

Transformed by Receiving the Spirit of Revelation (Part 2)

¹⁶ ***I do not cease...making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened; that you may know (experience) what is the hope of (confidence in) His calling, what are the riches (wealth) of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe... (Eph. 1:16-19)***

I. UNDERSTANDING THIS PRAYER

- A. This is a very important prayer in Scripture. It focuses on God imparting the spirit of glory to us. This is Paul's "road map for discipleship" speaking to what our heart needs to be strengthened and motivated. We pray this for our own heart as well as for others, both believers and unbelievers (family, friends, ministries, cities, nations, government leaders and especially our enemies).
- B. Paul prayed one general prayer that people receive revelation of the knowledge of God (what God is like and how He acts). Then, he prayed that they experience 3 different expressions of God's glory that would cause them to persevere in godliness. We pray the following three things:
 - 1. To understand ***God's calling for our life***, both in this age and the age-to-come.
 - 2. To know ***who we are to God*** as His inheritance and ***how He feels as we walk out our calling***.
 - 3. To ***experience God's power*** in our life and to ***rightly perceive how it operates***.

II. WALKING IN CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S 3-FOLD CALLING FOR OUR LIFE

- A. God created us with a longing to participate in that which has lasting significance. Only that which is significant to God is truly significant. We must be in agreement with God in this.
- B. God answers our longing for significance by giving each of us a unique calling which has 3 dimensions (internal, external and eternal) and 2 aspects (individual and corporate) to it.
- C. In each of the 3 dimensions and 2 aspects of our calling we need revelation because in each of these we by nature have the wrong perspective. We need a paradigm shift in all three of these areas. Each dimension demand faith that God sees or greatly values what we do.
- D. We will stand before God as a corporate people on several levels (ministries, cities, nations, generation). The Spirit joins people together in a ministry mandate (same vision and values). This touches our longing to belong to something bigger than ourselves. Our biggest calling is the one that we have together in a region, nation or generation. The Western culture values the individual far more than the corporate group they are in (some of Eastern culture is opposite).
- E.

- F. Premise #1: God's will is wise and good as it liberates our heart and makes us great in His sight.
² ***Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove (openly display to others) what is that good and acceptable (satisfying) and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:1-2)***
- G. Premise #2: What God values and plans is opposite of what we naturally value and plan. What we naturally think about these three dimensions of our calling is opposite of what God thinks. This will either liberate or trouble us. Only by revelation can we understand God's view.
¹⁵ ***For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. (Lk. 16:15)***

III. OUR INTERNAL CALLING: TO BE A FAITHFUL DISCIPLE OF JESUS

- A. Our internal calling in this life is to be a faithful disciple of Jesus that deeply loves God and embraces what the world calls foolish and weak (humility, serving, giving, fasting, praying and forgiving). We need revelation that this lifestyle of so-called weakness is valuable to God.
²⁷ ***God has chosen the (so-called) foolish things of the world (Mt. 5-7 lifestyle) to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the (so-called) weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty...²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. (1 Cor. 1:27-29)***
- B. Our primary calling in this life is internal. We are to say and do what He said and did (Sermon on the Mount lifestyle) without regard to the honor or money that we receive nor the size of our impact in ministry. The "weakness" of holy things is a stumbling to some who see Jesus' leadership over their life and calling as too hard with unreasonable expectations (Mt. 25:24).
²⁴ ***Then he who had received the one talent said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. (Mt. 25:24)***
- C. We need revelation that our calling to a disciple's lifestyle of so-called weakness is valuable to God. This insight equips us to rejoice in the weak and small things of our calling instead of despising them. ***It is enough for us to be His servant.***

IV. OUR TEMPORAL EXTERNAL CALLING: TO FUNCTION FAITHFULLY IN SMALLNESS

- A. Our temporal external calling includes our position (function) in the marketplace, a ministry organization or our home. This dimension is what most people focus on when considering their calling. This is an important part of our calling, however, it is the least important of the three.
- B. Our temporal external calling includes our position (function) in the marketplace, a ministry organization or our home. History verifies that the Lord has given the vast majority (99.9%) an assignment that involves few things and makes very little impact (that can be measured by man in terms of the numbers impacted). Of the approximately 1 billion believers today, my guess is that only about 1,000 people directly impact 5,000 people or more on a regular basis.
²¹ ***You were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. (Mt. 25:21)***
¹⁷ ***You were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities. (Lk. 19:17)***

- C. We are committed to doing God’s will (which is good and wise) not to “smallness” as an end in itself. However, since God’s will for 99.9% of His people is to have a small ministry assignment we must soberly and honestly address this issue that so often confused with self delusion.
- D. Only a fraction of 1% of the Church is called to have a “large impact.” We must understand that these also have a larger demonic assignment against them. Paul called this a “thorn in the flesh.”
⁷ ***And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted... (2 Cor. 12:7)***
- E. It is “His calling” for our life not one a calling that comes from our “own imagination.” Some aggressively pursue a calling that they have set for themselves rather than the one that God ordained for them. How do we know? If we strive to open doors for it that will not open, then usually the calling is not from God. Our gifts will make room for us.
¹⁶ ***A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men. (Prov. 18:16)***
- F. The most common example of striving to establish one’s own calling is seen in seeking a public teaching ministry or to gain a leadership position over others. They strive for years to make it happen. When we look for our calling in the wrong places we grow frustrated and despairing.
- G. The Spirit gives us confidence that our weak activity and small impact is valuable to God. We live differently when we see that our seemingly insignificant choices are important to God. The simplicity of the call to be faithful in little is attainable to all. This call is not so high that no one can do it yet it is so low that few choose to. We love the Lord for leading His people way.
- H. The “hope of His calling” refers to having confidence that this calling is valuable to God, wise and good and certain to come to pass (if we yield to the Spirit). This confidence is like an anchor in our soul that makes our heart strong and steady to our obedience to God.
¹⁹ ***This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast... (Heb. 6:19)***
- I. We revelation about the value of our calling to intercession. Jesus appeared to 500 people after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:6), but only 120 of them had sufficient revelation of the value of intercession to come to the Upper Room for ten days of continual prayer (Acts 1:15).

V. OUR ETERNAL CALLING: TO FUNCTION IN “BIGNESS” IN THE AGE-TO-COME

- A. Our eternal calling (in the age-to-come) has a much larger impact than anything that we will accomplish now. The apostles made many references to their calling in the age-to-come.
- B. It takes revelation to see that our greatest impact and most important ministry is in the age-to-come. By revelation we see that faithfulness in “very little” now leads to “ruling ten cities” in the age-to-come and faithfulness in “few things” now leads to receiving “many things” then.

- C. Our inner man can be daily renewed by the Spirit as we embrace the difficulty that goes along with being a faithful disciple of Jesus. This leads us to a greater calling in the age-to-come.
¹⁶ Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory... (2 Cor. 4:16-17)
¹⁸ The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:18)
- D. We press of the prize to attain to our “upward” call. This refers to receiving the “highest” and most “heavenly” dimension of one’s calling in the age-to-come. The specific prize that Paul had in mind was receiving the crown mentioned in 1 Cor. 9:25 and 2 Tim. 4:8.
¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God... (Phil. 3:14)
- E. All three dimensions of our calling demand faith that God values what we do. In the context of 2 Cor. 4-6, Paul writes about living in weakness (1 Cor. 1:27), suffering persecution and laboring in smallness as the sure way to walk in the fullness of his eternal calling (ministry in the age-to-come). This is this context in which Paul said that we walk by faith. Serving, sacrificing and laboring in ministry before His eyes makes it all a very personal issue of relationship with Him.
⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight...⁹ We make it our aim...to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body...¹¹ Knowing...we are well known to God... (2 Cor. 5:7-11)
- F. This life can be likened to a 70-year internship which prepares us for ministry in the age to come. Jesus gave a great promise to the compromising Laodicean church. Jesus motivated them to resist compromise and passivity by offering them a place in His Millennial government. This is the same way Jesus motivated Peter, John and the other apostles (Mt. 19:27-28).

VI. BELIEVING LIES OUR ABOUT OUR CALLING LEADS TO MUCH UNNECESSARY PAIN

- A. Our culture tells us that we are only successful if we have a big numerical impact in man’s eyes. The call to the “so-called weak” activity of serving, giving, fasting, praying and forgiving in context to having very little impact offends the unrenewed mind.
- B. Many live in fantasy about how big their ministry impact will be. They formed their expectations around what “motivational self help teachers” told about going for great impact and money.
¹² Hope deferred (expectations continuing to be unfulfilled) makes the heart sick... (Prov. 13:12)
- C. Those whose ministry fails to grow big in impact go through much pain and despair. They often end up disappointed with God and feel like a failure in ministry.

- D. Some people are more committed to doing “something big” than in faithfully doing God’s will. They become intoxicated with visions of grandeur about their future ministry. The expectation of having a big ministry motivates them more than being a faithful disciple of Jesus. If their big vision is not rooted in the revelation of God’s will for their life but in pride (cloaked in language about seeking it for God’s glory) they will end up disappointed.
- E. The proof that all along they were more motivated by pride than for God’s glory is that after several years of not attaining a big impact, they lose zeal for fasting and prayer (since they now conclude that it may not guarantee them a big ministry). Wrong thinking in this leads people to great disappointment as their misguided dreams and expectations are shattered. The more we labor for a big calling that is outside of God’s will, the smaller our heart gets.
- F. Many are brokenhearted when they conclude that their ministry is ordained by God to be small. Yet, they endured a “slow death” from decades of resisting the truth. Much of this pain can be minimized by having expectations that are formed by the revelation of our true calling in God. God’s people can be spared much anxiety and frustration by embracing truth in this area.
- G. God gives us a small “external assignment” because He is jealous that we do not establish our identity in what we accomplish before men but in who we are before God. Some assume their identity is 80% in the Lord and 20% in what they accomplish (I suspect it is probably opposite).
- H. God resists our efforts when we seek a big ministry (if it is contrary to His will) out of His desire for deeper relationship with us and in His commitment to work for our greatness. Many assume that the resistance they feel is only because of the devil or people who do not value their calling.
- ⁶ **God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (Jas 4:6)**
- I. Paul prayed that we receive revelation of the “knowledge of God” (Eph. 1:17) which includes knowledge of how Jesus thinks and feels now as well as how He carried His heart in His earthly ministry. Jesus as God’s “ideal servant Israel” (v. 3) knew that His ministry appeared to others to have accomplish nothing significant. Yet, Jesus knew His reward would come after His death.
- ⁴ **I (Jesus) said, “I have labored in vain (in man’s eyes), I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain (in man’s evaluation); yet surely My just reward is with the LORD.” (Isa. 49:)**
- J. Is it too small a thing to be God’s servants or do we need the guarantee of having a great impact? Korah was called by God to stand before Him in doing mundane work in the sanctuary. He was not content with his calling to stand before God. He was striving for a place of recognition before men in pushing for a leadership role within Israel’s priesthood.
- ⁸ **Moses said, “Is it a small thing to you that God has separated you from the congregation to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle...? Are you seeking the priesthood also? 11 Therefore you are gathered together against the LORD.” (Num. 16:8-11)**
- ⁵ **“Do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh,” says the LORD. ”(Jer. 45:5)**

- K. We must call people to be faithful disciples of Jesus (lovers of God) without giving them any false promises about having a large ministry impact or great wealth and comfort. Much of what is being preached today is a delusion and a diversion from our fundamental call to discipleship.
- L. Others have the exact opposite problem, they do not eagerly seek anything in ministry. They bury their talents in disregard of God's call on their life. Jesus calls this wickedness and laziness.
²⁴ ***He who had received the one talent said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man...25 I was afraid, and went and hid Your talent in the ground....26 His Lord said, "You wicked and lazy servant...." 28 Take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. (Mt. 25:24-28)***

VII. WE MUST BE RESOLVED TO GAIN REVELATION OF GOD'S CALLING IN OUR LIFE

- A. We must be resolved to lay hold of our calling in God. Many Christians lose this vision over time because the revelation of our calling does not come to us automatically and it need to be often renewed. We must labor to receive it through prayer, study and discussion with others of like heart as we re-align our heart 10,000 times to truth. The truth sets us free (Jn. 8:32).
- B. It is significant that the leaders of the early Church prayed fervently and continually for this one issue of receiving the spirit of revelation about God's will or calling in people's life. Why were they so focused on this? Our entire life in God is dynamically affected by how we view this.
¹² ***Epaphras...always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete (instead of despising or neglecting) in all the will of God. (Col. 4:12)***
⁹ ***We...do not cease to pray...to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will (revelation of God's assignment) in all wisdom and spiritual understanding... (Col. 1:9-10)***
¹⁶ ***I do not cease...making mention of you 17...to know the hope of His calling (Eph. 1:16-17)***
- C. Without a clear picture of what we want to be in God, we live careless. Without a clear vision and plan, God's people live undisciplined or without restraint (*the people perish; KJV*) in their passions, time and money. What we believe about where we are going forms how we live today.
¹⁸ ***Where there is no revelation (life vision), the people cast off restraint (discipline). (Pr. 29:18)***
⁹ ***She (Israel) did not consider her destiny; therefore her collapse was awesome. (Lam. 1:9)***
- D. Seeing ourselves in God's drama changes us. Josiah (1 Kg. 13:2 nearly 300 years before 2 Kg. 23:15-20), Cyrus (Isa. 44:28-45:8), Alexander the Great (Dan. 8:5-8), David, Paul, and the apostles saw themselves in God's plans (1 Chr. 28:4; Mt. 19:28; Acts 13:47; Isa. 49:6).
- E. Our vision for the future must include what we will **BE in our hearts** (internal calling) and what we will **DO in our function** (external calling) both in this age and in the age to come. We live differently when we see ourselves in God's story by seeing our purpose. The turning point comes when we understand that we also can go deep in God as others have. We then begin to cry out to God, "Why not me? I want to go deep in God like others from history."