

T H E T E A C H I N G
L E G A C Y
 O F D E R E K P R I N C E

Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen

Have you ever known someone you would call a “born leader?” Or do you know anyone who is blessed with such a beautiful voice you would say they were “born” to sing? If so, have you also ever witnessed the heartache that develops if people aren’t doing what they were “born” to do? There is definitely a difference between being called and being chosen.

When Christ uttered the words, “Many are called, but few are chosen” in Matthew 22:14, He was not offering us an opinion or a probability. He was stating a fact. That fact is still as true today as when Christ first stated it. (*While this Scripture refers to salvation, the principle also applies to our calling to Christian service.*)* Many Christians are called by God to His service, but few are ever chosen and appointed to walk in that service. Some Christians are called in childhood. Some are called comparatively late in life. But very often I’ve found the call to God’s service comes to Christians in their teens or twenties. Therefore, Matthew 22:14 should be of particular interest to young believers.

Between the time when a Christian is first called to

* Italics added as editor’s note.

service and the time when he is actually appointed by God to that service, there nearly always intervenes a period of testing. Often, the more responsibility required in the service to which a Christian is called, the more intense will be the testing through which he must first pass. Only those who successfully endure the testing will be chosen to actually carry out the service. In the book of Judges, when Gideon first blew the trumpet to call the people of Israel to God’s service against the Midianites, 32,000 men answered the call. By the time that Gideon had subjected his followers to the tests which God appointed, however, he was left with 300 men — less than one percent of those who were called passed the tests and were chosen for service. I suspect the proportion is barely any higher



today — if at all. Nevertheless, God's wisdom was justified by the event. Gideon was able to do more with 300 tested, disciplined men than he could ever have accomplished with 32,000 mere followers. Once again, the same applies today. One tested, trained, disciplined, self-denying servant of Christ is worth a hundred Christians who are merely "members" of some group or organization.

Much modern evangelism centers in counting converts. I believe God is more concerned with making disciples. During the days of His earthly ministry, Christ could have numbered His converts by the thousands, but in the last hours before the cross He was left with just 11 men who remained disciples. Even after His resurrection — and although He had revealed Himself alive on one occasion to "over five hundred brethren" (1 Corinthians 15:6) — only 120 went to the upper room to seek the power from on high, without which He had warned them that they could not be effectual witnesses for Him. The true progress of God's kingdom has always depended upon quality, rather than quantity. It is

time for us to emphasize this fact again today.



Two Types of Testing

There are two main ways in which God tests Christians who are called to service: by allowing things to become hard, and by allowing things to become easy. In the parable of the sower in Mark 4, Jesus spoke of the seed that fell on stony ground and compared it to Christians who "endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble." But He also spoke of the seed that fell among thorns and compared it to Christians in whom "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." Some Christians are not prepared to endure opposition, persecution, ridicule, loneliness, poverty or apparent failure for the sake of the Gospel. Others cannot remain steadfast in the midst of worldly ease and comfort, popularity, wealth and success. Those whom God accepts for His service must

neither be deterred by the one nor entangled by the other.

The Bible continually warns Christians that they must expect to undergo testing. From the beginning of his epistle James says, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2–3). Peter writes that trials come only "to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold — and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world" (1 Peter 1:7 NLT). Intense trials are not something strange for true Christians; they are God's own appointment.

The Bible also gives us many pictures of God's faithful servants and of the testings through which they had to pass. One of the classic examples is Job. In Job 23:10–12, we read Job's own testimony concerning his testings: "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I

shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” In verse 12 we find the secret of Job’s victory. It lay in his attitude toward God’s Word. Those who esteem God’s Word above all else will always come through their trials victorious.

Another servant of God who endured severe testing was Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a very young man when God called him. In fact, Jeremiah himself thought that he was too young to be a prophet at all (see Jeremiah 1:6). One of the most difficult trials for young Christian people to endure is loneliness. Faithfulness to God holds them apart from the empty, worldly pleasures and activities in which they see others of their age indulging. They feel themselves aloof, cut off. In Lamentations 3:27–28, Jeremiah described this test: “It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him.” Jeremiah himself endured this particular test (see Jeremiah 15:17). Like

Job, Jeremiah drew his strength to endure from his attitude to God’s Word. This was his mark as a true servant of God. “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jeremiah 15:16).

Moses is another great servant of God who learned to endure testing. His first test was that of worldly rank and pleasure. Brought up in Pharaoh’s house and heir presumptive to Pharaoh’s throne, he could have enjoyed all the wealth and culture and luxury of Egypt. When he refused to succumb to this temptation, he was rejected by his own people and persecuted by Pharaoh, and he had to endure 40 years of exile and poverty and loneliness. Still he overcame all these trials because he never allowed the appeal of temporary wealth and glory to blind him to the true glory of God and the eternal reward that God offers. Hebrews says that Moses endured this because he “thought it was better to suffer for the sake of the Messiah than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the great reward that God

would give him. It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt. He was not afraid of the king. Moses kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:26–27 NLT). Today many Christian young people are being blinded to the true glory and eternal reward of real Christian service by prospects of worldly comfort and success.



The Weight of the Call

The Bible uses three powerful words concerning the calling of God. First, it is a “high calling” (see Philippians 3:14). It is on a different level from all the other interests and claims of life. In a Christian’s life nothing else may take precedence over the calling of God — neither a home, nor any family or earthly ties. “If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26 NLT).

Secondly, the call to serve God is a “holy calling” (see 2 Timothy

1:9). It is something sacred, to be guarded jealously from all compromise or defilement. It demands dedicated time of prayer and spiritual self-emptying. Its fulfillment demands our strength, our time, and the consecration and development of every gift and talent that we possess.

Thirdly, God's call is a "heavenly calling" (see Hebrews 3:1). The voice that calls us to Christian service comes from heaven. Whether it comes as "a still, small voice," or as "the sound of many waters," it is the voice of almighty God. His voice has supreme authority and is worthy of unconditional obedience. When Paul heard the call of God, he said he "did not rush out to consult with anyone else" (Galatians 1:16 NLT). He did not seek confirmation or permission from the religious leaders of his nation, or even from those who were already apostles of Christ. He got alone with God — to know to the full God's purpose for his life.

Today, when God calls Christians to specific ministry, the first reaction of many is to seek the opinions of others. Who

will send me? Who will finance me? As a result, the voice of God is soon drowned out by the opinions of men. But to the Christian who is called and who is willing to put all his confidence in God, there comes a blessed assurance from God's own Word: "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). The fulfillment of a Christian calling depends supremely and solely upon God Himself.

Don't Delay

Lastly, the calling of God is urgent. When Joshua put before the Israelites the call to the service of God, he said: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). Psalm 95:7 (NLT) says: "Oh, that you would listen to his voice today!" The call of God does not wait upon man's convenience. We may not defer our decision to surrender to Him to some more "convenient season." The devil says "tomorrow," but God says "today." In Proverbs 1:24–32, there is a solemn warning against deferring to answer the call of

God. It describes people who — in their prosperity and self-sufficiency — turn away from the call of God. In fact, later when they change their minds and turn back to seek God, it's too late! God has withdrawn Himself. The voice that once called is now silent. The hour of opportunity has passed.

Whether His calling to you is general (like in Micah 6:8) or specific (like in 1 Peter 4:11), let me encourage you to heed His call. Take it seriously. Endure His tests. Dedicate yourself to being about the business of heaven. Don't become another name added to that of the "many" who were called—but never chosen.

FOR FURTHER STUDY, WE RECOMMEND DEREK'S MESSAGE:

GOD WROTE YOUR SCENARIO

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