

The Hope to Which You Are Called

In Ephesians 1:16-18, Paul prays that God would give believers "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" so they might know "the hope to which he has called you." This hope isn't found by focusing on what we're missing, but by turning our eyes upon God himself. When we focus on Him, everything else falls into perspective.

What Does It Mean to Be Faithful in God's Calling?

Paul's journey through Acts 18 reveals the first principle of living in God's hope: be faithful. After leaving Athens, where philosophers wanted to be entertained rather than transformed, Paul moved on to Corinth. He didn't get caught up in grandeur or prestigious opportunities that didn't align with God's purposes.

Sometimes faithfulness means walking away from what looks impressive to pursue what God is actually doing. Paul left the marble stage of the Areopagus because he wasn't interested in merely stimulating minds - he wanted to see lives changed.

Why Is Work Important in Ministry?

When Paul arrived in Corinth, he found Aquila and Priscilla, fellow tentmakers who had been expelled from Rome. Rather than seeking a position of comfort, Paul worked alongside them as a tentmaker to support himself.

This teaches us that we're not here for position - we're here to do God's work. If God calls us somewhere, we need to find out how to do what He's called us to do, even if it means working with our hands to support the ministry.

How Do We Stay Consistent in Our Calling?

Despite working as a tentmaker, Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath. He maintained consistency in his primary calling even while supporting himself through other work. This shows us the importance of not missing our spiritual commitments, even when life gets tough.

Consistency matters because life is challenging. When we say it's hard, we should ask ourselves: "Compared to what?" This is life, and it has its ups and downs, but we find our hope and joy in the greater calling God has placed on our lives.

When Should We Choose Our Battles?

When the Jews opposed and blasphemed Paul's message, he shook out his garments and declared he would go to the Gentiles. This wasn't defeat - it was wisdom. Paul was selective about what he fought and what he didn't fight.

Where God's favor and growth aren't evident, we should look for where God is moving. It's not our job to fight for God - it's our job to spread the gospel and make disciples. Jesus said He would build His church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

What Does It Mean to Repent and Not Resist the Holy Spirit?

The Jews who opposed Paul weren't just disagreeing - they were blaspheming against the Holy Spirit's work. Jesus warned that while all sins can be forgiven, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be.

When the Holy Spirit convicts us to repent or stop doing something, and we oppose that conviction, we put ourselves in a dangerous position. If we receive the Holy Spirit's conviction and repent, we are forgiven everything. But if we resist and blaspheme against the Spirit's work, how can we be forgiven?

How Can We Be Aware of What God Is Doing?

Paul's pattern had been to leave when he faced opposition, but in Corinth, God had different plans. Instead of leaving the city, Paul simply moved next door - from the synagogue to the house of Titius Justus.

Sometimes we think we need to be in one specific place, but God's plan is right next door. We must be aware of what God is doing and not assume He always works the same way. When God spoke to Paul in a vision, telling him not to be afraid and that He had many people in the city, Paul stayed for a year and six months.

Why Should We Be Encouraged by God's Movements?

An interesting detail emerges in the story: Crispus, the synagogue ruler, believed and was baptized with his whole household. Later, when Paul faced legal trouble, another synagogue ruler named Sosthenes was beaten by the crowd. But remarkably, in 1 Corinthians 1:1, Paul mentions "our brother Sosthenes" as a co-writer of the letter.

This shows us how God works - when people try to replace someone who follows God with their own person, God often ends up winning that person too. We should be encouraged and look for God's hand moving in unexpected ways.

What Does It Mean to Be Servant-Hearted?

Paul consistently worked as part of a team. When God began moving in a place and numbers started growing, Paul would move on but leave part of his team to continue establishing and building the church. In Corinth, he left Timothy and Silas.

Silas was a leader and prophet from the Jerusalem church, yet he served faithfully alongside Paul. Timothy, though young, was trusted with significant responsibility. This teaches us to work as a team and be servant-hearted rather than seeking individual recognition.

How Should Young People Respond to God's Calling?

Paul's instruction to Timothy was: "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity." When Paul met Timothy, he was likely in his late teens or early twenties. When Paul wrote 1 Timothy, Timothy was probably in his early thirties but still considered young for leadership.

Young people shouldn't let others judge them by their age, but they also shouldn't try to push doors open. Instead, they should set an example that others can follow - speaking honorably, living with integrity, loving people, believing God's word, and keeping themselves pure.

What Does It Mean to Be Pilgrims and Hospitable?

Aquila and Priscilla exemplify the pilgrim heart. Originally from Pontus, they lived in Rome until expelled, then moved to Corinth where they met Paul, and finally traveled with him to Ephesus. They didn't hold too tightly to any one place but allowed God to move them.

In Ephesus, they opened their home for church meetings, demonstrating hospitality. We should be willing to be pilgrims, not holding too hard to where we are, and allowing God to move us as He sees fit.

How Important Is Being Prepared and Teachable?

Apollos was an eloquent man from Alexandria, competent in the Scriptures and fervent in spirit. However, he only knew the baptism of John. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God more accurately.

This teaches us two things: be prepared by saturating ourselves in Scripture, and be teachable when others can help us understand God's ways more accurately. Even someone as gifted as Apollos needed further instruction.

Why Is Working Together Essential?

The interconnectedness of the early church is remarkable. When Apollos wanted to go to Corinth, the brothers in Ephesus wrote letters of recommendation to the disciples there - Timothy and Silas, who were still establishing the church Paul had started.

Paul later wrote that he planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow. Where Paul had challenged the Jews in the synagogue and faced resistance, Apollos came later and powerfully refuted them, showing from Scripture that Christ was Jesus. This demonstrates that God's work is not about individual achievement but about the body working together.

What Does It Mean to Be Secure in Our Unique Calling?

When Peter asked Jesus about John's future, Jesus responded: "If it is my will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? You follow me." This teaches us not to compare our calling with others or try to work out God's calling the way He's working it out in someone else's life.

God has made each of us unique, using our DNA, preferences, upbringing, and even appointing the very place we should live so that we will seek Him. While we work together as the body of Christ, we shouldn't try to be like each other. Our only criteria when we reach heaven will be: "Have you done what I said?"

Life Application

The hope to which God has called you isn't found in comparing yourself to others or focusing on what you lack. It's found in faithfully following Jesus, working diligently, staying consistent in your spiritual commitments, and being part of God's greater plan to reach the nations with the gospel.

This week, commit to being faithful in the small things God has placed before you. Whether it's your work, your relationships, or your service in the church, approach everything with the understanding that you're part of something much bigger than yourself.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I being faithful in the calling God has placed on my life, even when it's not glamorous?
- How can I work as part of a team rather than seeking individual recognition?
- Where might I be resisting the Holy Spirit's conviction in my life?
- Am I prepared through Scripture study and teachable when others offer godly correction?
- How can I focus on my unique calling rather than comparing myself to others?

Remember, our job is not to get people saved - our job is to share the gospel so the Holy Spirit can convict and Jesus can save them. Let's be faithful to do our part while trusting God to do His.