

Jesus Calls Us



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(Luke 19:5)

JESUS CALLS US

The Gospel of John records the following incident:

“And John [the Baptist] bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

“And I knew him not: but he [God] that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost [Spirit].

“And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

“Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

“And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

“And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

“Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

“He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

“One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.

“He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

“And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.” (John 1:32-42)

The last verse is enlightening, although Peter did not fully realize at the time what Jesus was saying to him. The Master not only knew Peter’s name as Peter approached him but also predicted the appropriate name that he would give when Peter later became a disciple. Thus are revealed both the foreknowledge of Christ and his personal awareness of the individuals God is calling to him.

“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

“Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

“And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

“Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

“Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

“And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” (John 1:43-51)

Philip, in searching for Nathanael, evidently could not find him at first and had to look further. Apparently in the meantime, Nathanael was under a fig tree. He no doubt had heard about Jesus of Nazareth and his being pointed out as the predicted Messiah, but he was troubled in conscience as to whether this was a reality. The indication, therefore, is that Nathanael took the matter to God in prayer. Under the fig tree, he was praying to

God to reveal to him whether Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah. The statements quoted above seem to support this supposition.

When Philip found Nathanael, of course Nathanael was not aware that Philip was coming in answer to his very prayer. Nathanael followed Philip, but before they arrived in the Master's immediate presence, Jesus saw them approaching and called to Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Upon hearing these words, Nathanael was a little disturbed, for he wondered how Jesus could know about him. In fact, from his perspective, the statement seemed preposterous. But when Jesus mentioned that he had seen Nathanael secretly praying to Jehovah underneath the fig tree, then Nathanael knew that Jesus had miraculous powers and that the claim he was the Messiah had some foundation. And so Nathanael acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God.

Then Jesus made an interesting and revealing remark in connection with Nathanael's conversion. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open[ed], and the angels of God ascending and descending upon [before] the Son of man." In other words, Nathanael's experience took place because Jesus had sent Philip as the messenger in answer to Nathanael's prayer. Thus Jesus was saying that on a larger scale in the future, the

miraculous experience of Nathanael would become a universal experience. Answers to the prayers of all the peoples down here on earth will be accomplished by angels ascending and descending before the Son of man; that is, angels will come to human beings in response to prayer and then take back the petitions to the Master. The result will ultimately be the conversion of the world. In summary, what Nathanael experienced *privately* will become a *universal* experience, a miracle of *worldwide* proportions, for there will be complete communication between God and man in the Kingdom of God, which is soon to be established on earth (Matt. 6:10).

The Gospel of Luke records a similar experience to upbuild faith, as follows:

“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

“And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

“And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

“And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make

haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.

“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.” (Luke 19:1-6)

Although Zacchaeus, a man of small stature, was a rich publican, his humility was manifested in an outstanding way when he climbed the sycamore tree to see Jesus, who passed by underneath the branches. The startling feature is that when Jesus looked up, he *identified* Zacchaeus by name—just as when he saw Nathanael under the fig tree and *identified* him as “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” And he *identified* Peter as “Simon the son of Jona,” who would one day “be called Cephas,” a stone. Here Jesus not only identified Zacchaeus by name but also informed him he would that day abide at the publican’s house.

Another remarkable incident was Jesus’ meeting with the woman of Samaria at the well.

“Now Jacob’s well was there [at the city of Sychar in Samaria]. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

“There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

“(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

“Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

“Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:6-14)

The native humility of this woman was apparent, as was her simplicity. When Jesus spoke of the “living water” he could give, she asked about that water in her guilelessness and innocence. *Humility* was a common trait in these experiences. Zacchaeus, the wealthy man of small stature, showed humility in climbing the tree to see Jesus. To act in this manner would be beneath the dignity of most. Nathanael manifested humility by going under

the fig tree to pray. The principle, which is illustrated repeatedly in the Scriptures, is that *only the meek and the humble* are in the proper condition to have their eyes opened to see the office of the Savior.

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

“Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

“The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

“For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

“Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and

in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

“The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

“Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.” (John 4:15-26)

What lesson can be drawn from these incidents? It is that Jesus *personally knows us*. Lest we, at some future time, should feel we came to Jesus *on our own* in connection with our sin and grief and *then* he accepted us, the Scriptures indicate it is *impossible* for one to see Christ in an appreciative sense unless *God's drawing power is first exercised upon the life of that individual*. It is an honor to have our eyes opened to see the Lord Jesus in this light, for Satan has blinded the minds of men lest they see the glorious light of the gospel as it is shining in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:4). And so the Master states, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me [first] draw him” (John 6:44). In fact, the *Father* knows the individual even before Jesus knows him. The *Father* first selects the Bride of Christ. As the Apostle John said, the *Father* Himself loveth us (John 16:27). And the Master states that he will in no wise reject any whom the *Father* selects to come unto him (John 6:37).

Thus the individual who hears the gospel of Christ is highly favored. And when the Master sees one approaching, he realizes the drawing power of God has led the person thus far, and he is anxious, therefore, for the relationship to be consummated. Jesus' message is, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and ... ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:28,29).

Jesus also tells the condition of the call: "If any man come to me, and hate not [loves not less] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him" (Luke 14:26-29). In other words, somewhat stringent conditions are attached to the call, and before one takes the step of full consecration, he should consider the cost that is involved. By no means is this text meant to discourage the Christian or one who is contemplating becoming a Christian. The purpose of the text is to make the individual realize that the call is serious, for once he puts his hand to the plow, once he makes a personal consecration to the Lord, vowing to do God's will, he cannot turn back (Luke 9:62). Consecration is a *lifetime* matter, the

principle being, “Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

On the one hand, Jesus cautions not to enter into a consecration contract in a lighthearted manner, yet on the other hand, he encourages consecration by saying, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:30). The gospel call and its terms of obedience are an *invitation*, not a threat. The call of the Church is not one of compulsion. Nor is the Christian to enter into this arrangement and become Jesus’ disciple on the basis of fear, for it is the *love or compassion* of God that constrains us to follow the Master—the realization that we have been bought with a price, that we have no worthiness of our own, and that the Master’s words are the words of life.

Jesus’ affection toward us is based on our willingness to follow his Father’s bidding or will, as illustrated by the following occasion when Jesus was speaking with the multitude and his mother and brothers stood without, desiring to speak with him privately.

“Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

“But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

“And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” (Matt. 12:47-50)

The encouraging aspect of the Cross of Christ far outweighs any sufferings or self-denials it might entail. Even in the present life, one who follows the Master is rewarded a hundredfold with a family of God and fellowship of kindred saints (Mark 10:29,30). Many do not realize the beauty of the call of truth. When one espouses the call of Christ, there is considerable self-denial along certain lines but also many rewards. People in the world often look upon the Christian as one who is dead and has nothing desirable in his life, yet how does the worldly person spend his time and exercise his mind? Some devote considerable time to sports; for example, one might be able to tell the batting averages of different baseball players or give the ratios of games won and lost by various pitchers. Or people’s lives may be wrapped up in television, movies, popular songs, or other kinds of transitory pleasure. All of these categories, frankly speaking, are trivia and a waste of time. And people’s minds are often occupied with sex and off-color innuendos. As King Solomon said, “All is vanity” (Eccl. 1:2). In contrast, that which pertains to the Word of God is LIFE. It is eternal; it is about the Creator of the universe; it applies to the next life. Which is more valuable—the short present life,

likened to a wind or a vapor, or that which is eternal beyond the veil of the present human life? If people could properly evaluate the beauty of the call, they would respond, even if all they had was a grain of faith. They would rush into the golden opportunity to be the Master's disciple.

In addition to the reward Christians have in fellowship with others of like mind is the fact that even the angels are operating on their behalf. Each Christian is assigned a guardian angel to superintend his ways in connection with the providences of life. Of course the Christian is not immune to accidents, sickness, and other troubles, but all trials are tailor-made to be a schooling or personal discipline. Trials rightly received make one a better soldier of the Cross. To the worldly person, however, troubles are just random everyday occurrences.

Sad to say, some evangelists do injury to the cause of Christ when they make a cheap offer to the public in putting forth the false principle "once saved, always saved." They say that all an individual has to do is to confess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and he is saved forevermore. Whom do people think they are fooling? Would the Almighty God want a person to make a profession of faith with a simple statement that he accepts Christ and then feel that whatever he does thereafter does not matter because he is saved eternally? Such conversions are not lasting.

We must work out our salvation with fear and trembling if we would make our calling and election sure (Phil. 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:10). “Once saved” is *not* “always saved.” However, God has provided helps all along the way, one being an Advocate, “Jesus Christ the righteous,” who is just to forgive us our sins if we merely confess them and try to reform and conform our lives more to his likeness (1 John 2:1).

The Scriptures encourage the individual: “My son, give me thine heart” (Prov. 23:26). God is not asking for anything difficult but merely for a *reasonable* sacrifice. The Apostle Paul wrote: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your *reasonable* service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1,2). We are reminded of the words of the following hymn:

Jesus calls us o’er the tumult
Of our life’s wild, restless sea;
Day by day his sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, “Christian, follow me.”

Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world’s golden store;
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying, “Christian, love me more.”

In our joys and in our sorrows,
Days of toil and hours of ease,
Still he calls, in cares and pleasures,
“Christian, love me more than these.”

Jesus calls us: By thy mercies,
Savior, may we hear thy call,
Give our hearts to thy obedience,
Serve and love thee best of all.

We would encourage those who are considering the step of consecration, of kneeling before the Cross of Christ, to take this step. God’s providence will lead in the direction of that call, and He will see that all who consecrate are cared for as long as their heart attitude is continually to know and to do His will to the extent of their ability. For those who are already Christians but who are complacent in their attainment, the Book of Revelation has advice. The message to Laodicea, the last stage of the Church, speaks to this class: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:15,16). The spirit of complacency and confidence is the lukewarm condition that prevails today among Christians, but Jesus said it is better to be either hot or cold than to be in the lukewarm condition, which is good for nothing. The Lord has no material to work with once strength of character, purpose, and direction have abated, that is, when “thou sayest, I am rich, and

increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). We must continually take hold of the feet of Jesus, rely on his robe of righteousness to cover our imperfections, and walk in his footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21). To make progress in the present life and to please him, we need the Master every day and every hour. His counsel continues in Revelation 3:18.

1. “Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.” “Gold tried in the fire” refers to the divine nature promised to Christians who are “more than conquerors” (2 Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:37). Only through trials and experiences and the required steps of faith will we enter into this rich inheritance of the saints, especially in life beyond the veil (Eph. 1:18).

2. “Buy of me ... white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.” Character development is necessary in the Lord’s people. They should be continually striving to improve their lives and to walk in the light of their conscience as directed by the Word of God.

3. “Buy of me ... eyesalve, that thou mayest [truly] see” thine own undone condition and the righteousness and perfection of the Master. Spiritual “eyesalve” (the Holy Spirit) is also needed to understand the Word of truth.

Jesus rebukes and chastens those whom he loves. If we do not receive persecution in the present life, we are not God's children (Heb. 12:8). Discipline and hard experiences are necessary for Christian development, but there are compensatory joys and rewards. For every step of hardship come rays of sunshine and comfort. God will not try us above what we are able to receive but will provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," but he also said, "Be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:19). Notice that Jesus counseled *Christians* to repent. We should not rest confidently on our laurels, thinking Jesus wants only the unregenerate to reform their lives. No, he was speaking to those who have already taken his name. He wants Christians to make their calling and election sure so that they will be a blessing in the next age. Christians are called to be kings and priests to help mankind in their diseased and morally depraved condition and to lift them out of the mire of sin during Christ's Kingdom, when opportunity for salvation will be proffered to all (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 22:17).

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For more information on Jesus' advice to the Church of Laodicea, see pages 95-116 in the book *The Keys of Revelation*.