

# I am GIFTED and CALLED

December 13, 2020

## Gospel Declaration #4

***I am GIFTED and CALLED. I have been given a special ability and assignment from God to advance His Kingdom.***

## You are GIFTED (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

*<sup>4</sup>There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. <sup>5</sup>There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup>There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.*

*<sup>7</sup>Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

In Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and elsewhere we see several examples of spiritual gifts. Here are just a couple examples:

- Administration
- Exhortation
- Giving
- Hospitality
- Helps/Service
- Faith

If you are NOT sure what your spiritual gift is, couple things to consider:

- Are you serving?
- What do you find yourself drawn to do willingly and joyfully?
- What activities do you find yourself “coming alive” spiritually and emotionally when you do them?
- Expect confirmation from others

But not only are you GIFTED, but...

## You are CALLED (Ephesians 2:10)

*<sup>10</sup>For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

This word in the Greek carries with it the idea of you being carefully crafted by God. You have been given your particular personality and interests and abilities and spiritual gift-mix in a very unique way AND to carry out unique assignments. Look at this verse with me again.

So, we were collectively, but also individually created by God. Uniquely fashioned by God *to do good works*. You were created to work. To work for God. There is work for you to do. Why? Not only because He designed you for this, and therefore you have some obligation to it, but there is SO MUCH WORK TO BE DONE!

Church, we do well to remember that God did not call us to Himself simply to save us. He called us to Himself to work. To work HARD for His Kingdom.

Matthew gives a unique eye-witness account to the heart of Jesus:

*<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

Church, there is still SO MUCH work to be done. And what Jesus is saying in this passage is that people are ready. But Jesus seemed to know that even there is still so much work to be done, and the people are ready. The workers... the workers would be few. There would be few who would be ready to leave their comfort, their pastimes, their worldly pursuits, those things that simply waste time, their entertainment, the list could go on right? Jesus seemed to know that there would always be this problem of workers. Just having enough people who would actually step up and serve. Who would actually roll up their sleeves to pray hard and work hard for someone's salvation. We've asked this question a lot in the past, "Who's your one?"

God called us to save us. But He also called us to save others.

*<sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.... And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 19b-21*

And He called us to build up the Body of Christ.

And not in just a general sense. But in very specific assignments. Assignments that, according to Paul in this passage, He *has prepared in advance for us to do*.

That's awesome to think about isn't it?

## **So Be FAITHFUL (2 Timothy 2:1-7)**

*You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.*

Some of you know this already, but Paul is writing this book from a jail cell. This is it. And he knows it. This is likely one of the last letters he wrote before becoming a martyr for the cause of Christ. And you get the sense that he is officially passing the baton to Timothy. He likens his own ministry as that of a race that has been almost won. A battle that has raged on for decades now, but he fought on like a good soldier:

*<sup>6</sup>For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.* 2 Timothy 4:6-8

And now he is officially passing the baton to Timothy and in this passage of 2 Timothy 2, Paul says, Timothy, you need to be strong. This is going to be hard.

And you can't do this alone. You're going to need to find others. Reliable men. Reliable women. Young people. The word used for reliable people might also be translated "faithful". Because this is the only way the Kingdom of God will ever be advanced.

It's not going to be through great buildings and beautiful cathedrals. It's not going to be through bloody Crusades. It's not going to be through political wrangling. It's not going to be through programs which require paid professionals just to pull off. It's not going to be through concert-like worship services with smoke and lights and emotionally-frenzied crowds.

It's going to be advanced simply from person to person to person. You pouring into reliable people who will pour into reliable people who will pour into reliable people. THAT's how the Kingdom of God will be advanced.

And then he gives three pictures of what a reliable person looks like. The first picture he gives is that of a...

#### **SOLDIER (3-4)**

*<sup>3</sup>Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.*

So with this picture, he makes it clear. This is not going to be for the faint of heart. This is not going to be easy. This is going to be a struggle. Paul described the true Christian life as that of being a soldier elsewhere as well:

*<sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup>Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

Are you a soldier or a civilian?

## **ATHLETE (5)**

*<sup>5</sup> Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.*

We need men, women, young people who are willing to be trained. Who are willing to have a coach, who will train them in how to grow spiritually. Who will challenge them to give their best and then some. Who know the race that God has called them to and are faithful to keep their eye on the finish line.

The writer of Hebrews has this powerful picture in Hebrews 12:1-2a:

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus...*

What is the race that God has called you to? Do you know? If not, then maybe you need a good coach? Someone who will walk alongside you and help you grow spiritually. Who will help you discover what is God's call on your life. And then when you discover it, refuse to allow you "goof off" the whole season of this thing called life.

Are you an athlete or a spectator?

## **FARMER (6-7)**

*<sup>6</sup> The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. <sup>7</sup> Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*

Paul in 1 Corinthians 3, compared sowing the seed of the Gospel into the hearts of the Corinthians as if he were a farmer and they were the field. And he wasn't the only farmer, mind you. He said others had also been a part of the work. Some had sown seed, others had watered. But only God can bring the harvest.

So there is this both-and principle here. There is going to a harvest for the faithful farmer because God is faithful.

But I want to make a simple observation here. It is offered not as a categorical statement because God can do anything, but generally speaking: *God can't grow what you aint sowed.* Right?

You gotta be faithful. A good farmer, no matter the circumstances, just keeps plowing, just keeps fertilizing, just keeps sowing seed. Just keeps praying for rain. And God will bring the harvest.

Are you a farmer or a consumer?

## Characteristics of a Soldier, Athlete, Farmer

- Faithful
- Sacrificial
- Patient
- Disciplined
- Focused
- Willing to Suffer

Paul says to Timothy THESE are the kind of people it's going to take to advance Christ's kingdom. Timothy find these reliable, faithful people. Pour into them!

Don't pour into the civilian, spectator, and consumer. You will be running around like crazy trying to please them, trying to meet their needs, and demands, and meanwhile, there is a whole world out there that needs WORKERS! There is a harvest field that is ripe for the harvest and yet... there are not enough workers. Pray for workers Timothy. Pray for workers. And when you find them, pour into them.

This is the counsel for a young pastor for an old experienced church planter who is officially passing the baton in this letter to his dear son in the Lord.

There is great counsel for a young pastor. But what I am hoping is stirring in your heart is this... I want to be one of those reliable men. I want to be one of those reliable women. I want to be one of those reliable young persons.

I don't want to be a **civilian**. I want to be a soldier. Because like it or not, ready or not, believe it or not, there IS a battle raging out there and we need men and women of courage who will be willing to suffer, to live sacrificially for the harvest. To take their stand against the work of the evil one.

I'm hoping that some of you will I don't want to be a **spectator** any more. It's too easy to criticize from the pew, and now from my living room couch. I'm going to engage. I am going to get up every morning, be spiritually disciplined, find a coach to help me grow spiritually, and by God's grace, run the race that He has called ME to run. There are so many who have gone before me, who are cheering me on right now. By God's grace I will get on the starting blocks again and run the race He has called me to run and run it with all of my might.

I'm hoping that some of you will say I don't want to be a **consumer** anymore. I may live in a society known for consumerism. I may be a Christian in a time and season in which many of my other brothers and sisters are simply showing up on a Sunday or now staying home in the comfort of their homes to receive, receive, receive, receive. And rarely giving back. I'm hoping that many of you will say, my childish days are over. I will by God's grace, no longer be a consumer. But a farmer. Someone who works hard for the harvest. Someone who faithfully shows up and serves. Not needing fanfare. Not needing attaboys. Just faithfully putting my hand to the plow and don't look back.

**Final challenge:** *What does this look like for YOU during COVID-19?*

