

A Holy Calling



Learning by Living (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you precious insights out of Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life and can do the same in yours. The title of my talks this week is "Learning by Living."

I have been "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." That is how James describes himself in the opening of his epistle, and that is what I have sought to be: "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

I have lived at various times in four different continents. I have raised a large family. I have mingled with and ministered to people from many different backgrounds, racial, social and religious. I can say, like the apostle Paul, "I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty." I have seen God confirm the truth of His Word with many different kinds of signs and miracles in many different situations.

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feel it is appropriate, therefore, that in my talks this week and next I should share with you the most important practical lessons about the life of faith that I have learned from all these experiences. Remember, I will not be sharing with you mere theory or theology, but truths that I have proved in my own experience. That is why I call these talks "Learning by Living."

In my first talk yesterday I emphasized a statement of three words: God is faithful. That is the testimony I want to leave behind to posterity. It is not long, it is not complicated, but it is tremendously important. God is faithful.

I pointed out that God is faithful in three areas: to keep His covenant that He makes with us, to keep us in temptation and to keep us from evil, and He is faithful to fulfill His calling. Whatever He calls us to do, He will faithfully enable us to do it, if we will walk in faith and obedience toward Him.

I particularly emphasized in my talk yesterday, God's faithfulness to His calling and I illustrated from my own lifelong experience. Today I am going to share with you more fully this theme of God's calling. It is one that is so important and I find so many Christians really haven't grasped this vital truth.

In 2 Timothy chapter 1:9, Paul says, concerning God:

> "God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."

Another translation says "before time began." That is a staggering statement. I just want to point out some main features of it. Paul says, "God has saved us, and called us…" Many Christians who are saved do not realize that they are also called. Salvation includes God's calling. Salvation in a certain sense is the same for everybody but included in that universal salvation, there is a specific individual calling for everyone who becomes a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

If you have never realized that, I want to challenge you with that statement. If you are saved, then you are also called and you are going to miss some of the best things in life if you do not discover what God has called you, individually and personally, both to be and to do.

And then Paul says, "[God has] called us with a holy calling." Oh, that is so real to me! When God called me to be a teacher of the Scriptures, it was so sacred. I made up my mind then and there that nothing else would ever take preeminence in my life over my God-given calling. And I can say with sincerity that for more than forty years, I have striven to be the best teacher of the Scriptures that I can be. I do not compare myself with other people, there are others that will be much more gifted and able then I am, but my aim is to be the best that I can be, by God's grace and in my calling. I want to challenge you with that aim.

And then Paul says it is not according to our works. It does not depend on our ability. So many people when they are confronted by the call of God, they begin to think about the level of their education, or their intelligence, or their social connections, or whatever it may be. It does not depend on your deeds, your achievement—it depends on God's grace.

Paul goes on to say, it is "…according to [God's] own purpose and grace, which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity," or before time began. Isn't that exciting? That before time began, before the world was created, God had a special plan for each one of us—you and me. And this plan does not depend on our ability, it depends on God's grace.

Let me tell you this very simply about God's grace. It cannot be earned. You will never earn it. If you are trying to earn it, you will never attain to it. Let me say it this way: God's grace begins where our ability ends. Okay? As long as your working and walking in your own ability, that is fine, but you are not walking in the grace of God. See, if you are limited to what you can do, you are cutting yourself off from the grace of God in your life.

Let me just then, sum that up. When God saves, He also calls. They go together. His calling is holy. It does not depend on our ability or qualifications, but on His grace and the purpose that He has for our lives, which did not start in time, it began in eternity. Let me say it this way, God wrote in eternity a scenario for our lives, a script which is to be worked out in time. But the scenario is eternal. You see, you will feel very differently about yourself as a Christian if you once grasp that. You are not an accident looking for somewhere to happen. You are something that God had a plan for before time began. And remember that calling is holy, it must take first priority, it demands all our commitment, our energy, our time.

When Paul speaks about our calling as Christians, he takes an example from the world of athletics, one which is very easy for us to understand in our contemporary culture, where athletics and especially the World Olympics play such an important part in our culture, in our thinking, in the media and so on. This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:24–25:

> "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize."

Now I do not think Paul is talking about our competing with our fellow believers. I do not think there is competition in the Body of Christ. He is talking about priorities. He is talking about in this race, you have got to set your mind to do your best. And you have got to devote everything in you to that achievement. And then he goes on with this example:

> "Everyone who competes in the games [and he was thinking of the Olympic Games in the ancient world which were the first pattern of the Olympic Games today.] Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training."

Isn't that true? If it was true then, how much more true today? There is not a single athlete that ever appears in the World Olympics, from any nation, that has not gone into the most tremendously strict and demanding and arduous training. Now Paul says:

> "They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever."

We, in this Christian race, are going to be rewarded with a prize that lasts forever. It is going to be with us through all eternity. Time is so short, eternity is so long. That is why it is so important that we make the best use of time because it is going to determine how we will function and enjoy eternity.

What are some of the things that an athlete pays attention to when he goes into training? Well, obviously his diet, his exercise, his training, his sleep and most important of all perhaps, or as important as any of those, his mental preparation.

People who are going to run a mile: I remember reading a description of two great athletes who were going to run a mile competition. One of them was describing his mental preparation, how he built up confidence, day by day by day, that he could run that mile faster than the other man.

Well, I want you to think of yourself as an athlete in the Christian life, running a race to win a prize. You have been called by God with a holy calling, an individual calling, something that God has for you specially, that He does not even offer to anybody else. But in order to fulfill your calling, you are going to have to be like that athlete. You are going to have to go into strict training. You are going to have to discipline yourself.

And really the key to it is setting the right priorities. If you make the fulfillment of your God-given calling the first priority in your life, the other things will fit into place. There are many aspects of spiritual discipline that are not included in the discipline of an athlete. Although I think as Christians we do need to take the best possible care of our bodies, that they may be the best temples of the Holy Spirit, the best instruments of God's purposes.

So as I come to the close of this message this morning, I want to challenge you. Do you realize that God called you with a holy calling? That you are in a race and that you are running for a prize and that you need to be in strict training to achieve that result?

Radio Program

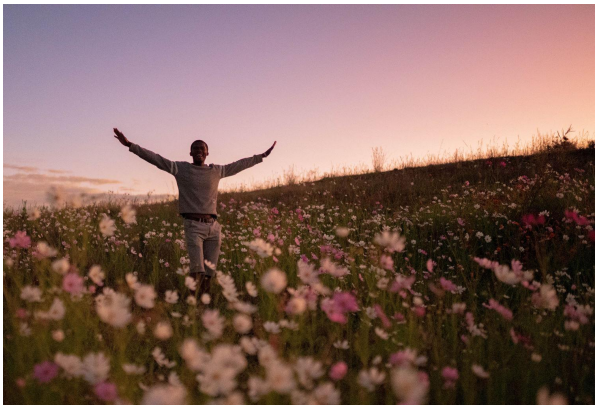
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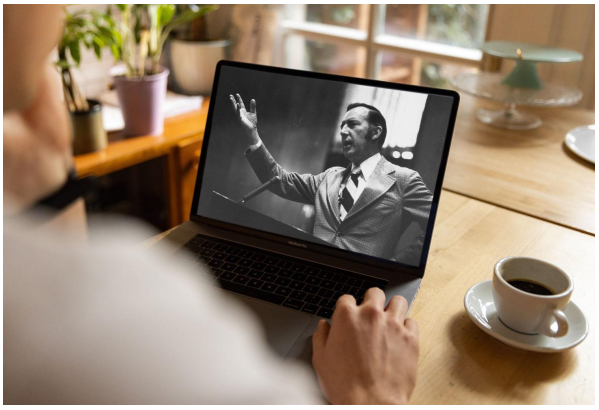
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