

Jesus Calls His Disciples

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in John's Gospel, John chapter 1.

It's that last section of it, of John chapter 1, it's really looking at from verse 45, where we find Philip finding Nathanael. Philip, verse 45 of chapter 1, Philip found Nathanael and said to him, We have found him of whom Moses and the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathanael said to him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? And so on down to the end, where Jesus said, You will see greater things than these. He said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

Now we know one of the great things about somebody giving their testimony is that a testimony, a passion's testimony is very different. There will always be one point of contact, one similarity, and that is that a passion comes to God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The outworking of that in our experience will vary from passion to passion. There is only one way of being saved, and the Bible makes that 100% clear, that there is no other way to God the Father but through God the Son.

[1 : 55] And there is no way of salvation apart from a personal union, faith, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But with regard to experience, with regard to our own individual experience and coming to our knowledge, to our realization of that journey, it's very different from one passion to another.

There might be similarities. If you were to listen to a dozen folk give their testimony, there would be certainly similarities, and you'd be able to say, Well, I can identify with that. And there might be other points where you will say, Well, I cannot follow that.

But a testimony isn't simply a matter of our relating or sharing our coming to faith in Jesus Christ. That is only part of it. A testimony is ongoing. A testimony is developing. Our testimony should be becoming greater and greater as we journey.

Because Jesus said to Nathanael, You will see greater things than these. That day he saw something wonderful. That day his eyes were opened in a way that they had never been opened before.

[3 : 14] But they were going to be open to see greater things than these. Greater things than they had seen that day. And so it is to this day. And that should be the experience of every single Christian in here.

You should be seeing greater things today than you saw when you first came to faith in Jesus Christ. Because that's what happens. There's an ongoing development.

We come to a greater... We're told in Scripture to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. So there should be a development, a deepening faith.

There should be a greater sense of experience. There should be a development and growth in all these things. And a greater understanding of God's way of providence.

God's word and God's redemptive purposes. All these things. So we're beginning to see greater and greater things. So when a person gives their testimony, as we say, there should be a development.

[4 : 15] If a person is stuck with simply the point of where they come to faith in Jesus Christ, you'd be wanting to say to them, But I need to hear more. Where are you today? How have you arrived to where you are today?

But it's always interesting to hear about how the Lord works with people in bringing them to follow himself. And in a sense, this chapter here is a chapter that gives us the beginning of various

journeys.

We have Jesus dealing with different people. And you'll notice that these dealings in many ways are very, very brief. Of course, we're just given. Then we're given only little snippets of what is happening.

For instance, back there when Jesus calls his first disciples, when John and Andrew, we believe it's John and Andrew, go with Jesus. Back in verse 37, the two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

Jesus turned and saw them following and said to him, What are you seeking? And they said to him, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? He said to them, Come and see. So they came and they stayed with him that day for it was about the tenth hour.

[5 : 27] Now, we would love to know what went on when they went in with him. We're only given. That's one of the things the Bible gives us. Just gives us very often just the bare details. That would have been an amazing day.

That first day with Jesus. I say experienced fellowship and closeness and nearness with him.

Anyway, what we're looking at tonight is the result of Jesus' meeting with Philip.

Because Jesus, we find that the next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. Now, when we look at it like that, that Jesus decided to go to Galilee, we've always got to remember that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit.

We're told in the Scripture that he had the Spirit without measure. And that every step he took, he took in keeping with the will of the Father.

So this decision to go down to Galilee was, of course, a decision that was prompted by the Spirit and was according to the will of the Father.

[6 : 35] Everything was in keeping with the Father's will. And so we find that Jesus finds Philip and he says to him just two words, Follow me. The word of power.

And my friend, tonight you could be here and you could hear, I've heard the gospel for years and years and years. And it's passed you by. If the Lord were to speak to you in effectual power tonight, Follow me.

Everything would change. And if you've never heard the Lord speak into your heart, I would ask you tonight to ask him to do that. Lord, speak into my heart so that I will hear the word, the call, the command of God.

Because it's not normal words, natural words, man's words. Supposing I were to roar with a megaphone. Supposing I were to yell through the system here.

That wouldn't make a whit of difference. Supposing you put earphones on and heard the words, Follow me, follow me, follow me, follow me. 24-7. It wouldn't make a whit of difference.

[7 : 44] Supposing all your friends who are Christians gathered around you and preached to you all the time. That wouldn't do. It has to be the word of God itself.

It has to be his word. He alone is able to see you. To save you. And you need to hear his word. And you ask him tonight, Lord, speak into my heart so that I will hear your voice.

And that's what happened with Philip. Follow me. Came with power. These words were spoken.

These were the words of Jesus. And then we see that Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Amdur and Peter.

And Philip goes and he finds Nathaniel. Now it's obvious that Philip and Nathaniel were friends. And we mentioned that this morning, the importance of friendship.

And I believe that the Lord gives us our friends in life and he puts us in different places. And it's amazing the impact for good that good friends can have. And there's no doubt whatever that Philip was a good friend.

[8 : 51] And you know, one of the wonderful things is that when a person finds Jesus Christ as Savior, it's not something that they want to keep to themselves. That's the nature of grace. It's the nature of gospel work.

When you become a Christian, you have found the one, like the woman at the well said, we have found, we have found, I've found him.

And she had to go and tell others. And straight away Philip does that very thing. I'm going to find my friend Nathaniel. And I'm going to tell him. I'm going to tell him who I've found.

And we can't help it. It's just, it's natural. This is the way that grace works. And as I've said before, this is the greatest form of evangelism.

It's where we tell, where we share. We have opportunities. We have privileges. We have contacts with others. And I'm sure in here today, many of you, as you look back over your spiritual journey, you are thankful for the friends that God gave you.

[9 : 56] You're thankful for the family that God put you in. And you see his grace at work shaping your life and bringing you into touch and into contact with people who spoke to you, who shared with you the good news of Jesus Christ.

So Philip finds Nathaniel and he said to him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Now, the wonderful thing about the Bible, although the Old Testament and the New Testament are from two different dispensations, they are all one.

Somebody called them the tulips. They are, you cannot separate. And the one throws light upon the other. We live in New Testament times and we have far greater light than those who lived in the Old Testament times.

But those in the Old Testament times were given sufficient light to see the coming Messiah and to believe in him and trust in him. And the Old Testament is full of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 05] I say I spoke of him as a lamb. Jeremiah spoke of him as a righteous branch. Ezekiel spoke of him as a shepherd.

Malachi spoke of him as a messenger. We find Zachariah speaking of the one that is pushed. And you go through the Old Testament, the whole tabernacle, temple system, even the very furniture, everything was set out so that the law and the prophets were full of Jesus Christ.

It's all about Jesus Christ. And don't have anybody that come to you and argue and say, Ah, the Old Testament is irrelevant. This is a New Testament age. The Old Testament is confined to history.

No. You find that Jesus constantly, he was preaching from the Old Testament. The Old Testament is right up to date with the New Testament.

And we need both together. And it speaks to us constantly about the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, Philip says to Nathanael, We have found him, Jesus of Nazareth.

[12 : 17] And of course, Nathanael picks up on the word Nazareth. And he asks a question. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Now, we know that there was, this isn't just a matter of rivalry.

There was a sense, particularly with the southern Jews, because Nazareth was such a mixed town or city that it was kind of looked down on, kind of despised.

And Nathanael wasn't ready to lay hold upon the fact that this was the Messiah. The Messiah? In Nazareth? And so, there's this question.

Now, I love the thing that Philip does. Because, you see, there is prejudice in the heart of Nathanael towards Jesus right away.

From Nazareth? You mean to tell me there's someone good in Nazareth? So, there's this inbuilt prejudice. And, you know, prejudice is one of the most dangerous things that we can have in life.

[13 : 28] If you're prejudiced against anybody, you will look at that person with a distorted vision. And, sadly, there are many people who look at Christ and the gospel with a distorted vision.

They're not prepared to fairly and squarely examine the truth. And, very often, we've got to remember that people can be prejudiced against the gospel because there's differing reasons.

The first, of course, is the natural sin that's within our own heart that causes a distortion and a prejudice. Prejudice is against the gospel. It's not something that we have to learn.

It's something that's natural to us. But, side by side with that, we ourselves have got to be careful that we don't prejudice people against the gospel.

Because, remember, the world is always looking for an excuse why they should, A, not come to church, B, why they should not believe the gospel.

[14 : 39] And, they're always ready to find a reason. And, one of the great reasons that they find is the life of the Christian. As they see all the faults and inconsistencies.

And, I suppose we have to hold up our hands and say, That is true. And, it's true because of sin.

We're all sinners. But, again, we're always seeking that we might be molded and shaped more and more like Jesus Christ.

But, see the way Philip deals with the situation. He doesn't stand there and argue the point and say, Listen, Nathaniel, you've got to listen to me. I'm going to give you five reasons why this person I'm talking about is the Messiah.

I'm going to tell you A, B, C, D, E, F. No, he says. I'm not going to stand here arguing with you. And, he says something very simple. He says, Okay, come and see.

That's all Philip said. Come and see. Come and see for yourself. And, I can't think of any wiser idea than that.

[15:42] Because, I think it's one of the most irritating things. It's where you find people who are so prejudiced against the gospel and often speak rubbish.

And, they speak against Christ and against the word. And, you're saying to yourself, What you're talking isn't true. That is not right. And, you're saying to yourself, You know, it's not...

You know, when we hear something about somebody, And, you don't know this person. You, yourself, don't know this person. But, you just hear about them. And, you begin to join in with others.

And, you put down on this person. And, you say, Ah, he's a this or she's a that. That's wrong. Because, you don't know. You've never met that person. You've never been in that person's company.

You've never allowed yourself to come to know that person. And, form your own impression and own opinion. And, that's what every critic of Jesus Christ is like.

[16:49] They have never met him. They have never fellowshiped with him. They don't know him. They only hear about him from a distance. And, they form the opinion from a distance.

And, from their... Take their opinion from others. And, they criticize the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without knowing. Without coming to meet him. Without coming for themselves to experience. And, it's so wrong. And, that's why it's so important to say to people. I'm not going to argue with you. But, look. Here's the word. Whether you give them Luke's gospel.

Or, John's gospel. And, say, Luke. Come. Read through this book yourself. Read the gospel of John. Read the gospel of Luke.

Have you ever done that? No. Well, do that. And, then, come and speak to me again. And, pray for that person. Because, it's so important that they themselves will come to meet to a certain extent with Jesus.

[17:52] Well, that's what Philip is saying. Right? He says, I'm not going to argue with you. Come. This is what he says. It wasn't just go and see. But, come and see. See the personalness.

And, this is how Jesus was always operating. We find that. He said that earlier back there in verse. Where do we see it? In verse 39. Come and you will see.

Where are you staying? Come and you will see. Jesus says regarding the water of life. The great invitation. Come and drink. He says elsewhere. Come and dine.

It's always come. It's not go. But, come. And, so, we find verse 47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him and said of him, behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no deceit.

Now, that declaration that Jesus gives concerning Nathanael, where he says, behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no deceit.

[18:55] Now, I'm not in any way going to categorize. It would be wrong of me to straight away categorize and say that all Israelis, that all Jews are deceitful.

That's not what we're going to say. But, I think we would all recognize that the Jew is somebody who is known as being a very shrewd operator.

Somebody who knows very often how to maybe gain an advantage. And, that's why you will often find that the Jew is always somebody who is at the forefront of things.

It's very progressive. It's very industrious. And, you will find that all walks of life throughout this world that there are people who have really managed to get on. They're something, they're tremendous business people.

And, it's something that's within them. And, when you go back and you look at their history, and you go right back, it's very interesting how Jesus is tying everything in here. When he saw Nathanael, he said, behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no deceit.

[20:03] And, you go back to the one, to the Israelite who was the first Israelite in the sense, whose name was changed from Jacob to Israel. Jacob was the supplanter.

Jacob was the deceiver. Jacob deceived his brother. He deceived his father. He deceived his uncle. That was the kind of life he had. Although he was somebody the Lord had a hold of, there was this aspect to his character.

He was in the business of deceiving. He was getting on. He got the birthright. He got the special blessing. He deceived his uncle and managed to get... He was always on the take. Always on the make. And, then there came the time when God dealt with him. And, you remember when Jacob was making his way back. And, the Lord met Jacob. Jacob didn't know that it was the Lord. He didn't know that that night he was wrestling with an angel. He thought it was a man. We believe this was the angel of the covenant. We believe this was Jesus.

[21 : 08] It was a pre-incarnation visit of Jesus. It was what we would term a theophany. Where the second person of the God had took the appearance of a man.

In the incarnation, he took actual bone of a bone and flesh of a flesh. But, this was the appearance. Remember how Jacob wrestled all night with this man by the brook.

And, often people look upon it as the wrestling in prayer. Because, we talk about wrestling in prayer. But, it was more than that. Because, God was dealing with Jacob.

And, eventually remember how God struck the hollow of his thigh. And, Jacob became lame. And, Jacob was being suppressed that night.

There were things in Jacob's life that the Lord was dealing with. And, in the end, the Lord says to him. You're not Jacob anymore. You're Israel.

[22 : 09] A prince with God. And, there was, that was a defining night in Jacob's experience. Where he became Israel. And, who, of course, we have all the children, all the Israelites.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, descendant. Well, here, here's Nathanael. And, Jesus said to him, here's an Israelite indeed. In whom there is no deceit.

More like, not like Jacob. But, like Israel. The one who has been changed. No deceit. We mentioned that this morning about the Apostle Paul.

How he was claiming to have operated in sincerity, with openness. And, that word has the idea. Paul, writing to the church in Philippi.

He's praying for them that there will be this sincerity. This lack of, in any way, guile or deceit. It's like the idea of being tested by the sunlight. Where it is absolutely clear.

[23 : 13] It's a great statement that Jesus is making about this man, Nathanael. And, then, Nathanael said to Jesus, how do you know me? Jesus answered him, before Philip called you.

When you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Now, most people believe that Nathanael, under the fig tree, was praying. And, now, that's where Jesus saw.

But, Nathanael, as he was praying, of course, hadn't a full understanding or a full knowledge. Hadn't come to a full revelation of, or persuasion of the Messiah of Jesus Christ.

And, my friend, we cannot overemphasize the importance of drawing aside in prayer.

The more time you spend alone with the Lord in prayer, the more like the Lord you will become. We were talking this morning about the fragrant Christian.

[24 : 13] My friends, that's where the fragrance comes from. Being alone with the Lord. If you worked, for instance, we're talking about perfume and the breaking of the seal and all that.

But, if you worked in a perfume factory, people would know that that's where you worked. There are certain jobs, and you will know that people work in that particular place.

Because, they've lived there all day, been there all day. When they come out, you can smell where they've been working. It's lingering, it's clinging to them.

And, that's how it is in prayer. There, you spend time with the Lord in prayer. You go alone with the Lord in prayer. Spend time with Him. And, the more time you spend with Him, the more like Him you become.

And, you know what the Lord says? That we are to enter that secret place. Alone. Being with the Lord, nobody else knows. And, what does the Lord say?

[25 : 16] He will reward you openly. And, that's exactly what is happening here. That, Nathanael was away alone under the fig tree. And, soon there was to be this wonderful reward as Jesus meets with him.

And, Nathanael straight away, he says, Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel. You know, there's an absolutely wonderful declaration.

Because, at this moment, Nathanael is seeing Jesus in his three offices. Of prophet, priest, and king. Rabbi, teacher.

And, that's who Jesus is. The Word. He is the one who teaches. We, he is the living Word. Rabbi. You are the Son of God. You are the Messiah.

You are the Saint One. You are the King. You are the one who has come from heaven. You are the sacrifice for sin. And, it's in this moment that Nathanael is seeing the redemptive purpose of Jesus.

[26 : 23] You are the King of Israel. Prophet, priest, and king. My friend, is that how you see Jesus tonight? In his three-fold office?

Because, you have to. In order to be a Christian, you have to. Now, I'm not saying that in order to become a Christian. The first thing that you've got to do, even before you become a Christian, is say, Ah, now, how do I work this out?

These are great things. These are great truths. How? No. But, I'll tell you, you will come to discover. If you accept Christ as your Savior, you will come to see him in these offices.

As a prophet, as the Word, as the Revealer of the Word. You will come to see him as a priest. As both sacrifice and priest.

Your priest. Your sacrifice. And, you will see him as King. Your King. Tonight, let me ask. Is Jesus the Word in your life?

[27 : 25] Is Jesus the only sacrifice for your life? Is Jesus King in your life? If you can say yes to all these, then Jesus, without a doubt, is Lord of your life.

He is your teacher. He is your sacrifice. He is your King. And, that's what, that's, it's a most wonderful declaration that Nathanael makes here.

And, Jesus answered him, because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these. We mentioned that at the beginning. It's an ongoing discovery.

And, my friend, it's an ongoing discovery. And, you know something? The best is yet to come. The best is yet to come. You know, that's, that's, that's what's so wonderful about the Christian faith.

You know, if you're without Christ tonight, you cannot, as you are at this moment, say, the best is yet to come. But, in Jesus, you can confidently say that.

[28 : 37] Because, glory awaits. The Bible, this is how the Bible says it. That the day of one's death, this is for the believer, the day of their death is better than the day of their birth.

Isn't that wonderful? Where you will be brought with gladness great and mirth on every side, into the palace of the King, there to abide. That's what's ahead. We have the foretaste of it here.

We have begun to discover here, when we have come into union with Jesus. But it grows, it develops. And then Jesus comes back to the theme of the Israelite.

Where he's talking, remember how he's mentioned Nathanael as the Israelite, changed from Jacob to Israel? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

Where do we think of the angels ascending and descending? We go back to Jacob's dream. And remember when Jacob saw the ladder, extending from the earth to heaven.

[29 : 43] And the angels ascending and descending that ladder. And here's what it's all tying together. Because Jesus really is the ladder. He is the link between heaven and earth.

He is the Son of Man. This wonderful designation and self-designation. Christ was always using this of himself. The man.

Yes, humanity. One humanity. But God. In one. This is all tied in to, remember, in Daniel chapter 7. That great vision that is given of the Son of Man. Ruling forever over the nations. Well, here he is.

He is the ladder between heaven and earth.

He is the way from earth to heaven. Jacob was given this vision that night as he ran away from home.

[30 : 44] And here all these, we could say, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years later. We find it's not a dream but a reality.

And we find the living ladder between earth and heaven. My friend, there is no other way to God but in and through Jesus Christ.

Personal faith in him. Will you tonight accept him? Or are you going to walk away and say, no, not tonight? Well, I cannot think of anything more serious and solemn than to be in the presence of Jesus.

We're hearing tonight about how Jesus is dealing with people. Saving people. Drawing people. Tonight he's inviting you.

Are you going to turn away and say, not me? Or are you going to say, Lord, please open my heart. Help me tonight to see you. So that you'll be my teacher.

[31 : 50] My sacrifice. And my king. Let us pray. Amen. Amen. O Lord, O God, we give thanks for the fullness that we have in the word.

All that we need for salvation and for our growth in grace. May we all tonight see Jesus as our teacher, as our sacrifice, and as our king.

Enrich us, we pray, in the knowledge of Christ. And help us to go forward looking unto Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith. Lord, bless and pity us, we pray.

Do us good. Cleanse us from all our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.