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Teaching Letter

Heed His Call



Teaching Letter
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When Jesus Christ uttered the words in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen," He was not offering an opinion or a probability. He was stating a fact. That fact is still as true today as when Jesus first stated it. Although what He says pertains to salvation, the principle also applies to our calling to Christian service.

In this edition of the Teaching Letters of Derek Prince, we will take a closer look at how you and I can heed the call to service that is connected to Jesus' statement, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

The Period of Testing

Many Christians are called by God to His service. But few are ever chosen and appointed to walk in that service. Why is that?

Between the time when a Christian is first called to service and the time when he is actually appointed by God to that service, there is usually a period of testing. Often, the more responsibility you are required to carry, the more intense the testing will be. 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. However, by the time Gideon had subjected those initial followers to the tests God required, 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 may be about the same today.

In the end, God's wisdom was justified by the outcome. Gideon was able to do more with 300 tested, disciplined men than he could ever have accomplished with 32,000 mere followers. The same principle applies today. One tested, trained, disciplined, self-denying servant of Christ is worth a hundred well-meaning Christians who are merely "members" of some group or organization.

Converts or Disciples?

Modern evangelistic measures tend to focus on counting converts. I believe God is more concerned with making disciples. During the days of His earthly ministry, Jesus could have numbered His converts by the thousands. But in the last hours before the cross, He was left with just eleven men who remained disciples. Even after His resurrection,

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although He revealed Himself alive to “over five hundred brethren” (1 Corinthians 15:6), only 120 went to the upper room to seek the power from on high which would make them effective witnesses for Him.

There is definitely a difference between being called and being chosen. 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 God tests Christians who are called to service:

- Firstly, by allowing things to become hard.
- Secondly, by allowing things to become easy.

In the parable of the sower in Mark 4, Jesus compared the seed which fell on stony ground to Christians who “endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble” (v. 17). But He also compared the seed that fell among thorns to Christians for 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” (v. 19).

Some Christians are not prepared to endure opposition, ridicule, hardship, or apparent failure for the sake of the Gospel. Others cannot remain steadfast in the midst of worldly comfort, popularity, and success. Those whom God calls to 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:

> These trials will show your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold. (1 Peter 1:7, nlt)

Intense trials are not something strange for true Christians; they come by God’s own appointment.

Job

The Bible gives us many examples of the tests through which God’s faithful servants had to pass. One classic example is Job.

In his own testimony concerning his tests, Job says this:

> 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. (Job 23:10–12)

In that last verse, we find the secret of Job’s victory. It was his attitude toward God’s Word. Those who esteem God’s Word above all else will always come through their trials victorious.

Jeremiah

Another servant of God who endured severe testing was Jeremiah, who was a very young man when God called him.

One of the most difficult trials for young Christian people to endure is loneliness. Their faithfulness to God can separate them from the empty, worldly pleasures and activities in which their peers are indulging. As a result, they feel 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 was a true servant of God who drew his strength to endure from his attitude toward God’s Word.

> 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

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 as the presumptive heir to Egypt's throne, Moses could have enjoyed all the wealth, culture, and luxury of Egypt. When he refused to succumb to this temptation, he was rejected by his own people, persecuted by Pharaoh, and forced to endure 40 years of exile, poverty, and loneliness. Still, he overcame all these trials because he refused to allow the appeal of temporary wealth and glory to blind him to the true glory of God and the eternal reward God offers.

Hebrews 11:26–27 (nlt) gives the rationale behind Moses' endurance:

> He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of the Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the One who is invisible.

Today, in stark contrast to the attitude of Moses, many Christian young people are being blinded to the true glory and eternal reward of 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. For a Christian, 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 disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even 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 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 any human being" (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 discover God's full 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 can soon be 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 serve God, he said: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). Psalm 95:7 (nlt) says:

> If only 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 postponing your answer to God's calling. 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.

If you would like to respond right now, would you join me in the following brief prayer?

Dear Lord, I want to respond to Your call upon my life. I want to serve You and be chosen by You to bring forth the fulfillment of Your plans for me and those to whom You have called me to minister. Regardless of what it may cost me, I will not delay. Today, this very moment, I say YES to You. Amen.

Teaching Letter
Transcript: TL-L143-100-ENG
Last Updated: 28 Jul 2026
Website: Derekprince.com/en/resources

