

Called and Set Apart

Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, told a story about a goose who was wounded and who landed in a barnyard with some chickens. He played with the chickens and ate with the chickens. After a while that goose thought he was a chicken. One day a flight of geese came over, migrating to their home. They gave a honk up there in the sky, and he heard it. Kierkegaard said, "Something stirred within the breast of this goose. Something called him to the skies. He began to flap the wings he hadn't used, and he rose a few feet into the air. Then he stopped, and he settled back again into the mud of the barnyard. He heard the cry, but he settled for less."

Leighton Ford

Romans 1: 1 – 7

1) Called to a task

- The first position that Paul introduces himself as is a "servant of Christ Jesus"
- When God calls someone to do something for him he looks for qualities of servanthood and not someone with superiority attitudes.
 - Matthew 20: 26 – 28 "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
 - Illustration of the lawyer who was called into mission. His missionary training included cleaning the roof with the labourer and sweeping leaves. He still had money in the bank and asked the leadership if he could hire some poor people to do the work. They refused stating that that was part of his training.
 - If Jesus is truly our master we will serve Him in any way He desires us to.
 - 2 Samuel 23: 15 – 16 "David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David.
 - David's men were willing to sacrifice their lives for him even to do things that he merely expressed a desire for and never commanded them to do.
 - Being a servant of Jesus we listen to His heart's desire and should be willing to sacrifice our lives to accomplish His desires.
 - A true servant will obey Jesus' commands because He is already willing to accomplish any desire of the Lord.
- It is such a person that God calls to accomplish a task as Paul was called to be an apostle.
- God has called us all to different tasks in the body of Christ and in the world.
 - He may have called some to be doctors and others to be welders. Some to be accountants and others to be factory workers.
 - The issue is that we submit to whatever task Jesus calls us to do however great or however small.
 - We only serve His kingdom purposes when we submit to the particular calling that He calls us to.
 - If we say to God – "That isn't what I want to do" then we don't have the true servant attitude that it takes to fulfil God's call on our lives.
- Jesus came as a servant and fulfilled God's call on His life to go to the cross even though He struggled with it but finally submitting to the Father – "Not my will but yours be done"

2) Set Apart for the Gospel

- Paul was specifically set apart for the Gospel
 - From the time Paul met Jesus on the Damascus road in a bright light he was set apart for the Gospel
 - Acts 9: 15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel
- The other apostles were also called and set apart for the Gospel such as Peter and Andrew
 - Matthew 4: 19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men"
- Although some people are called particularly to be set apart from other tasks particularly for the Gospel such as Paul and Barnabas and the other Apostles – in Acts 6 they chose seven men to look after the widows so that they could give attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word – we are all set apart from the world and sin for the Kingdom of God.
 - We are in the world but not of the world. (John 17: 14)
- The Gospel was promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.
 - Galatians 3: 8 – 9 "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."
 - The Gospel is that we are justified by faith through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Jesus was the descendent of David according to the prophets. His so called father was Joseph – a descendent of David
- However it was His resurrection that declared Him to be the Son of God.
 - It is like a king who dresses up like a common man and mixes with common people to identify with them. No one suspect that he is the king. One day he gets rid of his common clothes and rides through his kingdom in his royal clothes and with his royal procession – he merely declares what he has been all the time.
- It is for the proclamation of this Gospel that we have received grace to carry out the calling to which He has called us.

3) Called to belong to Jesus Christ

- We have not only been called to a task but we have primarily been called to belong to Jesus Christ.
 - 1 Peter 2: 9 – 10 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."
- We once belonged to another Master – the devil – but now we belong to Jesus
- As people who belong to Jesus Christ we:
 - Are loved by God
 - Called to be saints – holy and blameless
 - A people of grace – recipients of God's grace and givers of God's grace
 - A people of peace – wholesome in every aspect of our lives