

# Calling and Destiny

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## Introduction

In my years in ministry, two questions I’ve heard raised over and over is “What is my calling?” or “What is my destiny?”

I feel these questions are largely misguided, as most of the time it seems that people mean “What am I supposed to do?” In some more extreme cases, “How do I stand out from everyone else?”

So, I want to look at these two concepts from scripture and hopefully bring some clarity about what they really mean so that the body of Christ can feel more confident in who they are in Christ.

## Calling

There are basically two types of “calling” in the scripture. Both are exciting, but they are unique from one another. One is the same for everyone, and the other is where we find some intimate uniqueness in how Jesus sees us.

## An Invitation (a noun)

The first type of calling is from the Greek word “klesis” (klay'-sis), which means “an invitation.” We see this commonly used throughout the scripture, especially in regards to salvation.

**Romans 11:28-30 (NIV)** <sup>28</sup>As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, <sup>29</sup>for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup>Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience

Here we see the promise that God has placed a sure election on the people of Israel—an invitation to be His people—is something that He will never repent of. He won't change His mind. This call, or invitation, is irrevocable.

**Ephesians 1:18 (NIV)** I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints

Here Paul prays that we, as saints, would understand the hope that is found in our invitation to be God's children.

**1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (NIV)** <sup>26</sup>Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup>He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no one may boast before him. <sup>30</sup>It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. <sup>31</sup>Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

Here we see that this invitation has nothing to do with our merit, or that it was in spite of our lack of merit. He invited all of the weak, foolish, shameful, lowly, and nobodies of the world to boast in the work Christ has done.

**Ephesians 4:4-7 (NIV)** <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup>But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

We all have this one calling that came from one God and Father of all.

**1 Peter 2:9-10 (NIV)** <sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

It is this invitation that brought us out of darkness and into His marvelous light to receive the great mercy of God.

## A Calling Out (a verb)

The other type of calling in the scriptures comes from the Greek words “kaleo” (kal-eh'-o) or “keleuo” (kel-yoo'-o). It literally means “calling” in the sense of what someone calls out to you or calls you.

For example: **1 Peter 3:6 (NIV)** like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

## Us and Calling

It is a wonderful thing to be called something special by someone you love. The thing about us using the word “calling” in the sense of saying things like “called to preach”, “called to the mission field”, “called to lead worship”, and so on—is that it reveals a deficiency in how we view our calling in Christ. It shows that we are focusing more on what we “Do” for Christ versus who we “Are” to Christ.

For example, I don't call my wife “My Beloved” because I am calling her to “do” something to be my beloved. I call her “My Beloved” because that's who she is to me.

The same is true of God. Our “calling” from God isn't supposed to be something that we are trying to figure out how to do. It is something that we are—because He says we are. It's what we are to Him.

The God who said “Let there be light”, and there was light, calls you something. He says something over you that you are. You don't have to worry about missing it. You need to be concerned with seeking first His Kingdom and His Righteousness.

## Jesus and Calling

We see this throughout the scripture with Jesus and the ones he loved. He called people things because that was either who they were to Him, or who he was fashioning them to be.

**Luke 13:10-13 (NIV)** <sup>10</sup> On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, <sup>11</sup> and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” <sup>13</sup> Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

Here Jesus called the woman “loosed”, and she was.

**John 15:15 (NIV)** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Jesus calls us friends, and we are.

**Mark 3:17 (NIV)** James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder);

Jesus apparently liked to give names to people that described what he saw in them.

**Matthew 16:17-20 (NIV)** <sup>17</sup> Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church,

and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup> Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Of course, Jesus calling Simon "Peter" is one the most well-known names that Jesus called one of His friends. But there is someone else much closer to you that he has also picked out a name for:

**Revelation 2:17 (NIV)** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

This scripture shows us something amazing. God has a name that he calls us, and he will literally tell us what it is when we overcome. This God who speaks, and things are, calls you something. THAT is your calling.

### Conclusion About Calling

Finding your calling is not so much about finding out some position you are going to fill as it is about just walking in the Spirit—walking with God. In New Testament times people were called "Pastor", "Teacher", "Apostle", "Prophet", and "Evangelist" not because they were given some position in the church that they worked in, but because people saw what they did out of the natural outflow of their walk with God, and called them one of those titles as a description of who they were in God.

The same should be true of us. IF people call us anything it should be as a result of us just being what God calls us, and never because we've taken some position.

## Destiny

Destiny is a great catch phrase to use to get people's attention. If you've seen it on one conference flyer, you've seen it on a hundred. Why? People want to know that their life is headed somewhere. If you can promise to "release" their destiny in some way, then you can get a lot of people's attention.

However, I think the truth about destiny is that we all have the same destiny. "Destiny" to the church shouldn't be a hope to be different or unique from everyone else. It is a promise of who we are in Christ.

**Our destiny is to be like Jesus.** We all certainly have different places (destinations) that we will end up throughout our lifetimes, in ministry or not, but ultimately the biblical witness about destiny has everything to do with the promise of true Christlikeness.

### Not Only Possible – God's Idea

Do you feel that it is possible for you to be just like Jesus? I think the scripture would tell us that, not only is it possible, it is God's idea and his plan. He has already decided it. He has already thought it through, and it began with the creation of mankind.

**Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)** <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that

move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Of course, man fell and God sent his Son to RECONCILE us back to God.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (NIV)** <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

**Romans 8:28-29 (NIV)** <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> 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.

For those that God foreknew would accept this reconciling, he predestined them to be conformed to the image of Jesus—to be just like Him.

**1 Corinthians 15:45-49 (NIV)** <sup>45</sup> So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

It is easy for us to believe that we bear the likeness of the fallen man, Adam. We readily accept that we have the "adamic nature." We proclaim willingly that we are "sinners saved by grace." But here in this scripture God is making it clear that in the SAME WAY that we bore the likeness of the earthly Adam, we will also bear the likeness of the heavenly one—Jesus Christ. We will be like him, in just the same way that we were like Adam.

**Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)** <sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

This scripture assures us that, not only was the first body that God created in the garden intended to be like God, but the new self that He gives to those of us who are born again is "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

## It is a Process

It certainly is a process—we are "being renewed"—but there is no doubt that not only can we be just like Jesus, we should plan to be.

**Colossians 3:9-10 (NIV)** <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

**2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (NIV)** <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

**Luke 6:40 (NIV)** A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

## How Can We Embrace the Process?

Peter lays out a beautiful path for us to take so that our knowledge of Jesus Christ, through which we have received everything we need for “life and godliness” (being like God), will not be ineffective and unproductive.

**2 Peter 1:3-11 (NIV)** <sup>3</sup> His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. <sup>4</sup> Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. <sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; <sup>6</sup> and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; <sup>7</sup> and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. <sup>8</sup> For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, <sup>11</sup> and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## Finally: Total Transformation

This process ends with a promise that we will absolutely be totally transformed—even physically—into the image of Jesus himself.

**Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV)** <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

**1 John 3:2-3 (NIV)** <sup>2</sup> Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

## Final Conclusion

We all have been called (invited) into the family of God. We are all called something by God. We are what He calls us, because what he speaks is always the truth. We will walk in that calling primarily by simply walking with God, because he is transforming us to be conformed to the very image of His Son, which is ultimately the final destiny of all who believe. This is God’s idea from the beginning of creation, and what God himself is working out in us. We can embrace the process of this transformation by working to increase the measure of faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love in our lives. How do we do that? All of these come from walking in love with Jesus. He has always transformed those who gaze on him.