

Fourth Stage: Called



Secure in God's Choice (Part 7)
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.

This week I'm continuing with the theme which I commenced last week, "Secure in God's Choice," a theme which can bring you into a new place of security in God. God has a plan unfolded in seven phases from eternity, through time, and on into eternity again. That's a plan for each one of us.

In my previous talks, I've dealt with the first three phases of that plan: God foreknew us; He chose us; He predestined us. I spoke yesterday about that rather frightening word "predestined" and I pointed out that really it's not frightening. It simply means that God has arranged in advance the course that your life or my life is to follow. And that even covers when we go astray. As I pointed out yesterday in the case of Jonah, Jonah went the opposite direction to that which God called him to go but God had His way all arranged in advance for stopping Jonah and turning him around. And, if necessary, God can and will do that in our lives but His predestination stands.

So today we're going to look at the fourth phase: God called us. Now, all the first three phases that we've looked at, God foreknew, God chose, God predestined, these all belong to the realm of eternity. They were complete before time began. I think it's so important to see that. It gives us such a different sense of who we are, where we're going and where we came from. We're not just creatures of time, our roots are in eternity, in the eternal mind and heart and counsel of God.

Now, when we come to this fourth phase, there's a difference because in this fourth phase God's plan emerges out of eternity into time and it makes its first individual impact in the life of each one of us. That's why the moment when God calls you or calls me is perhaps the most critical moment in the life of any of us because all the future is going to be decided by our response to God's call.

I can remember very vividly more than forty years ago. Without any background in spiritual understanding or in knowledge of the Bible, a Christian who had just dropped out of church attendance (and I might say a nominal Christian, I'd never known the reality of Jesus Christ), I was suddenly,

unexpectedly, dramatically confronted by God's call. And in all my ignorance and in all my darkness I saw one thing by revelation: that I could never expect or claim that God would call me again. I saw what a critical moment this was in my whole life. How was I to respond to God's call? And I thank God with all my heart that by His grace I made the right response.

So, as I talk today about being called, God's calling, if God is calling you, if this answers to something that is happening in your life, I want to tell you very urgently: this is the most critical moment in your life. Please give careful heed. Not just to me, but to the voice of God that's speaking to you.

Let me just briefly define the word "to call" because it's a somewhat Old English word, at least the way it's used in the Bible. And I would say it has two meanings which go together: to invite or to summon. Well, an invitation is you are being asked to something nice. But a summons always represents a call from authority. Well, the call of God is both. It's an invitation to all the blessings of God in Jesus Christ but it's also a summons from the ruler of the universe. We cannot just shrug our shoulders and say, "Well, I don't feel like accepting," because we're dealing with Almighty God.

Now in this God still retains the initiative. He calls, we answer. But at this point, He does require a response from us. His foreknowledge, His choice, His predestination were just facts of eternity. But when we're confronted by His call, that demands a response. And as I have said already, but I'll say it again with emphasis: our response determines all that follows in our lives.

You see, the proclamation of the Gospel is it's God's invitation and acceptance brings salvation. Paul explains this in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14:

> "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (NAS)

You will notice there that Paul again emphasizes the fact that God chose. And it says He chose you for salvation. And then he says He called you into salvation by the proclamation of our gospel. So, the preaching of the gospel, when it comes to you, is God's call, it's God's invitation, it's God's summons into salvation. And then Paul concludes with those words "that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." And I pointed out to you that in all that God does in all His predestination, the purpose is always glory.

You see, God's choice is expressed in our lives by His calling. Until God calls us we don't know He's chosen us. But from that moment onward we are confronted by the solemn fact that God has chosen us. A calling accepted brings salvation. Salvation, in turn, opens the way to the fulfillment of our calling. Now I need to explain that. You're called into salvation. When you experience salvation, you discover (or you should discover) that salvation opens the door into the fulfillment of that for which God called you. This is very important. A lot of people who are saved do not realize this. If you are saved, you are called. You may not have discovered your calling, but you are called. This is what Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:9:

> "[God] saved us, and called us [He saved us and He called us, notice that]... [He] called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." (NAS)

"And another translation says "before time began."

I want to point out to you three things about your calling. If you are saved, this applies to you. First of all, your calling is a holy calling, it's something that you should give total concern to. It's something that should take total priority in every aspect of your life. It's holy, it's sacred and you need to treat it that way. You should never let anything come between you and the calling and purpose of God in your life.

Secondly, Paul says it's not according to our works but according to God's own purpose and grace. So our calling and our ability to fulfill it doesn't depend on our natural ability. That's very important. You might say, "Well, how could God call me to do this or that, to be an evangelist or to be a missionary or whatever it might be, or to be a doctor or a nurse. How could God call me to be that? I don't have the ability." But it doesn't depend on your ability. It depends on God's grace. In fact, God's grace begins where your ability ends. As long as you can handle it by yourself, as long as you've got all that you need, you don't need God's grace. So never refuse God's calling because you feel unable. As a matter of fact, almost every person whom God called in the Bible felt unable. It's a good sign if you feel unable. I question whether a person who says, "Well, of course, I can do exactly what God tells me to do." I question whether such a person is really called of God. The first thing that happens when we are called is we see our own ability and that casts us upon the grace and the mercy of God. So remember, it doesn't depend

on our ability but on God's grace.

And the third fact that I want to point out is that you're called to fulfill a purpose conceived before time began. Again, this is so exciting to me. I see so many people today just adrift in the sea of time. They don't have any anchor, they don't have any past, they don't have any future. They're just like a cork bobbing up and down on the waves because they've never seen this vision of an eternal God who had a plan for them before time began and in due course confronted them with His plan when He called them.

Now this requires a response from us. That's obvious, I think. And in 2 Peter 1:10-11, Peter describes the kind of response that's appropriate:

> "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure." (NIV)

You are called, God has done His part. You have to respond. How does Peter say we should respond? By being eager to make our calling and election sure. If I were to sum up all of that in one phrase, the great single basic requirement for fulfilling your calling, I would say it is single-mindedness. You have to have a single mind, you have to have one goal, you have to say, like Paul, "this one thing I do; I press toward the mark. I am not going to be diverted."

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining the fifth stage in God's plan.

My special offer this week is a book of recipes. Does that surprise you? Well, it's a book of recipes for success, proven recipes that have worked in my own life and in countless other lives. The title of the book is If You Want God's Best. All the recipes in it are practical and down-to-earth and they work. The title again: If You Want God's Best. Also my complete series of talks this week on "Secure in God's Choice, Part 2" is available in a single, carefully-edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

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Transcript: TS-R137-102-ENG
Last Updated: 13 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

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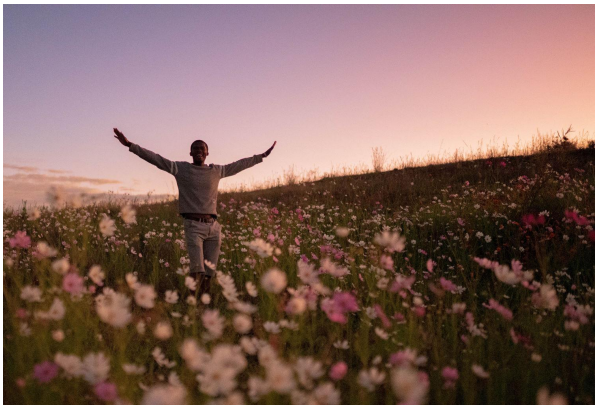

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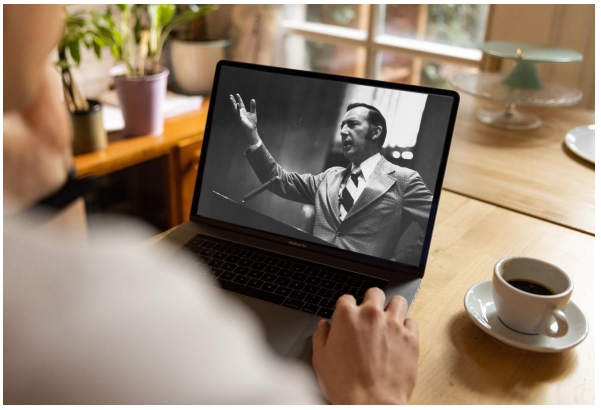

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