

## "He Who Calls" - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

Why are you here this morning?

There are a lot of other places you could be, but you chose to join us for our Sunday morning worship service. I'm really glad you did, by the way. I look forward to this weekly gathering of God's kids. But if I made you get out a piece of paper and write down the main reason for your attendance, what would you write?

Many of you would probably say "Where else would I be on Sunday morning?" But maybe one or two of you might reply "I couldn't think of anything else to do. There was nothing on TV. The weather outside isn't to my liking." Or perhaps, for those of you who are a little more spiritual: "It is my Christian duty!"

I'm going to tell you why you are here this morning and I'm going to get to the root cause. I'm not going to mess around with all the secondary reasons you might think caused you to come to Canyon Community Church today. The real reason you are here this morning is this: Are you ready? You are here because you were called by Almighty God.

It's true! You wouldn't be here if God the Holy Spirit didn't lay it on your heart to attend. It is true if you have been a Christian for 50 years. It's true if you only recently trusted Jesus as your Savior. It's even true if you are still yet-to-believe, if you're not quite sure about this Christian thing.

Your tendency as a fallen human being is to avoid worship like the plague.

*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)*

So, if you find yourself looking forward to our time together on Sunday morning, Praise the Lord! He has called you! He is replacing your hard heart of stone with a tender heart of flesh. He is drawing you to Himself.

As we've made our way through Paul's First letter to the Thessalonians, we've been looking at some very specific commands that apply to every Christian. While we are not saved by works, it is our responsibility to strive to be obedient to these commands: rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in everything, don't quench the spirit, don't despise prophecies, test everything and cling to the good, reject every sort of evil. We are to expend effort in our Christian walk. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. But we must always remember that it is God who is working in you to both will and do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13.

God is doing a work in your life. It is He who calls. Are you listening?

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-28)*

Now you might think that there's not a whole lot of doctrine in these six verses. That it's just a sort of valedictory. Paul is signing off. He's saying "over and out". But we dare not gloss over any passage of scripture because all scripture is God-breathed. It is given by

inspiration of the Holy Spirit and it is useful for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. So, let's drill down just a little bit.

There is a blessing here. Paul is praying for the Thessalonians, and us too, by extension. His first petition is that they be completely sanctified.

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely.*

To be sanctified is to be set apart for a holy purpose. Our holy purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We are being prepared for that vocation and not one of us is there yet. The Holy Spirit still has a ton of work to do. We won't be completely sanctified until the Lord returns and our bodies are transformed. I'm looking forward to a transformed body, one that won't get sick, age, or die, a body that will be perfectly adapted to the new heaven and earth, a body that will be forever freed from the temptation to sin. That is the promise we have in Jesus Christ.

*... and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Wait ... how can we be blameless if we have not yet been completely sanctified? I don't know about you, but I still sin and the Bible agrees:

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)*

*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:10)*

So how can the whole of our being be preserved blameless?

Well, we can only be blameless if we have been clothed with Jesus' righteousness. We all stand guilty before Almighty God. All have sinned and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23) and the just wage of our rebellion is death. (Romans 6:23) It's not just the death of the body; which is bad enough but this is the second death ... an eternity of suffering death throes in the pit of hell, a place of eternal torment, which was prepared for Satan and his angels. You do not want to share that environment, where your worm will not die and your fire will not be quenched and the smoke of your torment ascends forever before the throne of God. It's what you deserve. It's what I deserve. But God loves us anyway.

*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

To accept that gift, all you have to do is believe. Believe that it is true. God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die for you. When Jesus met with Martha, the sister of Lazarus, who had just passed away:

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)*

If you believe in Jesus, trust your life to Jesus, you will live eternally. The work of God is to believe in the One He sent. (John 6:29)

*... that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)*

If you truly believe, you have been completely cleansed.

*"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)*

Trust Jesus! Then, when God looks at you, He will not see the filth of your sin; He will see the pristine righteousness of God the Son. If you truly believe, you will have a desire to live your life in obedience to Him.

If you can believe the Gospel of Christ, you have been called. You have been called out of darkness into God's immaculate light. Not only that, God started the deal and He's going to close the deal. Just listen to what Paul wrote to the Romans:

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)*

And so, to the Thessalonians here in verse 24, Paul writes:

*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)*

Oh, my friends, does that not give you a thrill! Doesn't it make you want to shout Amen! God chose you before the dawn of time. God predestined you for salvation. In His perfect timing, He called you to Himself. And when you said "yes" to Jesus, He justified you, forgave all your sins and adopted you as His own child. Not only that, because He has begun that good work in you, He promises to complete it until the day of Christ. (Philippians 1:6) It might not look like it now, but He has already glorified you with Jesus!

But I have to ask you, have you answered the call? Have you placed your faith exclusively in the finished work of Christ, or are you still trying to earn your way to heaven? Has the devil distracted you with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life? Have the cares of this world choked out the perfect seed of the gospel? Are you more concerned with your temporal health, wealth and prosperity than your eternal destiny?

Jesus will not share you with anything or anyone.

*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. (Matthew 10:37-38)*

Answering the call means that you have to go all in. There can be nothing in your life more important than the Lord. In fact, Jesus said:

*"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26)*

Have you answered the call to salvation? Do you believe He died to pay the penalty for your sins? Do you believe He was raised from the dead so you can have a living relationship with Him? Have you confessed Him as Lord, and let Him lead?

Have you answered Jesus call to service? If you are a Christian, the Church needs you. You are to be the hands, feet and mouth of Jesus in this dying world. Have you reached

out to the unbelievers in your sphere of influence. Have you given sacrificially of your time, your possessions, your money to further the kingdom?

When Jesus calls, you have to go! At a point in my life, I was called to be your pastor. I had to answer that call!

You know, sometimes, usually when I'm sitting alone in my study, often after a time of prayer, or maybe a time of study, I still ask myself "What am I doing here?" I sure didn't set out to be a pastor. It was never on my bucket list. It's not what I trained for in college. I so often I feel so underqualified. I feel so weak. I cry out to my God "Who is sufficient for these things?"

And then Jesus speaks to me from the pages of my Bible:

*"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)*

*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)*

There is the promise I cling to. You need to cling to that promise as well. To whatever ministry you are called, you need to give what you can give, and God will supply the rest.

Our Lord works by means. He doesn't need us to accomplish His will. He is omniscient. He is all-powerful. He can do anything He wants by speaking a word. But He allows us to participate with Him in His grand plan of redemption and then supplies whatever is lacking.

Every one of us is called to participate in the ministry of the Church. We need the fellowship of saints. We need to support one another. We need to pray for one another. And so Paul finishes up His letter in this way:

*Brethren, pray for us. (1 Thessalonians 5:25)*

It is so important that we pray for one another! Don't neglect that ministry. It's something every one of us can do. I pray for you. Please pray for me, especially as I endeavor to be faithful as your pastor.

*Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. (1 Thessalonians 5:26)*

Now, before you get restless, this holy kiss thing is cultural. It's something they did in their culture. In our culture, we do handshakes and hugs. I don't want any of you greeting me after the service with a lip-lock, okay? But we do need to greet one another. We need to enjoy fellowship with one another.

*I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren. (1 Thessalonians 5:27)*

Isn't this an interesting statement? God's word is not just for the religious elite. God's word isn't just for theologians and pastors and the super-saintly. *I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.* God's word is for everyone.

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)*

In Paul's day, the majority of folks were unable to read, but they still needed to hear the word of God. We need to hear the word of God. You need to hear the word of God. You need to read it, digest in, meditate on it, study it and you need to hear the word of God preached! It is His means to our sanctification.

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. (1 Thessalonians 5:28)*

And that is Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians.

Have you accepted the grace of Jesus Christ? Have you believed what He accomplished for you on the cross? Are you letting God's grace permeate your life, leading you to the upward call of Christ Jesus? Have you yielded to the work of the Holy Spirit, or are you still trying to quench Him?

My prayer is the same as Paul's. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all! His grace will be with you if you remember His sacrifice. His grace will be with you if you understand what He gave up for you. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, clothed in glory, one with the Father and one with the Holy Spirit. He is the Agent of creation and, according to Hebrews, the sustainer of all things. But He gave all that up to enter His creation as a tiny, helpless baby. He was born just like we were born. He grew just like we grew. He lived a human life, just like we are living now, except that He never sinned. And then He sacrificed His life, beaten to a bloody pulp, dying a horrible, excruciating death on the cross. He bore the unfettered wrath of God, not for anything He did, but for every sin you and I ever committed. He suffered so you won't have to.

*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)*

Now, we have the privilege of commemorating His sacrifice through the ordinance of Communion. As the men pass out the elements, would you reflect on what Jesus did for you? Will you confess your sins silently to Him? Will you offer your thanksgiving to such a wonderful, loving Savior?