

Theme: Christians should strive by God's grace to be faithful in their callings - the specific tasks and responsibilities given to us by God, through which God works to serve our neighbors and promote the common good, restraining the effects of the curse and bringing blessing to every realm of life and every corner of creation.

I. Intro - New Year's Resolutions?

- A. Many people make new years resolutions - and fail!
- B. A different way to approach this idea - callings
 - 1. The Bible speaks of the importance of our gifts and callings
 - 2. This helps us think in terms of responsibilities given by God rather than cultural pressures and fads
- C. The tension of multiple callings
 - 1. We struggle to balance our lives & callings
 - 2. Guilt leads us to try to give Jesus a bigger slice
 - 3. But He has the whole pie - not the biggest slice!
- D. How do we faithfully fulfill our multiple callings in 2023?

II. Understanding Gifts and Callings

- A. Paul is teaching on fulfilling our callings

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.
Colossians 3:23–24

 - 1. Paul is speaking of 'whatever we do' - all of life
 - 2. This is referencing the way we serve others

- 3. In this passage, he references church, husbands, wives, parents, children, slaves, and masters - the various roles people had in Roman society
- 4. People have multiple callings - a husband can be a parent, employer, citizen, etc.
- 5. He indicates that ultimately our service is to God and that we will be rewarded by God for faithful service in all of these areas.

B. Peter refers to the same idea by speaking of gifts

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:10–11

- 1. Each of us has received different gifts from God
- 2. These gifts are different but ultimately must be used to serve others as part of our service to God.
- 3. We are called to faithfully administer these gifts, using them the best we can to fulfill our various callings in life.

C. Understanding calling and gifts

- 1. Each of us has received different callings and gifts from God
- 2. These callings and gifts are given by God so that He can serve others through us
- 3. Callings and gifts are not restricted to church life; they touch every area of life where we can be used by God to serve others

4. We each have multiple callings
5. We will ultimately be rewarded by God for how faithfully we use our gifts to fulfill the various callings we have been given by God.

D. A biblical definition for 'calling'

Calling refers to the specific tasks and responsibilities given to us by God, through which God works to serve our neighbors and promote the common good, restraining the effects of the curse and bringing blessing to every realm of life and every corner of creation.

III. A Theology of Calling

A. Calling - specific tasks/responsibilities given by God

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as **working for the Lord, not for men**,²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. **It is the Lord Christ you are serving.**
Colossians 3:23–24

Each one should use **whatever gift he has received** to serve others, faithfully administering **God's grace in its various forms**. 1 Peter 4:10

1. Callings are something that comes from God - we are working for the Lord, serving Him in our callings.
2. Spiritual gifts are the unique way the grace and Spirit of God work in us to enable us to serve others as God works in and through us.
3. This takes into account everything about us - our 'natural' personality, our gifts and abilities, our life experiences, the particular way the Spirit works best in our lives, etc.

4. This also takes into account circumstances in our life that may be beyond our control

Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has **called** him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.¹⁸ Was a man already circumcised when he was **called**? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was **called**? He should not be circumcised.¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.²⁰ Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God **called** him.²¹ Were you a slave when you were **called**? Don't let it trouble you — although if you can gain your freedom, do so.²² For he who was a slave when he was **called** by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was **called** is Christ's slave.²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.²⁴ Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God **called** him to. 1 Corinthians 7:17–24

- a. Called is mentioned 8 times in 8 verses!
- b. Calling includes life situations beyond our control - circumcision and being a slave!
- c. Not fatalism or inactivity - if you can get free, do so!
- d. But do not fret - God is in control and has you on mission right where you are, even if you are a slave!
- e. Faithfulness in our callings does not fret over circumstances beyond our control or on what gifts and opportunities we do not have, but rather focuses on the gifts and opportunities we do have and uses those to serve God and others.

B. Calling - God working through us to serve others

Each one should use whatever **gift** he has received **to serve others**, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one **speaking the very words of God**. If anyone serves, he should do it with **the strength God provides**, so that in all things **God may be praised** through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:10–11

1. My gifts & callings are not for me but to serve others
2. This is not about self-fulfillment but serving others!
3. As creation and salvation are the overflow of the life and love of the Trinity, so God's work within us overflows to serve others.
4. Gift, speak God's word, serve by God's strength so that God receives the praise - this is God at work
5. This is more than us serving others - in our callings God is at work in and through us to serve others!
6. Paradoxically, this gives us deep joy and fulfillment as we see God work through us to bless our neighbors.

C. Calling - promoting the common good

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, Colossians 3:23

1. Whatever you do - all of life is in view
2. Specifically speaking to slaves and masters here
3. As God's exile people we are called to work to see our city flourish with the shalom of God

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Jeremiah 29:4–7

- a. God's exile people are to seek the peace and prosperity (shalom) of the city of our exile.
 - b. Our good is tied to the common good of our culture and especially our city.
 - c. This includes praying and working within our callings to serve our neighbors and promote the common good and flourishing of our city.
4. Two key parts - restrain curse, extend blessing
 - a. The curse came because of sin & touches all callings
 - b. But we still do our calling & restrain effects of the fall
 - c. At creation we were blessed and called to extend it
 - d. Continues after the Fall - blessed to be a blessing
 5. This is part of God's common grace - and our call!!!!
 - a. Common grace refers to the aspect of God's grace that restrains sin and its effects and gives general blessings to humanity and creation so that they can partially fulfill God's original design for them, but is not part of salvation itself.

- b. God has not abandoned creation or unbelievers, but is kind to them, restraining the effects of sin and gifting them with common grace so that they can still enjoy God's creation and work to develop creation and culture.
- c. This means we can partner with unbelievers in our callings, working together where possible to promote the common good and flourishing of our city and culture.
- d. There may be areas where we can not work with others because they are promoting an ungodly agenda, but we must strive to work with others wherever we can.

6. We do this, not just in 'church work' but in every area of life and every corner of creation.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I know the areas to which God has called me?

- 1. Each of us has many callings from God -
- 2. These are usually discerned based on our gifting, life experiences, and opportunities
- 3. Consequently, our callings will change over time
- 4. Our multiple callings (generally apply to many)
 - a. Family
 - b. Church
 - c. Work (paid or unpaid)
 - d. Volunteer service
 - e. Citizenship
 - f. Membership in other groups - civic organizations; community associations; hobby or educational groups; etc.

- 5. Can I give a list of the callings God has given me?
- 6. Are there areas God is calling me that I have not been doing in the past?
- 7. Are there areas I am spending resources (time, effort, money) that God is NOT calling me but I have been pulled in by others or my own desires - and I need to stop?
- 8. Are there areas God is calling me to where I need to receive grace to more faithfully fulfill the calling this year?

B. Called To the Table

- 1. This Table reminds us that we are not justified by how well we fulfill our callings!
- 2. We approach not because we have been faithful, but because Jesus was, is, and always will be faithful!
- 3. This Table also reminds us that our primary calling is to know, love, and serve Jesus - and everything else we are called to do is merely an overflow of that primary call.
- 4. Here we draw near to the Lord and receive strength to walk with Him - and this is how we will faithfully fulfill our various specific callings in 2023.
- 5. Come and be strengthened!

Faithfully Fulfilling Our Callings

Colossians 3:23-24; 1 Peter 4:10-11

January 1, 2023

Communion

Psalm 90:16-17

Teaching keywords: Calling and work; common grace; spiritual gifts

May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; may He establish the work of our hands for us. Go forth blessed, and be a blessing! Psalm 90:17

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.
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Amen. 1 Peter 4:10–11