

Called Into Fellowship

I Corinthians 1:9: “God is faithful, by whom you have been called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Let’s have a word of prayer:

Lord, we are so grateful for Your words because Your words are Spirit and life. We are thankful as we come to You this morning that we do not have to trust in ourselves for Your word, but we can lean upon the One who is the Word, the Word made flesh, the Word that was from the beginning with God. We thank You that You came to us and dwelt among us, and we have beheld Your glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. So we ask You again as we think on Your Word, as we share on Your Word, that You would grant us real understanding into Your Word. For to whom shall we go? There is no one else. We wait upon You, we call upon You, we ask that You take Your Word and do that thing which You alone can do. We believe in what the prophet Isaiah has said that it will accomplish that which You sent it forth to do when It is Your Word. In Your precious name. Amen.

A Key to Unlock Real Fellowship

My burden is “called into fellowship.” That ought to be quite clear from this single text verse, and I can tell you that the burden comes from this one verse alone. From the beginning of this year, I have been meditating and thinking about it, and it has been very much impressed on my heart the importance of this verse. One way to put it is that this single verse is of supreme importance. I think it is a key that unlocks what fellowship really is, how we enter into it, and how we experience it. I believe for that reason we should pay much attention to it. It is one of my favorite verses, by the way, if you have not figured it out. I use phrases that I like because they help me to understand it and to apprehend it. I think of this verse as a comprehensive whole. So much is packed into these three phrases, that it is of such an extreme depth and fulness, that we can take in.

Another phrase that I use for a verse like this, and there are many in the Bible is, it is so full, so deep, so all-encompassing that is compressed in these verses, and this verse is a universe of meaning. We see the very nature of God; we see who God is; we see His Person; we see the Caller. Not only that, but we see His desire for man, and His unending pursuit for man. We see what He does, we see the called, and we see His end. We see His purpose; we see why He calls us. Why does He do what He does? In those three things and in the three phrases that are within this verse, we get a full meaning of what He is after and has been after since eternity past.

I remember when we were studying I Corinthians in our Bible Fellowship groups, and I still remember how much that book meant to me. And as we studied it together and shared on the importance of it, it meant even more. I also remember reading for the first-time what Campbell Morgan said about this single verse, and it has never left me even though it has been years ago.

He thought much of this verse, and in his wonderful book "The Corinthian Letters of Paul" he went on to say this: "We shall devote this study to the consideration of this one verse, for it is altogether too important to be hurried over." He went on to describe it in a way I will never forget. He said, "It is the fundamental affirmation of this entire letter." It is quite a thing. You remember that is not me saying that or you saying it; it is the one who they refer to as the prince of expositors who said that. He had an understanding that everything that Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers had to do with this matter of being called into fellowship. And he went on to describe himself later in II Corinthians, which was an equally beneficial Bible Fellowship time for us concerning that spiritual man who knew and lived in the center of that fellowship. However, I take one exception with brother Campbell. A fool speaks easily, but let me say what he said, "This is the key to I Corinthians." Now I happen to believe this is the key to the entire Bible. If you understand this verse you begin to understand who God is, what He does, and what He has been after for all time and even before time, pre-time. So this is the verse that is on my heart.

I would like to talk about the importance of this verse. All the mysteries of God seem to me to be compressed in this one verse. Now that is quite a lot when you think about it. We will consider three things. First, the unparalleled declaration in that first phrase, "God is faithful." We will look at the Caller. Then we will look at that second phrase "by whom you were called," and we will look at the called, the ones who are called, and that is the universal call that I believe is so clear. Then we will look at the unfathomable privilege. But the unfathomable privilege is wrapped up in this single verse, and that is the calling, what we have been called into. It comes from that wonderful part, that third phrase "into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." So that is what we will be looking at today, God willing, and we will try to cover a little bit of the depth of this great verse.

Unparalleled Declaration

First of all, there is the unparalleled declaration. Think of that! Think of those three words, "God is faithful." Now there are many words that are important in the Bible, but I think these three words are of supreme importance. Just imagine for a moment if these three words were not in the Bible. How we would be left to our own devices! How we would be left to our own strengths! How we would be left to our own wisdom and ingenuity! So if you think for one moment that would get you through, you are sorely deceived. Therefore, I consider this the unparalleled declaration.

God is faithful. What powerful words they are! When I think of the chaos of this world, and what many of you have been living through this past year, you will agree this world is chaos. The cosmos is chaos, but God's purpose is anything but chaos. There is the conflict of our own lives, and I think most of you would probably agree with me that much of our lives is in conflict because we live in spiritual warfare. This is not some phrase that is in Ephesians 6; it is reality for us who know the Lord.

I think of the compromise of the church, and probably most of you would agree that as a whole the church lives, and we live, in the Laodicean period in which there is great compromise. So when I think of the chaos of the world, the conflict of our lives, and the compromise of the

church, this single three-word phrase, *God is faithful* exceeds all of those short comings. What a tremendous phrase it is! How wonderful it is! This unparalleled declaration must be our declaration from the beginning. Think of it. As we go through life's hardships and hazards, it must be our unparalleled declaration all the way through. That is the secret that comes to us in this verse.

At the end of our journey on earth, when you stand on the precipice of eternity and you go into that new realm, it must be our ending declaration. So as we commence, as we continue, and as we conclude, this single phrase needs to be our unparalleled declaration. *God is faithful*.

He is faithful in the beginning. I believe, and I know you believe, He is faithful in the end, but I think we all are knowing in this current area of life, He is faithful all the way through, and therefore this must be our unparalleled declaration. This phrase, *God is faithful* is what they call in the English language a declarative statement. Now I may be a fool to speak about English, but nevertheless I know this is a declarative statement. What does that mean, by the way? It is something that makes a statement, and this is the statement of the universe, *God is faithful*. What a statement it is! I often joke with people and tell them that if you want to get a tattoo (and I do not have a tattoo, by the way), get a tattoo that says, *God is faithful*. There is a statement! That will make a statement when you are at the beach. It not only makes a statement, but it provides a fact, an eternal fact, a glorious fact, *the fact*, the only fact that matters.

I think of our founding fathers who saw a lot. I know they are probably all cancelled now, and you cannot repeat their names, and I will be cancelled because I did repeat their names. But you remember the second president, John Adams, who made a famous statement about facts. As a matter of fact, every lawyer knows it, and in every court of law it is often repeated. Even politicians, who I have less use for, all know this statement. Of course, it is their facts, and we are dealing with eternal facts. But John Adams said, "Facts are stubborn things." Every politician stands up and says, "Facts are stubborn things." But he did make a real point because these men had a thought of the divine. And it says, "And whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence." Isn't that wonderful? Again, he was a politician like the rest, but we know the eternal fact, and that eternal fact is irrevocable; it cannot be changed. It is irreversible.

Linda and I went to our lawyer, and I think our lawyer was a little full of himself, and he said, "You will thank me after we do this. Your children will thank me after we do this. We are going to make for you a revocable trust." I will be honest with you. As long as I have been in business I honestly did not know what a revocable trust is. It is the little pennies that we have left over, and it means the children may get them or they may not because it is revocable. In other words, I can change it at any time at my discretion. And Linda can change it at any time at our discretion because it is revocable. But this unparalleled declaration is irrevocable. It can never be changed. It is not only irrevocable; it is irreversible. We can liken it to your jalopy which did not have a reverse; it would be irreversible. My motorcycle does not have reverse, by the way, so it is irreversible. But thank God, for this statement, this declaration. It is irreversible. How wonderful that is! I think this unassailable declaration is true all the way through the Bible.

You remember when the children of Israel were called out of the bondage of Egypt and were called to go into the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy, which many say is the second giving of the law, God had one thing He wanted His people to know. He said, "Listen, I am not giving you this land because you are better than anybody on the earth, and I am certainly not giving you this land that is full of seven ites, enemies who are stronger than you and more powerful than you. But I am giving you this land because I have chosen you." This one thing: "I called you."

So you can see from the beginning that God's heart was this "called into fellowship." Deuteronomy 7:9 tells us the one thing that He wanted them to remember, "And thou shall know that Jehovah thy God, he is God, the faithful God." That was the one thing He wanted them to remember as they went into the Promised Land and faced all of the opposition that they would remember this one unparalleled declaration.

The Bible ends with this thought. In Revelation 19:11 we are told about the vision that John had. It is a powerful vision about the marriage feast of the Lamb, and how the bride has made herself ready, and there is great rejoicing and hallelujahs in heaven. What a scene that is! But then it says, "And I saw the heavens opened, and behold, a white horse, and one sitting on it, called Faithful and True." The one thing that is Faithful, the one thing that is True is the unparalleled declaration.

I think of I Thessalonians 5:24 which Paul said. I cannot tell you, brothers and sisters, in my journey as a Christian how many times this verse has come to me with such encouragement. Paul declared to the believers at Thessalonica as he said, "Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it." Think of those words. Just imagine if it had said, "Faithful is he that calleth you." But Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, "... who also will do it."

I Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has taken you but such as is common to man's nature." Think of that! Isn't that encouragement? In other words, no temptation has taken you that is more than can be handled." Now I did not say by you, but in the Lord. That is the statement. "No temptation has taken you but such as is according to man's nature." And look what the Holy Spirit provoked Paul to put right after those words. *And God is faithful.* That is the secret. How marvelous that is! And it goes on to say, "Who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear, but will with the temptation make the issue also, so that you should be able to bear it."

I like the Darby rendering of this, because as much as I love the King James Version, and I quote it often, but I often get confused between the King James Version and the Darby Version and mix the verses up the way they are rendered. The King James Version says, "He will give you a way of escape." Maybe that is the wrong way to look at this verse. Certainly, it is true. How often we come into temptation and this faithful God has made a way of escape for us, but Darby renders it slightly different. He says, "He will make the issue clear so that you may be able to bear it." Think of that!

Brothers and sisters, in any temptation in which we find ourselves, no matter how deep, no matter how dark, no matter how difficult, He will make the issue clear that we shall be able to bear it. And that being able to bear it I believe is when we come to know this unassailable truth

that God is faithful. I think that is the secret. Even in our failures, I often think of Paul's last words he wrote in II Timothy to his dear beloved son in the faith. In II Timothy 2:13 it says, "If we are unfaithful, (think on this very clearly) if we are unfaithful, He abides faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." How wonderful!

The Authorized Version and the King James Version say, "He remains faithful."

As the importance of this verse settles in your heart, think of that. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. This is who God is.

One of my favorite hymn writers is Thomas Obadiah Chisholm. Not many of you probably know who Thomas Obadiah Chisholm is, but you know his unparalleled declaration, I guarantee you. They say he wrote twelve hundred poems and hymns, and we hardly know who he is anymore. We have three of his hymns in Christ In Song hymn book, and if we understood the importance of these three hymns, what a life we would live as believers. The first one is, "O To Be Like Thee" and it begins, "O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer, This is my constant longing and prayer." These were his words and his constant cry. Would to God that our constant cry would be, "O to be like Thee." We do not sing that hymn enough.

The second hymn that we have is, "Living For Jesus". Just think of it. All of the world is living for themselves, and unfortunately we have to admit most believers are living for themselves. But his secret in all of the chaos of his life was living for Jesus, and that hymn begins: "Living for Jesus a life that is true." This is true living. Is that our declaration?

All of you know the last hymn that he wrote: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness". It is one of the most important hymns in church history, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness".

Here is a fellow that was no stranger to difficulties. He only had a primary education, which we would think is unthinkable. Who would have just a primary education? As a matter of fact, he had to be self-taught, and he taught in a one room schoolhouse where he received his primary education. Later he became an editor of a newspaper, and then he became an editor of a very famous Christian Periodical, the Pentecostal Herald.

After he was saved, His dream in life was to become a minister. He did become a minister, and then his health failed, and he could no longer continue in that ministry. We would think that this brother with almost no education, whose health had failed, who was known by no one would not be much to look up to. However, when you look at what his declaration was, you have to say, "Here is one to look up to."

He became a life insurance agent, and I love life insurance agents. He became a life insurance agent in New Jersey, so we can always become a life insurance agent. Even as a life insurance agent his passion for the Lord never left him. And because of his anxious and nervous clients, he wrote this wonderful hymn: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness".

He meditated on Lamentations and those wonderful words that we all know. He penned those words, and it was his gift to his clients. You thought he was a life insurance agent, but I say he was a life assurance ambassador. What a difference! This hymn has affected more people with that same old repeated line in the chorus thrice repeated: "Great is Thy faithfulness" much more

than many thousands and tens of thousands of sermons including the present have come to the church. How many people have been changed in an instant when under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it dawned upon them as an unassailable declaration. "Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father, There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not. As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be." Then comes that chorus so mighty and so clear, "Great is Thy faithfulness," and he says again, "Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!"

What a message! This should be our message. Have you discovered this secret? You need to. If you are going to walk worthy of your calling wherewith you have been called to speak of our theme, you need to understand this one great secret, "Great is Thy faithfulness."

I think of what we need to do as believers to understand that great secret and make this unparalleled declaration our own experience. Three things came to my heart as I considered it. First of all, we should remember the promise of His faithfulness. That is the first thing. Never forget it! Never forget it! If you have to write it on your mirror and look at it every morning and every night when you brush your teeth. Don't ever forget the promise of His faithfulness. It will carry you through everything! I think of Hebrews, a book that is one of my favorites.

There are many exhortations, many declarations, and many confessions in the book of Hebrews, and in 10:23 it says, "Let us hold fast the confession of the hope firm to the end, or unwavering, for he is faithful who has promised." That is the secret.

I think of Hebrews 11, the hall of faith, and Sarah, Abraham's wife. It was impossible for Sarah to conceive. Hebrews 11:11 says, "She was beyond a seasonable age." Now you know what that means. She could not conceive, and even worse was her partner, this aged man. It was totally impossible, truly impossible, but he gives her secret in verse 11: "... since she counted him faithful who promised."

Write it on your heart, remember it every day, never forget the promise of His faithfulness. It will be a secret for you for this life.

The second thing is to declare His faithfulness. It is not enough for you to just remember the promise of His faithfulness, but we must declare His faithfulness.

I think of Psalm 92 which is a Psalm of the Sabbath, and Psalm 92:2 is of extreme importance. It says, "to declare thy loving kindness in the morning and Thy faithfulness in the night." What a secret! Declare His faithfulness. What a recipe for living for us believers!

The third thing is, we need to feed upon His faithfulness. And I want to tell you the honest truth that this did not come alive to me until about five or six years ago. It came alive to me when a dear sister who is in our midst and who was no stranger to difficulties, shared it as a testimony: "Feed upon faithfulness." Darby renders it: "Give yourself to faithfulness" (Psalm 37:3-4).

I was saved in the Charismatic movement, to which I owe much, and I am thankful. I may still be a bit too charismatic for most of you, but I owe much to what the Lord did through the Charismatic movement. The latter part of Psalm 37:3-4 was our tag line or our watch line.

“Delight yourself in Jehovah or delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” We Charismatics knew that one. Do you want something? maybe a Cadillac? a nice home? The secret then is in verse 4: “Delight yourself in Jehovah, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” We knew it by heart, but it has only been in recent years I have come back to this verse 3: “Confide in Jehovah and do good. Dwell in the land and feed upon faithfulness.” What a secret! This is how this unparalleled declaration becomes your own experience. And if it becomes your own experience, you can go through anything with the Lord who is your portion.

The Universal Call

I want to talk about the second phrase, the universal call, by whom you have been called. Now this is very important because this tells us what God does. Everyone of us is called. Within this verse is the great heart of God for man. How wonderful it is. He calls and He never stops calling. We are considering together Ephesians in our Bible Fellowship, and in Ephesians chapter 1:4-5, it tells us what the great heart of God is for His people.

Ephesians 1:4-5: “According as he has chosen us in him before the world’s foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; having marked us out beforehand for adoption (sonship—Darby) through Jesus Christ to himself.”

Think about what was in the heart of God before time; this is pre-time. It says, “before the foundation of the world.” And I would encourage you to look up that phrase in the Bible, “before the world’s foundation,” or before the foundation of the world, and it will give you much light on what God had in His heart for all eternity for His Son. The great thing in the heart of God is almost unimaginable. It is this matter of “called into fellowship.”

I remember brother Kaung years ago in 2007 shared some messages with us on the Corinthian letters, and he entitled it “Called into the Fellowship of His Son”. Those were powerful messages that made us see things in a clearer way as to what God was after. Our brother said something most profound in those messages speaking of the Godhead: “They came to the conclusion that they wanted to expand their fellowship.” How tremendous that is! “They wanted to enlarge their fellowship” were the exact words our brother used. They wanted to extend it to mankind. Have you ever thought about that? Called into fellowship. They did not need to do that, but They decided in pre-time councils that they would in fact, before the foundation of the world, extend this great fellowship even to this creation unto mankind. How marvelous that is! It is beyond almost anything we could have imagined. We think of the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1:26-27, and if you meditate on it, you begin to understand just by the very words in those verses this great thing that was in the heart of God.

Genesis 1:26: “And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.”

Can you imagine! We as human beings have been made in the likeness and image of God Himself. How unthinkable that is! This is what it means, called into fellowship.

V. 27: “And God created Man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

If you look at Darby, Man in v. 27 begins with a capital letter Man, and the thought there is not just a person, an individual; it is a corporate vessel that He would bring into fellowship, and this Man is really mankind; it is the Adam if you prefer, and His design for man was to call them into this fellowship, “by whom ye are called.” That was the thought behind it.

Now think about this. The Creator so loved this creation that He wanted to include them in His great purpose. Just think of that! It was not as a minor part, but as a major part. I do not think much of Hollywood either, and usually I do not hold back in my feelings. But if you are an actor and you are in a movie or you are an actor or actress and you are in a play, if you do not have a very important part, it is called a bit part. You have a little bit, but you do not have much.

Brothers and sisters, in the high council of God, in the consideration that was before the foundation of the world, in the mighty heart that God had, He was determined that we would not just have a bit part, but we would have a major part in His purpose. How wonderful that is! Think of it. What He had in His thought was creation, then He had in His thought calling, and then He had in His thought response. If only those He created could see this great thing He had reserved for them, and if only they could hear the calling of God’s heart, and then only if they would respond to the calling of God’s heart, then we would understand what called into fellowship really is.

This was that corporate vessel, and this is what He is after. But when you come to the New Testament, you begin to understand what that corporate vessel really is. You begin to understand that corporate vessel of fellowship is, in fact, the church. And all of us know what the Greek word for the church is—Ecclesia. You all know that, but do you really know what it means? It simply means “the called-out ones.” They are called out of something, and they are called into something unthinkable. And that unthinkable thing is fellowship with the living God, full fellowship—not limited fellowship, not part fellowship, not a bit part, but everything He has for us. That is what called-out ones means.

If you look carefully at this word, another thing it means is the thought of meeting. Now some of you might not believe me here, but just look into it and be honest. I have heard a brother say that it has nothing to do with meeting. I think he is wrong. I think what was in his heart had to do with the town gathering in the town square. Called out ones gathered together. So it literally means this vessel of His choosing, this corporate vessel which is to experience all the benefits and wonders of fellowship is the church of God—the called-out ones gathered together. I believe the Lord came to this earth for two purposes. One was to satisfy all the righteous requirements of God. He completed that work, and He could say before He ascended: “Dear Father, I have completed all You have asked me to do.” Not a thing is lacking.

The second thing He did was to call His church into fellowship. That is very important. If you miss it, you miss the New Testament. I used to mistakenly say for years that the Lord only spoke of the church twice. In Matthew 16:18 He said to Peter: “Upon this rock I will build my church.” He was speaking of the universal church, but He spoke of the local church in Matthew 18:20. He talked about the sinning brother and He said, “And if he does not listen to the two or three, take it to the church.” He described that church: “For where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them.”

Brothers and sisters, I implore you, do not listen to anybody that tells you gathering is unimportant. If you do, you will fail to understand what the New Testament is, and what He had in view for us. As a matter of fact, the Lord spoke of the church again and again. It is true; it is only twice spoken during His incarnate state, but when you come to the book of Revelation, He spoke of the church. This book is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, but it is also the revelation of God's heart for the churches. And the emphasis in the first chapter is when He told John: "Go, write in a book and share it with the seven churches in Asia," and He named each one of those churches by name. When you come to chapters 2 and 3, you begin to see God's great heart for the church. He poured His heart out, and I believe it is a pouring out to say, "Don't you know what you are for?" It is being called into fellowship. As a matter of fact, some of you like and use the Red Letter Version of the Bible, and in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, from the opening verse to the ending verse, it is all red.

The messenger is not some angel; the messenger is not John. The messenger is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the message is to the church. The message to the church is a calling back, an adjusting, a correcting and strengthening—whatever has to do with fellowship. Whatever hindered fellowship, He corrected it. He walked among the lampstands so as to make fellowship real. He strengthened the things that remained. This is the whole explanation of chapters 2 and 3. And He ended with that divine call, that universal call to every assembly: "He that has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches." Then He said these words to every church: "He that overcomes." The only way to overcome is through fellowship, and that is what we have been called to. May the Lord really help us to enter into this depth of fellowship.

Let me make some very important facts about calling. Without calling you will never understand the Christian life. Without calling, you will never understand the church. Without calling, you will never enter into fellowship. Those are facts that are true. I think the Bible from the beginning to the end has to do with this matter of calling. You remember that awful chapter in Genesis chapter 3 when sin came in through Adam and Eve. In verses 8 and 9 It talks about how God walked in the cool of the day in the garden. Then it says this thing that is incredible: "Man and wife hid themselves among the trees from the presence of Jehovah. And God called unto them and said, Where art thou?"

Brothers and sisters, do you understand the importance of that? The importance is that fellowship was broken, and what God was after was that He would never give up on His purpose, but to go to those fallen ones and restore them to fellowship. How wonderful that is! Some of you in this room may have through your lifetime fallen from that place of fellowship, and God in His mercy is intent on going back again and again, whatever it takes in calling you into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We all remember how Israel rejected the Lord. Can you imagine that? Everything was given to Israel, and yet they rejected the Lord, and in His mercy He sent them into captivity. That was mercy. You may think that was cruel; it was not cruel at all. They had abandoned the very purpose to which they had been called, and they lost fellowship with the Almighty God. So His one aim right to the end of the Old Testament was to restore that fellowship, however harsh He had to be, it was with one aim in view, and that one aim was to restore that fellowship.

The last two books of the Bible are Zechariah and Malachi. There are two verses that are very much the same. It says in Zechariah how God called out to them and said, speaking through Zechariah, "And thou shalt say to them, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, return unto me and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of Hosts" (Zechariah 1:3).

Malachi is the last book of the Bible, and Malachi means messenger of Jah. God has a message for His people. At the very end He had a specific message for His people, and that message was in 3: 7: "Since the days of your fathers, have ye departed from my statutes, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." Listen to this painful response. "But ye say to me, Wherein shall we return?"

Can you imagine how that must have broken the heart of God! There was divine silence for four hundred years because of that response. He was looking for the right response, but He got the wrong response. That is why I am saying that the Bible is about calling and response. He is always looking for it.

I think of that great calling in the New Testament: "Come unto me all ye who are laboring and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). That was the universal calling.

In I Corinthians 1:1 Paul described those saints in Corinth as "called saints." It means saints by divine calling. That is what it was about. As a matter of fact, when you go to the great closing argument of Paul in Romans 8, you begin to understand that we are called according to purpose. All of us used to quote: "All things work together for good," and many of us stopped there, but it goes on to say, "to those who love God and are the called according to his purpose." This is the universal call. This is how important that second phrase is: "ye have been called." Do you understand the importance of it?

There is a strikingly controversial verse in Matthew 22:14. This was at a wedding feast, and there was one who came into the wedding feast without the proper garment. And he was dismissed from the wedding feast into outer darkness. There is a lot that could be said there, but we will not go into in that message. But then the Lord said, "Many are called but few are chosen." Have you ever thought about that? We need to think about this. It has to do with the ultimate universal calling. I do not understand all that it means; we will have to ask brother Stephen to explain it, but I know something that it means. The many that are called is the universal calling. The few that are chosen are the ones who respond, and He is always looking for those ones to respond.

Brothers and sisters, I think there are two questions for you and for me. Have you heard the call to fellowship? Have you responded to the call for fellowship? The answer to these two questions will affect your eternal destiny. They are that important.

The Unfathomable Privilege

I am going to end with a few thoughts on the unfathomable privilege. I have spoken about privilege before, so I do not want to spend much time. If you think about that last phrase, it says

in the middle part of the phrase, “ye have been called into the fellowship of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now many of us think that we have been called to eternity. Many of us or some of us think we have been called into ministry. Many of us do not understand this unfathomable privilege we have. We have been called into the center of everything from eternity past to eternity future, and that great privilege is we have been called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Think of that word *into*; how important is that word! We have been called out of, and we have been called into. Colossians chapter 1:12-13, tells us of being delivered from the authority of the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love. That is what we have been called out of, and that is what we have been called into. It is like the children of Israel and that illustration in the Old Testament. They were called out of the bondage of Egypt, but they were called into the Promised Land, a weak illustration of what we have been granted in that unfathomable privilege. How wonderful! How great this fellowship is in the book of Colossians! It goes on to say, “Christ is everything.” Think about that. Christ is everything. In this calling into fellowship we have not just been given one thing, or some things, or a few things, or many things. I do not care what adjective you put on it.

Listen clearly to this word about this unfathomable privilege. We have been given everything. And just to emphasize it the Holy Spirit spoke through the apostle Paul, and said, “Christ is everything; all and in all.” That is what we have been granted in this call into fellowship. How wonderful it is! What a privilege! It makes me think of Hebrews 3:1: “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.” Think of it. That is what fellowship means; it means partakers. It means sharing in the portion as we find in Colossians 1:12: “Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” That portion of the sharing of the saints in the light is this calling into the unfathomable fellowship to share all that Christ is, not only for now but throughout eternity.

Ephesians 2 says that He will display in the coming ages (notice that it does not say age), the kingdom and eternity, the unsearchable riches of His grace in Christ Jesus towards us. This is how deep this calling is. I believe it is the highest calling. I believe it is the holiest calling. I believe it is the most heavenly calling that could be imagined. Think of how exclusive that fellowship used to be. In the pre-time period or age, it was God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and they were the only three that had this fellowship. Surely the angels must have had this fellowship. No, no, no, do not be wrong about that. They were peripherally around it, but they did not enter into that fellowship in which we have the privilege of doing. As a matter of fact, it says in Hebrews that He has not picked the angels, but He has picked the sons of Abraham. What a privilege! What an unspeakable privilege! I think there are three questions we need to consider. Paul in his closing argument in Romans chapter 8 ended with these three questions to try and describe this unfathomable privilege.

Romans 8:31-32: “What shall we then say to these things?” Have you ever thought much about that? Do you think it is a little filler verse? I do not think it is a filler verse. “What shall we say then to these things?” This is a very deep, searching verse.

Another question: “If God be for us, who against us?” Think of it, dear saints. What privileges have been poured out on us! “If God be for us, who against us?”

Then he ends with this wonderful question: “He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things” (v. 32)? Isn’t that a wonderful question? It is not a question that is in doubt, by the way. I use questions. People say oh so many questions, I don’t get it. Just explain to me some of the questions. These are declarative questions, and they are absolutely clear. How shall He withhold from us anything?

This is the burden, called into fellowship, an unfathomable privilege indeed. I remember brother Kaung speaking in those messages “Called to the fellowship of God’s Son.” He was speaking of this verse in I Corinthians 1:9, and he said at the very beginning of the first letter to the Corinthians that the apostle Paul gave us was this tremendous statement: “The more I meditate on this, the more I marvel at it.” Then he quoted what was said, “God is faithful by whom you have been called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Then he said this: “Can you think of anything nobler, higher, more heavenly, more spiritual, more perfect than to be called into the fellowship of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord?” There is nothing like it. There will never be nothing like it; it is set apart.

Remember those three phrases: God is faithful, the unparalleled declaration. Remember that second phrase, “by whom ye have been called,” the universal call, and remember forever that last phrase of highest privilege: “into the fellowship of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Father, we think of this verse, and we cannot imagine such favor that has been shown to us. It is almost too much to take in, but it is altogether true, and we ask Your Holy Spirit to write it upon our hearts. Where men’s words are weak, too weak to communicate what is true, would You speak to us? Would You write it upon our hearts? Would You call us in this life that we now live to know what it means to be called into fellowship? Lord, only in that way will we fulfill our purpose, and in only that way will we fulfill your desire. Above everything God has chosen this for His Son. We meditated in our time of remembrance that you were the unspeakable free gift, but this is unquestionably the highest, the holiest, the most spiritual, the most perfect privilege ever there has been. Into this we give ourselves for the rest of our days. In Jesus’ precious name. Amen.