

To the Romans: Called and Loved “The Right Road” Romans 1:6-7

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Belonging

Abraham Maslow is considered the father of humanistic psychology. In the 1950's, he published his theory of the hierarchy of human needs in a book entitled Motivation and Personality. He presented the needs in a pyramid with the most significant ones being at the base, and the least significant being at the top. *Love/Belonging* was listed in the middle of his pyramid as one of the fundamental needs of a human. Humans need a sense of being accepted by a group or another person. He believed this need being met determines, to a great extent, how we will see and feel about ourselves. We see this at an early age in children.

I will never forget when my family started having kids. Our daughter Kiki came first, and then my sister had Michael. Along came our son Kory and it was not long before they formed a group. You see, Abraham Maslow said that man has a tribal instinct, or a herding mentality. Without knowing it, our kids formed what was called the Cousin Coop. As a matter of fact, their first video is now online and you can see it on Youtube.com. It has been viewed by thousands across the nation. Years later when my niece Kelsey came along, she had a need to be accepted by the older kids and to be admitted into the Cousin Coop.

Small children are sometimes ridiculed by their older siblings because they are tattle tales. The young ones are quick to come and report

the activity to the older ones. We have all heard kids say, "Johnny won't let me play!" It is really not about playing; it is about the need to belong and be accepted.

Humans will many times form relationships or tribes around likeness. It is easier to be accepted by those you are most like. It is a dent in a person's significance when he or she is not accepted, or believes they do not belong. Therefore, many of us tie our self-worth to the person or the group that we belong to. We appreciate the person we feel accepted by and feel that our value is appreciated. It significantly adds to who we are. God also knows what our greatest needs are. We are going to learn a dynamic truth in this section. Paul is going to teach us that as believers, like the Roman believers, we belong to Jesus Christ. Wow!

I have discovered that I prioritize my time according to how much value I place on the person or the group I belong to. If I am given a responsibility by a group that does not hold much significance to me, I might say, "I will if I have time." My hope is for you to realize that if the number one relationship in your life is with the Lord Jesus Christ, then that should determine the priority and efficiency of your time. We are giving time to other things that are not nearly as valuable as the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Please do not forget that truth.

Recipients of Paul's Letter: Called and Loved

There will be two main points of interest along our hike. Paul is writing to the "called" and the "loved", but I will only be teaching on the "called" in this chapter. The "loved" will be covered in the next chapter.

Scripture

"...including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul is writing to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints. In verse 5, Paul shared that his mission as an Apostle, and his motive to preach the gospel was to bring about the response of faith from all nations for the sake of Jesus name. In verse 6 he said that this mandate includes "...*you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*" In verse 1, Paul attributed who he was, a bondservant, an apostle, and one who had been set apart to the gospel, to the divine initiative of God. Paul never takes credit for who he is. He always says it is not by the will of man, but by the will of God. He reflects all glory for who he is to God. He does the same thing with the recipients of the letter in verses 6 and 7. He isn't going to let them take any glory for who they are in Christ, but gives all of the glory to God. Paul is going to attribute the identity of those recipients to God's initiative. I hope this does not burst your bubble. If it does, your bubble needed to be burst.

Paul uses the two words "*called*" and "*loved*" throughout the New Testament in his 13 letters. I am amazed at the number of times he used those two words. These two words are actually verbal adjectives. Adjectives describe or modify nouns and are descriptive words. They add color. They paint a fuller picture than just stating the noun by itself. It is one thing to say *the barn*, but it is another thing to say *the big, old, red barn*. You get a fuller picture. That is why Paul is using these two verbal adjectives. "*Loved*" is describing God's affection toward us. God's affection is toward we who believe in Jesus Christ. He loves us. We will talk about that affection in the next chapter.

- **Called**

The word we are going to look at is the verbal adjective "*called*." I want to submit to you that it describes God's action toward us. "*Loved*" talks about God's affection toward us, and "*called*" talks about God's action toward us. Romans 1:6-7 clearly says that we have been "*loved*" by God, but it also says we have been "*called*."

The Bible says we have been "*called*" to two things. First, we have been "*called to belong to Jesus Christ.*" It was true of the Roman's and it is true of us. And we have been "*called to be saints.*"

God called Paul to be an apostle. He called Moses, Jeremiah, Amos, and many others into service. I think everyone agrees that God has the right to call saints to service. In the flesh, I would rather be a farmer than a preacher, but I am doing what I am doing because of the call of God. If you agree with that, then you have to agree that God also has the right to call sinners to salvation. The phrases "*called to belong to Jesus Christ*" and "*called to be saints*" are not referring to service of saints. It is referring to the conversion of sinners to saints. It is talking about the conversion of unbelievers to believers. It is talking about what determines your identity. This will burst your humanistic bubble, but we must come to this truth of Scripture. God has the right to call sinners to salvation.

This word "*called*" is used by the Apostle Paul many, many different times and in many different ways. In this passage, it is not being used by Paul to refer to what we call the general call of the gospel. The general call of the gospel is when someone is preaching the gospel and the words are being heard and everyone there has the opportunity and the availability to turn from sin and put their faith in Jesus Christ. It is why Jesus can say many are called but few are chosen. Jesus was referring to the general call of the gospel. There are a whole lot of people who hear the gospel, but not many are chosen because not many respond. Everyone who hears the gospel has the general call of the gospel. If they do not hear the gospel, they do not get the general call of the gospel. Do you understand that truth? This is why we are a missionary Baptist church. It is why we take the gospel to the ends of the world, because we believe that without the preaching of the gospel, there will be no salvation. An island of people who never hear about Jesus Christ are not going to be in heaven. Those people on the island are not going to live a life that glorifies God because they have no access to the truth. Jesus Christ clearly said:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

In my opinion, Paul is using the word "*called*" to refer to what theologians call the effectual call of the gospel. Throughout its history, the Church has argued over this point. Everyone does not agree, but as a pastor/teacher and having studied in depth, this is what I believe. The reason it is called the effectual call is because of the effect it has on the one who is the recipient of the call. In other words, this call determines or brings about and causes the proper response in the one who is receiving the call. In these verses, this effectual call determined, caused, and brought about the identity of the Romans who believed. I believe with all of my heart that without the effectual call of God, a person will not come to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In John 6:44 Jesus said:

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day."

The context in John chapter 6 was salvation. There was a group that was not getting it, and they just wanted to argue. Finally, Jesus looks at them and says, look guys; you can't come to Me unless the Father draws you. You see, Jesus recognized there was a group there that was not being drawn. That does not mean they were not going to be drawn later, but at that particular time, they were not being drawn.

Without the aid of God drawing you to Christ, you and I would never come. Historically, Baptists have believed that, but may not have understood it to be an effectual call. Some attribute the call to the general call, but I attribute it to the effectual call. This is why we cannot take credit for our salvation. The response of faith that we make is a very real choice, but it only comes about because God breaks into our lives with the effectual call of the gospel.

- **God is the source of our call to salvation.**

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:9

This passage tells us that God is faithful and called us into fellowship with Christ. This phrase is almost exactly like the phrase in Romans 1:6 when Paul said, "...including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ." "Called" is an adjective in that verse. In 1 Corinthians 1:9, "you were called" is a verb. It is an aorist indicative passage, meaning it is punctiliar in action. Punctiliar action is the opposite of continuous action. Continuous means the verb continues on, it goes on all of the time. Punctiliar means it goes to a point in time and then it stops, it is over. That moment can be repeated, but when it is repeated it is not continuous, it is punctiliar. If I had a board, continuous would be illustrated by drawing a straight line across it. Punctiliar action would be conveyed by dot, dot, dot, dot. Do you see that difference? It is telling us the passive tense means the subject is the recipient of the action of the verb. The subject is being acted upon. The subject, "you", (the Corinthians) is being acted upon. In other words, they have had at a moment in their past, a time when God called them. They are now called, not because they believed in Jesus Christ, but because they are the recipient of the action of God. This is crucial. This is not saying you got yourself here, God is telling us that we are the recipient of a call. And we are the "called" because of the action of another.

The purpose of this call is to bring us into the fellowship with His Son. I submit that it is almost saying the same thing as Verse 6 when it said "*we have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.*" You are not just called to belong to a group; you are called to belong to a person. Yes, there is ***Koinonia***, or fellowship, in the Church because we are the called ones of God. But our fellowship must first be with Him who called us before it can be with those of us who are the called.

- **God has called us according to His purpose.**

Let that sink in. The fact that you and I are called of God to salvation does not lie within us, but it lies within the eternal purposes of God. This is very humbling. That is why believers do not run around with our heads up in the air like we are better than the people down the

road. We are not better, we are just different. What makes us different is God's eternal purpose for us, and it is a very humbling thought. Romans 8:28 says:

"...and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good." (ESV) or "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God who are called according to his purpose." (KJV)

Most of us love that first part of the verse, but we never get down to that bottom part that says we *"are called according to His purpose."* *"Called"* is not a verb here, it is an adjective. It is the same phrase that is used in Romans 1:6 and 1 Corinthians 1, as well as other places. The people that have the promise that all things work together for good are the people who love God. The Bible never tells all people that all things work together for their good. The only people who have the promise that all things work together for good are believers, the people who love God. It is not true of an unbeliever, so please do not teach it to them. You would be lying to them. You may want to believe it, but it is just not true. That does not mean things might not eventually work out for a non-believer, but at that moment, they do not have this promise. This verse describes the people who love God as the ones called according to His purpose.

I am laboring to talk about the call because it is all throughout Scripture in every major point of salvation. 2 Timothy 1:8-9 talks about the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our own works, but because of His purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. It is clear that we do not receive a call or salvation because of any works we do, but because of God's purpose and grace. Ephesians 1:4-5 says:

"In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

Again, Paul attributes our salvation to the purposes of God. Paul basically repeats this in Ephesians 1:11.

- **The call comes through the preaching of the gospel.**

There are some who would tell you that a person is saved or not saved based on what happened in the past, eternal counsel of God. That is not true. That may tell you why a person is saved, but a person is not saved until they come under the preaching of the gospel. The effectual call of God to a sinner comes through the preaching of the gospel. A lot of people have asked me why I preach the gospel if I believe what I believe. It is because I believe what I believe that I preach the gospel! There will not be anyone saved unless we preach the gospel. The effectual call of God, which is necessary for salvation, does not come to a person until they are under the preached word. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 says:

"But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The ESV says, "God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved", but the KJV says, "Chose you from the beginning to be saved." You might think there is a big difference in saying God chose us from the beginning and God chose us as the first fruits. First can mean beginning, and beginning usually means the first. So the interpreters are using the word first instead of the word beginning. The point is that God chose you, whether as the first fruits, or from the beginning. The purpose was for you to be saved. God chose you to be saved through, or accomplishes this through, the sanctification by the spirit and believing the truth. God chose to save you, and He accomplished this by having the Holy Spirit move upon your heart and set you apart, and opened your eyes to see the truth of Jesus. When the Holy Spirit does this, your response is to believe the truth that He just revealed to you by setting you apart. Verse 14 says:

"To this (talking about salvation) He called you through our gospel so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I do not believe this could be any plainer. God calls us to salvation through the preaching of the gospel.

- **The called of God will call upon the name of the Lord for salvation.**

God is the source of our calling. You do not get "called" because you call. You call because you are "called." 1 Corinthians 1:2 says:

"To the church of God that as it is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ..."

I love this verse. Paul starts off by talking about God's initiative in salvation, and tells them he is writing to those in Corinth, who have been called to be saints, and those who call upon the Lord in every place. Do you see the dual nature of this? God calls, then the people who are called call upon the name of Jesus because they believe the message to be true. The call of God affects that in your life. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 says:

"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

The Perishing and the Saved

There are two kinds of people in this verse; those who are perishing and those who are being saved. To those who are perishing, the cross is foolishness, it is folly. To those who are being saved, it is the power of God. Then God quoted a verse that says salvation is not going to be anything like man thinks it is going to be. He said that is the very reason I have made it the way it is. I am going to thwart the wisdom of man. It pleased God to save the person who believes through folly. He said the Jews demand signs, and the Greeks, or Gentiles, look for wisdom. This encompasses all of the people groups of the world. Paul is preaching Christ crucified and it is a stumbling block to them because they cannot believe their Messiah was crucified. The Gentiles want wisdom and it is absolute foolishness to believe that God sent His Son to die on a cross, take our sin on the cross, be buried for three days, and then rise again. That is absolutely foolish! Do you see this? But then He said that to those who are called from both the Jew and the Gentile, Christ is the power and wisdom of God. I do not know how much plainer this can be. Within the Jewish nation and the Gentile nation, the vast majority are going to reject Christ. But within those people groups, there is a group who is called, and when the message comes to them, it is not a stumbling block, it is not foolishness. When the message comes to them, it is the power and the wisdom of God! The rest of this chapter tells us that God made it this way so that no one would boast in His presence. Talk about a burst to our humanistic bubble! God has designed our salvation so that only He gets the glory and no one can boast in His presence! Some of you may think what a mean God, but I say no, what a glorious God! He will not share His glory with another.

Romans 10:13-17 says:

"For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the

feet of those who preach the good news!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

The first thing you have you have to do to be saved is to call upon the name of the Lord. That is the first thing you tell someone when you are dealing with them for salvation. But you cannot call unless you believe. You cannot believe unless you hear, and you cannot hear unless people are being sent. This is why Paul tells us the feet of those who share the good news of Jesus are beautiful! This is why Paul says faith comes by hearing and hearing by God's Word. The reason sinners call upon the name of the Lord is because in our preaching of the Word, they receive the effectual call of God. God calls them on His own to salvation. Therefore, He, not us, is to be glorified for salvation. It is not my initiative that makes me a child of God; it is God's initiative that makes me who I am and determines my identity. You belong to God because He loves you.