shows us a Jesus who was not freed from the struggles with

His humanity. He was tested in all things like as we are.

Even when He was bone-weary He did not allow that to be a justification for sinning, like we do. We say, "I didn't really mean to do that, but I was tired and had a lot of aggravation." Or we say, "Somebody pulled out in front of me, and I did that." We do those kinds of things all the time. We make justification for something that we really should not have done.

Jesus had the same kind of things happen to Him, but it never led to a justification for a sin. It never led to a sin. It had to be this way for Him if He was going to be fully prepared to function as our High Priest because He experienced the kind of obstacles that we have to overcome.

I am thinking of something that happened to me this past week. I do not think it led to a sin in this case. It was Wednesday, and I felt especially weary. It was not the kind of weariness where my muscles were real tired. I felt mentally wearied. I did not want to think on anything serious, at least for a while anyway, and so I convinced myself that the way to relax my mind was to watch something on television.

And so I went and watched the movie *Stars and Stripes Forever*. It was about the life of John Philip Sousa. That movie is filled with marches that just really get your blood stirring, and afterward I did feel a great deal better. A lot of the tiredness left my mind.

Now in relation to Jesus, God wants us to understand that He was tested in all things like as we are, yet without sin. Whenever Jesus speaks, we can be fully confident that He has every right to speak, not merely because He is God, but because He has experienced the limitations and weaknesses of His manhood. It is good to remember that "the Word became flesh." Jesus was bone-weary, and when He came to that well He flopped down, exhausted.

Jesus' manhood was not something that was merely apparent. It was a real participation in humanity's frailties, and therefore work was just as fatiguing to Him as it would be for us. The background of this story about the woman at the well begins with a bone-weary Jesus pretty much worn out.

John 4:31 In the meanwhile his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

The disciples left Jesus at the well and went into Samaria to buy food. It is kind of an interesting thing to consider them going into the city of Samaria. I am sure their minds

were already beginning to change in their attitude toward these people as a result of their association with Jesus. The Jews would have nothing to do with the Samaritans, but here they did. They went into the city in the midst of all these people and began buying food so that they could eat. When they came back they found a far different Jesus from the one they left.

John 4:32-34 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that you know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Has any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus said unto them, My meat [My food] is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

When the disciples came back His hunger was gone. His exhaustion had ended and He was full of fresh vigor, and He was ready to go on doing the work. Their first thought was that somebody had given Him food and that He had been energized by it, but that was not it at all. Jesus' reply makes it very clear that He was re-invigorated by something entirely different. The common approach is that Jesus was stimulated by doing God's work.

There is no doubt that involvement in work produces further stimulation. I think everyone of us has experienced that. If there is a job we dread doing, it almost seems as though the attitude erects a barrier to keep us from getting started, and so we drag ourselves into beginning it, but once we get going, it seems to create an energy. Our attitude changes and it is not long before we are really into it.

The actual doing of the work does create an impetus to change the attitude toward the work, but that is not what Christ said here. We are going to look at this a little bit more closely. I found this comment in *McClaren's Commentary* on this verse, and I think it is really worth mentioning to reflect on what McClaren said.

Notice that the language of the original is so constructed as to give prominence to the idea that the aim of Christ's life was the doing of the Father's will, and that it is the aim rather than the actual performance and realization of the aim which is pointed at by our Lord.

Did you get what McClaren said? Let me explain a little further. What Christ said can better be literally rendered like this: "My food [food is that from which we get strength and energy] is that I **may** do the will of Him that sent me, and finish His work." He is saying that the re-invigoration was derived from making the accomplishment of the

Father's will His ever-impelling motive. It was not the actual work of doing it, but the *motive* for doing the work that was so energizing and re-energizing and stimulating to Him. In other words, it was the thought of seeing it accomplished that was driving Him.

The *Revised English Bible* translates verse 34, "But Jesus said, For Me it is meat and drink to do the will of Him who sent me until I have finished His work." The word *until* properly indicates He was saying that He was being sustained and energized from the motivation to see the work done. So what Christ was saying is, "I'm being motivated by the thought that it is going to get done."

Brethren, this is so important to understand. If our lives are going to be worthy at all, it is going to be first and foremost because of two factors. The first is because of what we aim for in life, and the second is equally important—the recognition of who we are. The first may be simply described by saying, "You've gotta have high hopes!"

Brethren, you have got to shoot for the moon! The higher you shoot in life the greater the possibilities you are really going to accomplish something. If you shoot for low things, you will probably accomplish low things. If you shoot for great things, that is what is going to motivate you. That is what Jesus was saying. "I'm shooting high. It's my aim to hit the highest thing in life." Brethren, there is no higher aim in life for anybody but to do the will of God.

The second factor can be simply understood by grasping why psychologists keep hammering away at parents to work to build their child's self-esteem. If a child does not think he is anything, or that he can do anything, or that he is of no value, or that he is unloved, or that he has no skills, or nothing he ever does measures up, he will not do anything. He will spend his life spinning his wheels in self-pity and fear.

As I said earlier, there is no higher aim in life for a human being than to do the will of the Father. Everything connected to that supersedes all other ambitions in life. I can say that on the authority of Jesus Christ, because He Himself said, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." There is the aim.

Brethren, do you want to see the Kingdom of God on earth ruling over men? Is there anything you need to do to be there? Is it going to motivate you at all to be a part of bringing those wonderful things to earth? This is what Jesus was talking about. He was saying, "This is what gets Me going—the aim of seeing this accomplished. I want to do My part right now to make sure My part is done when this life is over."

The second part of this is very important as well. We are going to turn to some verses

that begin to explain this. The second of these two factors—the recognition of who we are—is understood through the realization of the fact that much of this is being written about us—the sons of God.

I Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things . . .

What things? In Romans 15:4 Paul says everything that was written aforetime is for our admonition. I chose to read I Corinthians 10:11 because the context is a bit more narrow than it is in Romans 15:4. The "*all these things*" happens to be the examples that are listed just prior to this.

I Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition.

Admonition means warning. All these things are written as a warning to whom? To everybody in the world? No. They are written to those "upon whom the end of the world are come." Pray tell, brethren, who is that? These things are warnings to those upon whom the end of the ages—the consummation of the ages, the end, the conclusion, the goal of the purpose of God—is come.

All these things are written for you and me. *We* are the ones to whom this Book is addressed, not the world. It is the sons of God. That is how important you are, and that is how important it is that you recognize this vital part of being motivated to achieve within the work of God. All these things that were written or recorded beforehand are a warning. We are going to attach it to something very specific in verse 14.

I Corinthians 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

This is a warning that we quit sinning. We are going to go to another very interesting one that is written in the same light. This is addressed to you and me.

II Peter 3:11-14 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation [conduct] and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we [brethren], according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

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Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

These things were written by Peter and Paul under the inspiration of God, and they are intended to motivate *the called of God*. I am going to read this from the *Revised English Bible*.

II Peter 3:11-14 (REB) Since the whole universe is to dissolve in this way, think what sort of people you ought to be. What devout and dedicated lives you would live. Look forward to the coming of the day of God and work to hasten it. That day will set the heavens ablaze until they fall apart, and they will melt the elements in flames. Relying on this promise, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which justice will be established. In expectation of all this, my friends, do your utmost to be found at peace with Him, unblemished and above reproach.

Again, see the sense of what I am getting at here. Why is this written? Because you are sitting in the place where you have the power, as it were, to stop the hand of God in your life. You can permit it, or you can stop it. That is your choice. Are you important to what He is doing? I will tell you, brethren, you *are* somebody! I mean it! You are not insignificant in the eyes of God. You are the most important people on earth. He wrote this Book for you. It is a love offering to you so that you will succeed.

Let us look at another one in the book of Luke where Jesus said a number of things.

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

That is a pretty good indication there that we are part of an elite group. There are about five or six billion people on earth right now. How many people really believe the Word of God? How many people has God actually called? How many people are getting their opportunity right now? Jesus knew that it was always going to be a very small number. "Fear not, little flock. It is God's pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is how important you are, so Jesus begins to give an exhortation about making strenuous effort.

Luke 12:33 Sell that you have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags

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which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts.

He is saying that we should put our time and effort in money where it is going to be well worth it to do so.

Luke 12:34-37 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord [in great anticipation] when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he comes shall find watching [being on guard; vigilant]: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

Can you imagine God serving *us*? That is what the inference is—this great Almighty God bending to serve us! That is how important we are. Jesus demonstrated it in type at the Passover.

Luke 12:38-40 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have allowed his house to be broken through. Be you therefore ready also: for the Son of man comes at an hour when you think not.

Brethren, these strong warnings and encouragements apply to only one small unique group of very special people. They are special not because they are great or have much talent or accomplishment to offer God, but because God has summoned them to participate in His work.

In the introduction of Romans 1 there is something very interesting to this subject as to what we are.

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

Romans 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice the phrase "called to be saints" in verse 7, and "called to be an apostle" in verse 1. If your Bible is anything like mine, you will see that "to be" in both of those verses is in italics which means those words are not in the Greek. The insertion of "to be" by the translators is not entirely wrong; however they tend to give us an impression that is misleading. From that impression almost invariably comes a wrong understanding of what Paul is saying here. The words "to be" give an English-speaking person the impression of something future—something that we are going to become, or something that must be earned. That is not what the Greek says.

In verse 1 Paul's apostleship coincided with—was contemporaneous with—his call. The apostleship existed at the very moment he was called. There was no delay. By the appointment of God, it existed immediately. The same is true of those of us. Our sainthood existed *immediately* upon the calling of God. Verse 7 says, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God." The beloved of God are saints, and He loved us when He called us. He did not wait until later.

The word "called" more specifically means "summoned." It does not mean named or designated. The summoned—those of us who are called—does not describe a name by which we are known, but the thing that we are summoned to be. "The called" is our vocation, our work. What is our work? As an individual and as a church, it is "the witness for God."

The word "saint" and the word "holy" express exactly the same idea. The only difference between the two is that they came into the English language from different languages, but both of these words imply separation. They imply consecration. They imply dedication. The common idea in this context here in the Bible is it means "belonging to God." A saint then is one who has been summoned to be dedicated, summoned to be consecrated, summoned to be separated, summoned to belong to God.

Brethren, we are not our own. As a result of the summons of God we have become a part of a very exclusive group. We have joined the others who have also been separated, dedicated, consecrated, and belonging to God. This group's responsibility—their work, their vocation—is to glorify God with their lives. It is from this that the witness of Him shines forth. The glory of the witness arises entirely from "the called" striving for purity of life that matches their Savior's. The witness arises because "the called" respond. The kind of response that God wants is with the way they live their

lives.

Now what if you know this, but you do not care, because you think being the called of God is nothing to shout about? Or what if you think that the high calling God has given to you is not worth a thing? The two factors are missing. I can guarantee you, brethren, you will do nothing. Those two factors have to be together if we are going to be motivated.

We have to see the high calling that we are now a part of, and we have to see how important we are to God's purpose. If we do not strive, the consecration derived from being summoned will not amount to a thing. Brethren, what we are looking at here is the absolutely tremendous privilege that we have of being "the called" of God.

In Amos 3:2 God said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Nobody else. They failed. They failed to see how important they were to the relationship with Him that they had through that covenant. They failed to take advantage of their summons to be the witness for God on earth. They thought it was a little thing. It did not amount to very much in their eyes, and so they failed in their calling.

Brethren, our calling, our summons, is exceedingly higher. Virtue, goodness, purity, righteousness, mercy, joy, and peace all express noble things that we all love to embrace, but they all go for naught unless we see who we are. This is because at the foundation of what is needful to produce them is the idea of holiness, of purity. The saints are those summoned by God to be holy like His Son. If we do not see who we are, we will not shoot high with our lives. We will not make the effort to produce these things because we will not see that this is our life.

I Peter 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Brethren, **this is it!** There are no other chances to grab the brass ring for which life was created. Far too many in the church of God have been deluded into believing in some form of the worldly idea that all one has to do is accept Christ. But brethren, God is creating, and our calling has been made to us for the express purpose of giving us the opportunity to yield to His creative efforts. That is how the purity is produced, and that is how the character is produced. That is how the witness is made.

Every branch of our armed forces has a special elite group to whom is given weighty

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responsibility. They might be called the Rangers, or they might be called the SEALs, or they might be called a S.W.A.T. team, but it is an exceedingly great privilege to be a part of those groups. While I was preparing this sermon I heard an advertisement for the Marine Corps. Their advertising motto is: "The Few. The Proud. The Marines!" I changed it to: "*The Few. The Humbled. The Called.*"

John 4:34 Jesus said unto them, My meat [My food, My refreshment, My nourishment] is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Recall this is where He drew attention to the fact that it was His *desire* to do the will of God, and to finish it. That was what motivated Him. Notice this time He also referred to "Him that sent Me." Brethren, I am going to show you that you have been sent just as surely as Jesus Christ was sent, and just as surely as the apostle Paul was sent. Just as as surely as they were specifically chosen to be sent by that great God, He chose you just as specifically to be a part of that elite group—the body of Jesus Christ, the church.

John 17:3-4 And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have glorified you on the earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do.

Jesus accomplished what He set out to do. He finished the work, and He glorified God in the way that He did it. It was not *merely* what He did; it was the *way* He did it as well.

John 20:21 Then said Jesus to them [the disciples] again. Peace be unto you: as my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

Now this is expanded out to the apostles. We of course all know that the apostles were sent.

I Corinthians 3:6-9 I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase. Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry, you are God's building.

This begins in such a way to lead a person to think of the pronouns here referring to the ministry only. But as we are going to begin to see, it develops out to the idea that *everybody* is encompassed within this. It is not just the ministry. Everybody has a responsibility to the body, because they are a part of the body. Everybody has a responsibility to God. Everybody is in that body because of what God did, and the body is being sent to do the work of God. Now are you going to tell me that you are not laboring in behalf of the work, in behalf of the church of God?

I Corinthians 3:11-13 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build [That is work. It is not restricted to the ministry. It is any man.] upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: Every man's work shall be made manifest.

I Corinthians 3:14 If any man's work abide....

I Corinthians 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned....

I Corinthians 3:16-17 Know you not that you are the temple of God [collectively], and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy.

The temple of God is holy just like the people in it are holy. That is what makes it holy. That is what makes it separate. That is what makes it consecrated. That is what makes it dedicated. That is what makes it belong to God. Everybody is included in this.

Philippians 4:2-3 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat you also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored *with me* in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life.

All of us in the body of Jesus Christ are now considered as sent by God even as Jesus and the apostles. Now I am going to expand it out even further.

John 4:37-38 And herein is that saying true, One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labor: other men labored, *and you* are entered into their labors.

This verse *joins* us with the same work God has had going on from the very beginning—His work of reproducing Himself! Before us were the others like Abel, Enoch, Noah and Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the prophets. You have joined their labors. Maybe that was a bit circuitous, but we need to be impressed by what a huge magnificent operation we have been summoned to in terms of time and purpose. We have been summoned to and sent forth to work within, knowing full well that we are one of very few on earth, in all of time, to whom this privilege has been accorded.

Jesus said that He was invigorated by His desire to see God's will done completely. He knew that it was so great, so good, so magnificent, and beneficial to all, that he wanted to ensure that He did His part to make the completion of that work possible. His complete surrender to God's will was His way of giving love to all of mankind.

Anybody who can bridge the connection between the Sender (God) and His purpose, and us (the called) is going to look at his life in an entirely different way from the rest of mankind. Brethren, that makes your life no longer trivial, small, ignoble, or insignificant. That person's life will be lived every day to see that God's will is done within it. You will be like a soldier on a forced march, or an athlete training to break a record, who drives himself on to whatever goal he is seeking to accomplish. That is the way Jesus was. He recognized who He was. He recognized that He was sent by God, and He gave Himself over totally to His accomplishment. He was a whole burnt offering.

II Peter 1:3 According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue.

There is one word in that verse which is not translated correctly. It is the preposition "to" in "to glory." It actually should be translated "*by glory*," and many Bibles have a notation in the margin on that. It means that God did it on His own. It was not anything that was forced. On His own He then revealed Himself and His will to us.

I Corinthians 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

Hebrews 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

II Thessalonians 1:11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God

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would count you *worthy* of His calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

You undoubtedly noticed that from time to time I used the word "summons" rather than "called" or "calling." I have done this purposely, because it is more correct than the word calling. The reason it is more correct is that in the English language the word "calling" implies generality. It is as though a voice goes out over a group of people randomly much in the same way an advertisement would go out in a newspaper or on television. But that is not what the word "calling" means. It is closer to our English word "summons," which implies a personal invitation.

I do not know whether any of you have been summoned to appear before the police, or summoned to appear before a court. They do not address a summons to your next door neighbor or to the whole neighborhood. A summons is directed specifically to the person they want to appear. That is the correct usage of the Greek word. Tie this together with John 6:44, which says, "No man [no singular individual] can come to the Son unless the Father draw him."

Another place is in Romans 8:29 where it says that "God foreknew us." That means He was analyzing us before He ever made the summons known to us. The word translated into the English "*foreknew*" is a word most of you are very familiar with. It translates into the English "prognosis."

I am going through this particular part because I want us to feel the force of responsibility this puts us under, to recognize that we are in this elite group—the called. We are here only because the great God of heaven and earth specifically summoned us, and by forcefully bringing the gospel of the Kingdom of God to our attention we would then be motivated to use our free moral agency. We would then be free to choose. It is only because of what *He* did. He had to do it specifically for each one of us.

God led us to repentance, to a personal understanding of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and then the acceptance of it. He gives us His Holy Spirit to enable us to obey the obligations of the New Covenant. Brethren, it is the combination of these factors, and a few more, which enables us to see the possibility of why God created human life in the first place. It gives us an understanding of why we were born.

We see in Jesus Christ the pattern of what we ought to be. The motivation to be in His image begins to rise only because we have been summoned and put into this elite group—the firstfruits—in order to make the run for the awesome goal. That is why Paul appealed to us to walk *worthy* of the vocation.

Do you know what the word vocation means? It came into the English from the Latin language through the French. It means a summons. Look it up in Webster's. It means a *summons to a particular state or course of action*. It is a life's work.

Where can we look in the Bible to find out what we are to work at? Let us make this practical. Where can we look for specific counsel? I was telling Evelyn this morning, this hit me like a ton of bricks. Thirty-six years in the church, and finally something that is so simple, but so important, impacted on my mind where the instruction is. Do you know where it is? In almost every case it is right in the context of those verses where we are named "the called." It is usually within a verse or two. That is why I read those verses to you. You start looking around those five verses and you are going to begin to find what God's will is for us in the using of our time and energy.

Just to let you know how big it is, I want you to go to Ephesians 4. Start thinking what Ephesians 4 is about. This is the one that says "there is *one* body, *one* faith, *one* hope, *one* spirit," and so forth, but look at what immediately precedes it.

Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. [Now how can we do that?] With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We are to seek humility, meekness (gentleness), longsuffering (patience), forbearing (putting up with one another), working to produce unity. Verses 4, 5, 6, and 7 tell us to make use of our gifts. He then specifies that the ministry had better use its gifts...in doing what?

Ephesians 4:12-13 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith....

He is telling where we need to yield and how we can live up to this calling. Brethren, this

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thought in his telling us how to live up to our calling does not end until the end of the book of Ephesians. That includes chapter 5, which is all about marriage. It includes chapter 6 which talks about family relationships—children and parents. It then closes with the exhortation to "take on the full armor of God."

There are some very specific instructions, especially in chapter 4, about how to live up to this.

What does it mean to submit to the will of God? In verse 17 he says, "Don't walk as other Gentiles." "Get rid of your vanity." In verse 22 he says, "Put off your former conduct." It mentions lust. Verse 23 says, "Be renewed in your mind." "Speak the truth" in verse 25. "Be angry, but do not sin." "Do not give place to the Devil." "Do not steal." I thought the commandments were done away! He says, "Work with your hands." "Do not let any corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."

Brethren, if you take every one of these verses that has something in it about being called, you are going to find right in the context very specific instruction of how God wants us to fulfill that summons. You do not even have to spend a lot of time looking for it. It is so obvious once the key is revealed. One of the things you will find as you go through Ephesians is that Paul then blends in the word "walking." It means living.

Colossians 1:10-11 That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

Again he launches into specific instruction. I John 3:1-3 ought to make such clear sense of what John is getting at here.

I John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

How many sons of God are walking this earth today of the kind that he is referring to? A small elite group. This is addressed to them.

I John 3:1-3 Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does

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not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man [the called of God, the summoned of God] that has this hope in him, purifies himself.

There is the response. Now to what degree? "Even as He is pure." To the image of Jesus Christ.

II Peter 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall.

Brethren, there is no doubt that we have been summoned to a great cause, and the summons is personal and specific. It presents us the challenge of choosing to living a life worthy of what we have been summoned to. We have been summoned to yield to God's creative effort of reproducing Himself; that is, reproducing His image in us.

Notice in this verse there is a very strong note of urgency. Most modern translations turn that word "diligence" into "urgency"—to be urgent. This emphasizes that we must do something because of who we are. It is right within the context of calling and election. "The called" must be urgent and diligent.

Now there is something again that is very interesting. In actual practice, being elected *precedes* the calling. This ties directly to Romans 8:30. The "election" means "selected." God analyzes, makes a prognosis, and says, "I want this person." We are then selected. Because we are selected, we are then called. We are summoned to appear before Him to be holy. But once we are called, that is it. One calling to a customer.

Peter is saying here that taking action, being urgent, being diligent to do this, secures two things: 1) It ensures that we will not stumble. It says "fall" in the *King James Version*. This would include falling or stumbling because of neglect, forgetfulness, ignorance, laziness, which are simple human proclivities. But it provides something else too. He says, "You will **never** fall." Verse 11 provides then, to make sure, "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you."

A way will be made into the Kingdom of God. Remember, Jesus said, "Narrow is the way and the gate that leads to the Kingdom of God." So Peter is saying, "Make sure you confirm your summons." Make an effort.

Our part is small in this process of salvation, but it is vital. There is a very interesting

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teaching in Revelation 3:4-5 and in Luke 20:35-36. You can compare these scriptures, and then go back to Revelation 19:7-8;

Revelation 3:4-5 You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father; and before his angels.

Luke 20:35-36 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God; being the children of the resurrection.

Revelation 19:7-8 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

In Revelation 3:4-5, in the letter to the Sardis church, He says that there are some there who are worthy. He then asks that question, "Who is worthy?" He answers, "Those who are clothed in white." Now who is clothed in white? "To those who overcome." It is that simple.

In Luke 20 Jesus made the statement that those who are going to be worthy are going to be in the resurrection. Revelation 19 has the series of verses about the bride, and it says there that the bride "has made herself ready." What is she clothed in? White! The implication is clear. Overcoming is "getting ready" and "walking worthy."

Many appeals to godly living are made on the basis of who we are—the summoned, the called of God. We have to recognize who we are because there is very great motivation there. We are a very special group. We are not better. God describes us as being *peculiar*. That does not mean odd. It means separated by God's summons to accomplish things others are not yet required to do, and this is, to conform our lives to doing His will.