

# Consider you calling

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[ 0 : 00 ] And I want to look first at the book of Jeremiah, chapter 1, and reading from verse 1 to verse 8. The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

It came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I consecrated you.

I appointed you a prophet to the nations. Then I said, Our Lord God, behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.

But the Lord said to me, Do not say, I am only a youth, for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.

[ 1 : 29 ] And then in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 26. Consider your call, brothers.

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 the things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.

[ 2 : 37 ] Amen, when the Lord blesses us, that reading may it be, to his praise and to his glory. Last week, we looked at this section, verses 18 to 25, on the preaching of the cross.

And by looking at that section, we saw that, as is his want in many of his letters, Paul is going to offer a tangent, because the main theme, which he had discussed in verses 10 to 17, was getting down to the business of addressing this problem of how people have become divided on the personalities of the ministers of the gospel.

This idea where he breaks off and returns to a theme, in this case, he doesn't return to it until chapter 3, verse 3, is quite regular in many of his epistles.

For example, in Ephesians 3, verse 1 says, For this reason, I bow the knee to the Father. But then, nothing more happens, because you get a digression on his call and conversion.

And then, roughly about verse 14, he then says again, For this reason, I bow the knee to the Father, and there then follows a hymn about prayer.

[ 4 : 13 ] That's a very clear example of what I'm talking about. Going off at a tangent and coming back. And so here, he's still thinking about the effectiveness of the gospel and that relates to its preaching and the purpose of God that comes behind it.

Verse 26, Consider your call, brothers and sisters. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful.

Not many were of noble birth. So here, the effectiveness of the gospel is stated by the apostle and addressed to the Corinthians.

Now, what he's talking about, they could readily testify about. They could testify how through his ministry, they became converted.

Their darkness was taken away. And they understood, as we pray today, that God in Christ loved them and gave his Son for them.

[ 5 : 22 ] And he draws attention to all of this in this phrase, Consider your call. What's he talking about? In the Greek, the word klesis, which means call, calling, or station in life.

And what he's talking about here is consider the way you came to Christ. what we call the effective call of the gospel that comes through the preaching of the gospel.

Now, he refers to this in Romans 8, 29 and 30, and I'll read this. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

those whom he predestined, he also called, and those whom he called, he also justified, and those whom he justified, he also glorified.

Now, in this verse, the apostle has spelled out his absolute belief in the purpose of God behind the preaching of the word.

[ 6 : 42 ] He calls it predestination. For some, this is an awkward word, but it's a biblical word, so it's necessary that we consider it.

And the first thing you can say about it is this, that although this theme of election, predestination, appears in most of his letters, he also has to say that he believes in the free offer of the gospel.

Because in Romans 10, quoting Joel 2.32, he says, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. So he holds the two things together.

How can they be explained? They can't. Are there mysteries in the Christian faith? There are. We sung of one of them earlier on. Holy, holy, holy, God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

How can there only be one God, yet three persons in the Godhead? You and I can't explain this, nor can we explain the link between predestination and the free offer of the gospel.

[ 8 : 05 ] But something else, the verb that's used in Greek, predestine, is the verb pro-horizo.

The pro bit is just a prefix which means before, but the horizon bit means to choose or determine or appoint. And believe it or not, it's from this Greek word that the English word horizon has been derived.

So that what is being said here is that God looked out to the horizon of time and he saw you and I where we were and he planned our salvation.

that's what this means. But he's talking here about he wants them to consider how they've been called by grace through the ministry of the apostle Paul.

And in verses that we already refer to in this series, in Acts 18, you get this statement about the ministry of Paul in Corinth.

[ 9 : 19 ] Verse 5. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.

The verses that follow that verse reveal that the Jews violently opposed and rejected his message while the Gentiles accepted his word.

So the word that he preached which found its resting place in the Crispus, the first ruler of the synagogue. It became something effective in their experience and in their calling and in their understanding of the gospel.

And while Paul laments the fact in Romans 9 that the message of the gospel has been rejected in the main part by the Jews, this does not mean that the word of God has become unfruitful.

Romans 9 6. It is not as though the word of God had failed. Now the verb that's used there means to become ineffective.

[ 10 : 41 ] No. The word of the gospel will always find a fruitful ground on which to fall and bear fruit. Our Lord himself in the parable about the sower said this, As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it.

He indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and another thirty. So in the gospel there is a mighty force that is arresting people's attention and bringing them to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there's another sense in which this word call is used. And the other sense that it's used is not just their effective call to their understanding of the gospel but to the way that they live their life.

That's their calling in God. The main point that the apostle is writing to them here in 1 Corinthians 1-4 is the fact that these people belonging to Chloe who presumably had a house in Ephesus and the people concerned were her Christian slaves that this church was full of dissensions divisions so it wasn't living up to its true calling in the gospel.

And at the beginning of the letter he had referred to what they are in God. He said this to the church of God which is at Corinth you are called to be saints.

[ 12 : 42 ] Called to reflect the life of Christ to your neighbor. Called to be an ambassador of Christ in a city that's full of vice and iniquity.

Has anything changed? No it hasn't. And at a later stage than the dating of this letter the apostle Peter also wrote to his people that therefore brothers and sisters be the more zealous to confirm your call and election for if you do this you will never fall.

Consider your call brothers and sisters. consider how you came to Christ. Consider how you're living as Christians in Corinth and in Wester Hills.

It's up to date. Now let's move on. The election of the gospel verses 28 to 29. God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Three times in these verses the apostle says God chose and the verb that's used here means to choose or select.

[ 14 : 27 ] You also find it at the beginning of Ephesians in Ephesians 1.4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him.

And what we have to decide is who indeed are the objects of this choice. In 1 Corinthians the objects of the choice are expressed in negative terms.

God chose what is foolish in the world. God chose what is weak in the world. God chose what is low and despised in the world.

And here he's talking about the Corinthians. These were people who were connected with a city of vice corruption and iniquity.

Now why is it that he stresses this here? The first answer to that question is that the apostle wants to stress to the Corinthian believers that their salvation is not of their doing.

[ 15 : 45 ] It's entirely the work of God. not the work of man in any size or shape. It is all of God.

In the history of the church you can be well aware that the reformers Calvin, Luther, Zwingli and many others attached themselves to this belief for two reasons.

One it's a scriptural belief. It's in the scripture. We saw it there in Jeremiah. But the second thing that they wanted to emphasize was this.

The salvation they were now talking about and they were talking about a different kind of salvation to anything that people had talked about prior to the reformation.

This salvation is entirely of God. Prior to the reformation salvation had been available via the priesthood and via series of meritorious acts such as paying for indulgences which would have got you out of the so called purgatory for so long.

[ 17 : 05 ] That started in a very innocent way in somewhere about 1100 when funds were being raised for the first of the crusades.

If you couldn't go you could pay for someone else to go. So here's the first idea of money being paid to the church for a so-called spiritual outcome.

So the reformers said no it's not. The salvation we talk about based on scripture is entirely all of God.

And so when the Corinthians are taken up with this idea of whose party they belong to it is humbling to them to suggest that not only are the preachers of the ministers of the gospel of no particular importance but their standing in grace is not their work but is entirely of God.

So he writes in chapter four who made you to differ? What have you that you did not receive?

[ 18 : 25 ] If you received it why do you boast as if it were not a gift? The salvation you've got is all of God's doing.

When he writes to the Ephesians you get another similar hymn of praise. It starts off Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

And this hymn considers what God the Father has done for us all of which is based on the elective purpose of God. So the first blessing is the blessing of election even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

Then there is the blessing of sonship or daughtership. He destined us in love to be his sons and daughters through Jesus Christ.

Then there is the blessing of redemption in whom we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of his sins. We have fourthly the revelation of God's plan of redemption for he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ.

[ 19 : 53 ] There is the blessing of living a new life in him according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will. We who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.

Finally in him you also who have heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation and have believed in him were sealed with this promise Holy Spirit.

And all of this has all come about by the action of God himself. So when he finishes his discussion of this in Romans 9 to 11 he says this for from him and through him and to him are all things to him be glory forever and ever Amen.

Finally this has a design verses 29 to 31 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus whom God made our wisdom righteousness sanctification and redemption.

Therefore as it is written let him who boasts boast of the Lord. Now in this he's continuing this stress your salvation Corinthians is all of God and this is what God has done for you.

[ 21 : 35 ] He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus whom God made our wisdom righteousness sanctification and redemption.

When I first read this in the King James version it reads like this but of him are he and Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness sanctification and redemption.

And that's a very complex sentence. But the reason it reads as it does is the translators were following the exact order of the Greek that's found in that verse.

But what the apostle is saying here is that all of our salvation every need that we have before God has been brought about by himself in Christ who has become to us wisdom from God righteousness sanctification and redemption.

Last Sunday night when we looked at verses 18 to 25 the preaching of the cross is folly to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

[ 22 : 57 ] Now this preaching of the cross has nullified natural wisdom which humankind possesses. So he said in the text that we considered where is the wise man?

Where is the expert in Jewish law? Where is the skillful debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? So what he's saying here?

If we're looking for true wisdom you won't find it in the experts in Jewish law. Nor will you find it in the Greek philosophers of that time.

True wisdom comes from God in Christ. Colossians 2 verses 1 to 3 I want you to know how greatly I strive for you and for all who have not seen my face that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery in Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

So this wisdom comes to us from God in the person of his son the Lord Jesus Christ. And if that is the case we who are rejected by the world's wisdom and the philosophers who reject the message of the gospel it is we who have become the wisest people on the planet because of our standing in the grace of God.

[ 24 : 50 ] Yet among the mature in a verse we will consider in a few weeks time we do impart wisdom although it is not a wisdom of this age or the rulers of this age who are doomed to pass away but there's something extra here.

It's not just wisdom that God has supplied in Christ but three other things righteousness sanctification and redemption.

Isaiah cries out this all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment apostle writes to the Corinthians and second Corinthians 5 21 for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

that is a fantastic statement because righteousness is an attribute which belongs to God in Christ and the apostle is saying because of what God has done in Christ we will be allocated that righteousness.

sanctification we previously looked at as being separated as sacred to God.

[ 26 : 32 ] In this high priestly prayer Jesus says this for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

In other words for their sakes I separate myself as sacred to God that they also might separate themselves as sacred to God.

The final characteristic is redemption and the word that's used there means a setting free. the teaching of Jesus is and we sang it tonight if the son makes you free you will be free indeed. How many people there have been who've been addicted to this or that or the other and have cried out oh God I wish I was free of this and some of them have cried to God and they found the freedom that Jesus offers.

This is the gospel that we're involved in proclaiming here in Westerhales so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

[ 28 : 11 ] He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus whom God made our wisdom our righteousness sanctification and redemption therefore as it is written let him who boasts boasts of the law.

So tonight we've looked at the purpose of God that's to be found behind the ministry and through the ministry of the gospel. We've seen how God has planned and executed your salvation and mine and it's entirely of him.

So what must we do about it? We must be ever more zealous through every means available to letting people know there's a God who loves them and there's a God who can set them free.

Amen. Amen. When you think about things you can set them free.