

Session Six: The Mission of Holiness Out of the Saltshaker

Every genuine believer is part of the Church, the Body of Christ, no matter where they live, what their race, or their level of spiritual maturity. The moment you come to Christ you become part of the Church. The word translated *church* in the New Testament means “called out ones.” Christians are called out of the world and into the Church. But Christians are not simply called *out of* something but are also called *to* something:

To the church of God ...to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours. (1 Corinthians 1:2)

We have seen that holiness means to be separate, set apart. The church is, of course, not called out of the world *physically*. Rather, we are called out of the world *spiritually*. This means that we do not operate according to the world’s arrangement of distorted *values*. Instead, we march to a different beat as we live out a different set of values.

But why has God left us here? If all He wants is for us to live according to different values, why doesn’t He just take us to Heaven now? Why doesn’t He just take us *out of* the world? After all, it’d be a lot easier to live a holy life when freed from the temptations and difficulties of a fallen world. The answer lies in the fact that God has more for us than holy living. Holy living is not the end but the means to the end. The purpose God has for us is to bring glory to Himself in our lives, and use us to reach others to do likewise. In other words, we’ve been “called out to call in.”

Recall from Session Two that God created the world and mankind for His purposes. God gave man an *orientation* to his environment by instructing him in his duties. Yet man fell into sin by desiring to *be* God rather than giving worship *to* God. The result was *disorientation*. God is now calling people out the world to redirect their values by replacing their idolatry with true worship. He has called us to participate in His work of *reorientation*:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world....Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-14, 16)

...in every way...make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. (Titus 2:10)

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life. (Philippians 2:14-16)

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (1 Peter 2:11-12)

Unless one grasps issues of purpose and calling, he does not have the proper framework from which to make the so-called ‘small’ decisions. Following are several biblical facts that provide the framework for decision-making that is consistent with our holy calling.

I. Purpose Determines Life.

Our steps are ordered by what we believe to be our purpose. Since many have not given conscious thought to their purpose, the manner in which they live their lives displays the aimlessness that results from such a perspective. Believers have been instructed regarding their purpose and therefore do not need to ‘drift’:

I created [you] for my glory... (Isaiah 43:7)

*Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
(1 Corinthians 10:31)*

II. God Has Given You a Mission.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known... to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:10, 21)

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

III. God Has Prepared You to Accomplish the Mission.

We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

[God] gives...to each one, just as he determines...God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:11, 18, 27)

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others. (1 Peter 4:10)

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. (Romans 12:4-6)

IV. God Has Placed You in the Mission.

We use the word ‘call’ often to refer to God’s special work in one’s life to direct him into a particular vocation. For instance, we talk of someone being ‘called to the ministry.’ The words ‘call’ and ‘vocation’ are related because the Latin word, *vox*, means, “voice.” Therefore, one is urged to hear and obey God’s voice (call) to his vocation (calling). However, contrary to popular notions, all Christians are called to the ministry! The only issue is *how* and *where* one will minister (serve). Our individual ‘calling’ involves how God has wired us (see III above) but also the circumstances in which He’s placed us.

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. 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. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts. Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you — although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 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. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.
(1 Corinthians 7:17-24)

Therefore: Decisions Should Seek to Advance the Mission.

Decisions regarding *how* I pursue service and *where* I serve should intentionally seek to advance the mission. So, I may seek training to enhance *how* I serve or I may change *where* I serve to a more needy area. In any case, we should never sacrifice present ministry for potential ministry.

Session Seven: The Grace of Holiness God Finishes What He Starts

Depending on how it's done, preaching on holiness can sometimes be hazardous to a believer's spiritual health. Sometimes we preachers succumb to preaching the "deadly bees":¹

- "Be better" (stop sinning, start praying, etc.)
- "Be more" (faithful, giving, etc.)
- "Be like" (Daniel, Moses, me!)

For those who are sensitive to their own sin and failure to live up to God's standard, such preaching can be extremely discouraging if not accompanied by the hope through which this can be accomplished. The bad news is, we simply cannot live holy lives on our own. The Gospel (literally, "good news") is, God is at work in our lives, and God finishes what He starts. The Bible says, *...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 1:6) God does not save us and then leave us to grow on our own. In fact, it is only through our relationship with Him that we are able to grow at all. Jesus said, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* (John 15:5)

The ultimate means of our salvation *and our sanctification* is found in the Gospel. A full grasp on the Gospel message will inform us regarding what God has done, is doing, and will do in our lives. In turn, this should strengthen the believer to pursue godliness, knowing that she is not left to herself, and therefore can live with full assurance that our struggle is not in vain.

The Gospel is the glorious message that God's grace has delivered us from our sin by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

I. Growth Requires Dependence on God's Grace in the Gospel.

A. The Gospel is at work in your life in the present.

I am so eager to preach the gospel...to you who are at Rome. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:15-17)

Note: This is written to Christians, people who are already saved. Romans 1:7 says the letter is written *To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Yet, in v. 15 Paul says he's *eager to preach the gospel...to you who are at Rome.* The content of the book of Romans is not merely past events but present and future realities!

¹ Taken from Bryan Chappel, *Christ-Centered Preaching*.

B. The Gospel will continue to work in your life in the future.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:28-39)

The chain from the past to the future cannot be broken by anything in the present! Nothing in the present done **to** you or **by** you will negate what God has determined to accomplish!

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:11-13)

The words “appeared” (v. 11) and “appearing” in (v. 13) are the same Greek word, referring to Christ’s first and second comings respectively. The appearance of God’s grace in the past and the future accomplishes three things:

- 1) It brought salvation in the past.
- 2) It instructs us in the present to:
 - a. Deny ungodliness
 - b. Live righteously
- 3) Look for the “blessed hope” in the future

Therefore, it is biblically accurate for us to say: “I have been saved, I am being saved, I will be saved.”

II. Growth Requires *Devotion* to the Disciplines of God's Grace.

Based on the truths outlined above, one might understandably ask: "If God has already guaranteed that I will grow, what is my role?" Or, put another way, "If I'm 100% dependent on God's grace, is my devotion to Him necessary?" The answer is an unqualified "Yes!" It is not a 50/50 proposition – some dependence and some devotion. We must be 100% dependent on God's grace and 100% devoted to the disciplines of God's grace. (See as example John 1:14 where Jesus is said to be "full of grace and truth." He was not 50% grace and 50% truth!)

Those who try to balance dependence and devotion will end up frustrated. Those who are devoted but not dependent are *joyless*. Those who are dependent but not devoted are *licentious*. It is *all* of grace!

Knowing what God has done, is doing, and will do in our lives, let us go forward and live our lives for Him and His purpose. This positive goal will require that we avoid certain behavior, but that which is given up cannot compare to what is gained. A life lived for the God who made us and bought us will yield reward both now and in eternity. *Right now counts forever!*