

Sermon - Called

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

August 22, 2021

When I say, “you’ve been called,” many, many, images come to mind. Let’s explore some images of being called. First, you’ve been **called by your name** since you were a toddler. You were called Ruth or Bill or Joanne or _____. You were called something by your parents, and often not your proper name, unless of course, you’ve been naughty and not nice. Then, of course, you were called by your full name, Charles Warren Gross, Jr! You get in here, right now! That was not a good calling. Then, you were called names by your friends. Some of these were good, helpful, build-you-up nicknames, and others, not so much. If you were a good ball player you may have been called, slugger. If you were a good football player, maybe they called

you Bull, or tiger, or the beast or something. But, they called you. They called you by a name and you responded to that name. I won't rehearse those hurtful, harmful names you were called, but you remember them, and they still sting. Oh, you remember being called. We also remember being **called on** by teachers. And, if your experience is like mine, you were called on when you hadn't done your homework or weren't particularly paying attention. Usually teachers know this and they call on you when you're looking down at your shoes. You've all done this. You avert your eyes. We use the ostrich technique. Maybe if I don't look at her, she won't see me. And, even when you've tried reverse psychology on her and painfully looked directly at her when you didn't have a clue how to answer, she'd call on you then, too. How do they know? Oh, we know about being called. Maybe some of you have been **called in**. Like called in to

the principal's office. I recall only one of those calls. We figured out how to 'reverse engineer' an ordinary clothespin and turn it into a really powerful dart gun. Brilliantly creative, but very dangerous. So, I got called in for shooting darts into the ceiling. Yea, we know about being called. **Some of you were called up.** Called up by Uncle Sam. You were called to active duty by that letter in your mailbox. Out of nowhere, wham. Greetings! Uncle Sam needs you. Or, in the news these days, we see a **host of people being called out!** Called out for sexual misconduct allegations. Hopefully, we never get called like that. Well, let's bring this closer to home. All of us get **called on our phones.** In the old days when the phone rang <**ring ring**>, you answered it and there was a nice friendly, family voice on the other end. "Hello Lisa, Hi this is Aunt Pat. How are you today? I bought a huge bag of apples at the market and made too many apple pies, so I wanted

to invite you and Charlie over to have a piece of pie with me.” That was then. But, now, oh, now, we don’t answer our phones. Nobody answers their phones anymore. We get called by robots, scammers and call centers from all over the country. So, we let our own miniature robots, called answering machines, answer the other robot’s call. So now, since nobody actually takes a call, sometimes your friends, knowing that you screen your calls, will say, “Hey Bill, pick up the phone. Hey Bill, pick up the phone! I know you’re there.” I once had a meeting with a Presbyterian Foundation representative at Starbucks and her phone started ringing, but the ring tone wasn’t ring, ring, it was her daughter’s voice saying, “hey mom, pick up the phone, hey mom, pick up the phone.” So, yes, we know what it means and what it’s like to be called. So, now we can look at this passage, for this passage is written to us who are being called by

God, being called by Jesus Christ into a gifted, secure, abundant life. This is the most important call of our lives.

We'll look at our call, what we're given and what we do. Our call, what're we given and what do we do.

The reason that I spent so much time on being called is that the bookends of this passage show that we are called. The called Paul is writing to called people. The called Paul is writing to called people. The called Paul is writing to called people, even you and me, people called to be God's holy people, people set apart, people sanctified in Christ Jesus. People responding to the call of God. You see, you wouldn't be reading this scripture or hearing this scripture read if you weren't called. Now, just like Paul, you may not have expected this

call. This may be a surprise for you. You may have been minding your own business, working at the puzzle table, swimming in the pool, having lunch with friends, watching the worship service on your TV, shopping at Stauffers, or visiting grandchildren and then wham, God calls you. God calls you by name. God calls on you even when you're not paying attention. God calls you in. God calls you up, and God enlists you. God calls you out, out of your own life of selfishness, out of your own road to death, hell and destruction. God calls you on your phone and you may hear it right now. **<ring ring>** "Hello, Ruth, hello Evelyn, hello Nancy, hello Victoria, I love you and want you to have life, real life. I love you and I want you to have life in my name! Will you pick up the phone? Will you take the call? Oh, don't worry, I'll take care of everything. Just relax. **I don't call the equipped, I equip the called. I don't call the equipped, I equip the**

called. You don't have to clean yourself up first, I'll do that for you. You're called, so come as you are. I'm faithful and I'll keep you." I'm faithful and I'll keep you. And, you know why he says that? Look at verse 9. Verse 9 says, "God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." God is faithful my friends and God will keep you firm to the end, so you'll be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you hear the call? It's for you. Pick up the phone.

Yea, it's as simple as answering the call. That's it. Let me demonstrate this for you. If I held out a \$5 bill and said this is for you. What would you have to do to receive this \$5 bill? If I held this out and said, this is for you, will you receive it? What would you have to do to have this \$5? **<just come and get it, right?>** It's the same thing in answering the call, picking up the phone.

So, now you realize you're called, let's look at what our faithful God does for us, then we'll look at our response. First of all, God gives us grace in Christ Jesus. Grace in Christ Jesus. While we were still sinning, while we were still traveling down our own selfish roads toward death and destruction, while we were not paying attention in class, while we were involved in our own misconduct cases, God calls us, God calls on us, calls us up, calls us out and gives us grace in Christ Jesus. God gives us Grace, which is God's undeserved favor for the likes of you and me. Grace is the Greek word, charis, or gift. Grace can be remembered as an acronym, **G.R.A.C.E. "God's riches at Christ's expense."** **God's riches at Christ's expense.** And, what flows from having the grace of Jesus Christ in our lives, is peace. We receive the undeserved and unmerited grace of Jesus Christ, then, we live with the peace that passes understanding. And, don't we all

desperately want that peace these days? We want peace in this world and less saber rattling, especially when Lancaster PA is within range of a thermonuclear weapon. When our houses and county would never withstand an airburst of a hydrogen bomb. So, we're called and given grace and peace through Jesus Christ. And, that my friends, is huge, overwhelming and life-giving, but as they say in the infomercials, "that's not all." Oh, no, my friends, that's not all. God not only gives us grace and peace in Jesus Christ, but in verses 5 and 7 Paul tells us that we're enriched in every possible way. We've been given spiritual gifts and we lack nothing for our lives. We've been given spiritual gifts and we lack nothing at all. Think of it this way, if God doesn't hold back his only Son from us, for our salvation and for our eternal life, he won't ever hold back his riches from us, enriching us in every possible way and pouring out his spiritual gifts on us.

You and I have exactly what we need for life. And, that's not all. God himself keeps us firm to the end, so we'll be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, God calls us by name, calls on us, calls us in, calls us up, calls us out, and gives us grace, peace, gifts and keeps us firm to the end, so we'll be blameless when Christ returns. I don't know about you, but for me, this is staggeringly good news. God is faithful. God calls you by name, calls on you, calls you out, calls you to be his very own. **<ring ring ring>** Do you hear the call? Will you answer the call? Do you feel the grace, the peace, the gifts and the strength?

So, since we're called, what's our response to this call? Well, **first**, you pick up the phone and you answer the call. Or, if you let your robot take it, you listen to the message from the Lord. The Lord has called you by name, the Lord is calling on you,

the Lord is calling you up, the Lord is calling you out and the Lord is calling you to live in grace and peace and giftedness. This is the Lord's call. Do not ignore this message and do not delete this message. This is not spam. This is not the caller about your car warranty. This is not some fake IRS caller. This is not someone imitating your local banker or even a call center. This is for real and this is the Lord God Almighty. Answer the call, it's for you. **Secondly**, realize that God is faithful and gives you all the gifts you need. God is faithful and God gifts you with an abundance of everything you need. You lack nothing, my friends, nothing. In July we celebrated Thanksgiving in July, so now, Christmas comes early for you and for me in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, realize this. **God doesn't call the equipped. No, he equips the called.** If you're like me, you feel totally inadequate for this call from God. Don't sweat it. God gives you the gifts you need,

each day. Live into your giftedness! And, **finally**, if you examine these 9 verses closely, you'll see the only verb that applies to you. The only verb for you and me is in verse 7. You **eagerly wait** for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. You eagerly wait for Jesus Christ. All you do is wait. Christ Jesus does the rest. But, if you ever ask yourself what do I do while I wait? What do I do with this grace and peace I've been given well then, take a look at your grace, your gifts, your talents and your abilities. Take a look at the spiritual gifts that fill you up and bless your life. Go ahead and unwrap one. Maybe there's one that says, "Open me first." Throw away the instructions, like you usually do, and start to play with it. Start to use it. Start to get familiar with it. Start to delight in it. It's a gift from the Lord and it's meant to be used. It's a gift from the Lord to bless you, to bless your family, to bless this community, to bless your neighborhood and to bless the world,

while you eagerly wait for his return. Friends, you and I are called and gifted while we eagerly wait for the Lord Jesus Christ. Live in perfect peace. Amen.