

"THE CALLING CONNECTION"
EPHESIANS 4:7-16

W9113

God so loved the world that He gave, He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. That's the very theme of the gospel.

You know, I come to you this morning with a great deal of enthusiasim and exzuberance over the fact that Jesus Christ is alive. He's resurrected from the dead and it's a wonderful thing to come together and worship and praise and Thanksgiving and prayer and all the great things we do with the music and worship. . On the other side of the coin, I also come to you today with a great sense of urgency, a sense of urgency about the task of the church, the meaning of the church, the purpose of the church, what we're called to do. Sometimes I get the feeling that in this world that is weary, this world that is sad, this world that discouraged, uncertain, despondent, that somehow, it's very difficult for us to really communicate the message like we ought to communicate it. And we have the responsibility, we have the resources and we have the answer. And I think the Lord is calling for us to release the great potentiality He's given to us. And to do everything in our power to reach the world. That's the calling that we have received.

You know, sometimes I get the feeling that we're playing this beautiful piano that has 88 keys and we're only using one

otive. Sometimes I get the feeling that we have this beautiful harp that has a thousand strings and we're only using ten. Sometimes I get the feeling that we have a Royles Royce that we're driving and has 16 cylinders but we only use four. What God wants to do is to really release the potentiality of the power that He has in His church.

You know, every once and a while I read the gospel according to Peanuts. Anyone ever read that? (laughter) You know, there's the gospel of Matthew Mark, Luke and John, then there's the gospel of Peanuts. It's in a special version of the Bible and it's hard to find. But uh, somebody put that across my desk this week. And there were four frames in this particular uh, rendering. In the first frame Linus is talking to Charlie Brown. Do you know these disciples I'm talking about? (laughter) Linus and Charlie Brown, you understand those two disciples, alright. Linus is talking to Charlie Brown and the caption is, the caption is, he said, "Everybody is so upset because I did not make the honor role". And in the second frame, the caption is, "My mother's upset, my father's upset, the teacher's upset, the principal is upset, goodgrief". And then it goes to the third frame and in that third frame the caption is, "All of them say they're very disappointed because I have such great potentiality". And in the final frame in great big letters we hear him crying out, "There is no heavier burden in life then a great potentiality". (laughter) And I kind of think that may be the way with all of us, that there's no heavier burden in life

then a great potentiality.

But it's because of that that I think it's important for us to talk about the calling connection. Because what God is doing today is calling us to release, to unleash, to set free, to motivate, activate, actualize this great potentiality called the power of the church.

Turn with me in your Bible's please to

EPHESIANS 4:

We'll notice sixteen verses in Ephesians. Uh, I told you the next time I was back with you and I fowled up the schedule when I told you that. Whatever I say, don't believe it. Look in the bulletin and get it straight. (laughter) But I thought I was to be here next Sunday but I'm here this Sunday so we got communion ready, I make no guarantees. (laughter) Uh, if we, what we'll do, if we run over time, we'll let people leave that got to go and the rest of you stay and we'll have communion. I can make the musicians stay, particularly the ones we pay. We can get them to stay I know. (laughter) Alright. Everybody got it,

EPHESIANS 4:

How many of you have your Bibles? Alright, we're ready for war then. Hallelujah. Shall we pray?

Father, in your Word, you tell us, Paul, the Apostle, giving us the understanding that as a prisoner of the Lord, he would urge us to live a life that is worthy of the calling we have received. May that calling come alive in our hearts. May it come alive in our spirits. May it come alive in our minds. May

we be lifted up by your presence and lifted up by your power to do those things that would be pleasing in your sight. Anoint our eyes to see, our ears to hear, our lips to speak and our hearts to perceive. And may we receive your Word gladly, fully and completely. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, amen and amen.

Without a doubt one of the most important words in the christian vocabulary is the word called. The reason this word is so significant is because first of all, it's used over 600 times in the New Testament. Secondly, because in practically every time that it's used, it gives to us an understanding of the essence of the gospel. But the question comes then, what do we mean when we say we are called? What are we talking about when we talk about the calling of God? When we really analyze it, by definition, to be called is to be alerted. It is to be invited. It is to be summoned. It is to be engaged. It is to be comissioned. This is what the Bible is talking about in

MARK 1:14 AND FOLLOWING

when we hear Jesus Christ as He came into Galeleah preaching the good news of God. This occurred just after John had been put into prison. As He was walking along the sands of the seashore of the Sea of Galeleah, He saw Andrew and His brother Simon as they were casting nets into the sea and He said to them, COME AND FOLLOW ME. AND IMMEDIATELY LEFT THEIR NETS AND THEY FOLLOWED HIM. He went a little farther and He saw James, the son of Zebedez and His brother John and they were preparing their nets.

And without delay, the Bible says, HE CALLED THEM. And they left their father Zebede and the hard men in the boat and they followed Him.

When we look at this particular connection, there is more here than meets the eye. It is more than just a verbal exchange. Somehow, there is an intellectual exchange here between the mind of Christ and the mind of these men. There is an emotional exchange between the heart of Christ and the heart of these men. There is a covenant connection that goes on. As they are alerted to the fact that they can have a possibility of a new creation. As they are invited to share in the mission of Jesus Christ. As they are engaged to live a life of discipleship. As they are summoned to make a commitment in that life of discipleship, and as they are commissioned to be representatives with Christ in the world and to win the world into the Kingdom of God.

Now in a very real way, Jesus Christ makes the same kind of confrontation with each one of us today. He comes into this room and He makes an encounter with each one of us as persons. And He says just what He said to Peter and what He said to Andrew and what He said to John and what He said to James. COME AND FOLLOW ME. And in that come and follow me, what He is really saying is, I am first of all, alerting you to the fact that you can become part of a new creation. I'm inviting you to share in my mission. I'm summoning you to make a commitment. I'm engaging you to live out a life of discipleship and I'm commissioning you to go into the world as my representatives to win that world for my Kingdom.

This is what the Bible is talking about in

I THESELONIANS 2:12

when it says, WE ARE CALLED TO HIS KINGDOM AND WE ARE CALLED TO GLORY. This is what the Bible is talking about in

II THESELONIANS 2:14

when it says, WE ARE CALLED TO THIS SALVATION TO SHARE WITH THE LORD IN HIS GLORY. This is what the Bible is talking about in

II TIMOTHY 1:9

when it tells us that WE ARE CALLED TO A HOLY LIFE. Not because of anything that we have done, but because of the grace and the purpose of Jesus Christ. This is what the Bible is talking about in

HEBREWS 3:1

when it tells us WE ARE CALLED TO A HEAVENLY POSITION, TO A HEAVENLY CALLING. And that heavenly calling is that we should fix our eyes on Jesus, because He is the high priest and He is the bishop of our very confession that we make before Him. This is what the Bible is talking about in

EPHESIANS 1:18

when it says, WE ARE CALLED TO HOPE AND THIS HOPE IS BASED UPON THE RICH'S OF THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS AND THE IMCOMPRABLE POWER OF GOD, WHICH WE WHO BELIEVE REALLY HAVE. This is what the Bible is talking about in

PHILLIPIANS 3:13

when Paul says, WE NEED TO FORGET THE THINGS THAT ARE BEHIND. WE NEED TO STRAIN FOR THE THINGS THAT ARE AHEAD AND WE NEED TO PRESS

ON TOWARD THE GOAL TO WIN THE PRIZE FOR WHICH GOD IS CALLING US
HEAVENWARD IN JESUS CHRIST.

Now the bottom line of all of that is this, that if we're really going to listen to His invitation, if we're really going to be alerted to the fact that we are a new creation, if we're really going to live out His mission in the world, if we're going to make the commitment to be disciples, if we're really going to be His representatives in the world, then we've got to live out that calling. And what makes us unique and what makes us different is that we live in the Kingdom. And we live in the glory, and we live in salvation and we live in holiness and we live in a heavenly position and we live in hope. And when we come to that point of knowing what God has done in us and we begin to live that life out, then we're going to turn this world upside down. And the world is going to know, Jesus Christ is alive and the church is on the move because it's a great army of a great God doing a great work. (applause) Amen, amen and amen. Well, praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Well magnify His name.

Now what that means is that we can begin to live by

ROMANS 8:27

IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US? What that means is, we can begin to live by

I JOHN 4:4

HE THAT IS IN US IS GREATER THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD. What that means is, we can begin to live by

I JOHN 5:14

WE HAVE THIS CONFIDENCE, THAT WE PRAY ACCORDING TO HIS WILL. HE WILL HEAR US AND WE WILL RECEIVE WHAT WE ASK OF HIM. There's one thing that God wants out of you. And there's one thing that God wants out of me. He wants us to stand up and make the world know that He that is in us has a power to meet every need in the world, and without Him, there is not life. Hallelujah. (applause) Blessed be the name of the Lord.

I want you to say with me, the things that the Bible really says to us, that we know what God can do in our lives. I want you to say with me, HE THAT IS IN ME IS GREATER THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD. Say that together. HE THAT IS IN ME IS GREATER THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD. Do you really believe that? (Yes) Alright, let's say it again. HE THAT IS IN ME IS GREATER THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD. Now praise the Lord together. Believe that with all of your heart. Hallelujah.

Well you say, Pastor Walker, that sounds fantastik. I'd like to be able to live that kind of a lifestyle. I'd like to know that I could come to the place that I could really have that calling in my life, to know I could be called to the Kingdom in glory. To know I could be called to this salvation. To know I'm called to holiness and I'm called to a heavenly position and I'm called to hope. And I'm called to win the prize as I'm called heavenward in Christ Jesus. That's all marvelous, but sometimes we get the feeling we're so inadequate. And we respond you see, in the same way that the man responded when Christ called and he said, "I'm sorry, I've got to go and buy a field". Another man

Christ called, he said, "I'm sorry, I've got to go and prove this yoke of oxen, this team of oxen". Another man that was called and he said, "I'm sorry, I've got to go and attend this funeral". Sometimes that it comes to the fact of, I could have. I would have. I want to, but somehow, we just never get around to it, to really making our lives count in the present. We've been raised up in this most strategic times. In the great outpouring of the latter reign, and we often come to the point of I could have and I would have. Maybe that's the saddest thing in God's economy. When people come to the fact that I could have, but somehow I just don't.

Someone put across my desk some of those little blurbs and these are pretty corny but they illustrate what I'm trying to say. And it's kind of like the man that says, I could have been a parachutist, but nothing opened up. (laughter) Thank you Mark. I could have been a violinist but I'm just too high strung. (laughter) I could have been a bowler but it's just not up my alley. (laughter) They get worse as we go along here. (laughter) I could have been a librarian, but I put it on the shelf. (laughter) I could have been a policeman but I copped out. (laughter) I could have been an elevator operator but it had too many ups and downs. (laughter) That's the one I like. I could have been.

But the thing about the apostle Paul, it was never I could have been, it is I am. When we begin to look at this particular scripture, there are six steps here to really make this calling

connection. We're going to hear him say, COME AND FOLLOW ME. And we're going to have that connected calling. I want you to see these six steps.

The first thing is, that this calling is created through concecration. Paul says as a prisoner of the Lord, I urge you to live worthy of the calling you have received. Paul called Himself a prisoner. Not once does he say I'm a prisoner of Rome. He never says I'm a prisoner of the government. He never says I'm a prisoner of the soldiers. He never says I'm a prisoner of the Pharasees or the Sageesees. He never says I'm a prisoner of Phelix or Agrippa. He doesn't say I'm ever a prisoner of Festus. He never says I'm a prisoner of Nero. He always says I'm a prisoner of the Lord. Now if you're going to be a prisoner, what that really means that the calling starts where we're concerated to Him. Where our will is put into is His will. When we lose our goals and we adopt His goals. Where we lose our interest for the future and we have His interest to the future.

We begin to understand

MATTHEW 6:33

that SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL OF THESE THINGS WILL BE ADDED TO YOU. And somehow Paul had lost Himself in Christ to the point that He saw Himself as a prisoner. And when he came to that place of being a prisoner, that's when the calling of God came alive in His heart.

Now he said the way you have to live as a prisoner is you have to be completely humble and gentle. You have to bear with and

forgive others. You have to make every effort to live in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. You have to understand that there's one body and there's one Spirit. You have to understand that there's one hope to which we are called. There's one Lord, there's one faith and there's one baptism. We have to see that, that there's one God and Father of all, that's overall, through all and in all. You have to see that unity of the Holy Spirit in your life. And it boils down to this, the thing that's really been in my heart this whole week as I've prepared for these services today, is the fact of practicing the very presence of God. That if I come into be a prisoner of His, and I really lose my will in Him, and I no longer belong to myself, but I belong to Him, if I put everything under His Lordship and He is the very Lord of my life, then I practice His presence every day.

I've been reading a lot of Brother Lawrence lately. Now Brother Lawrence never made a great impact on the world. He never did anything theologically. He never did anything hominatically. He never preached in a way that changed the multitudes. He never wrote anything significant. He never organized anything significant. The only significant thing that Brother Lawrence ever did was to prepare meals for his fellow monks and for his fellow people and to wash the dishes afterwards. But somehow, here was a young man who at 18, struggling through a wilderness found Jesus Christ, joined the Carmelite monks that's in 1666 and found a place of prayer in

Jesus Christ that released Him. When you become his prisoner, then your released to be everything that you can possibly be. And he said, "My Lord is the Lord of the pots and pans and things and I am becoming a saint through preparing meals and wiping the plates". And just before he died at 80 years of age, after 62 years of servanthood and prisonerhood in the name of the Lord, he said, "The only reason I became religious was to love God. And every act of my life as been in love for Him. And I have this one good thought that when I die, I will be able to say, I've done everything in my power to love Him." And I want you to know this morning, there's a place in Jesus Christ that you can live insulated from the Satan, insulated from demonism and insulated from the world and insulated from the flesh, and you can have the victory over anything that comes your way because His power is alive in you. Amen, amen and amen. (applause) Well praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

When you get those six verses in your mind, you begin to live as a prisoner and you see that the whole start of this calling is a creative concecration through the power of Jesus Christ. But the second step here that it has to be comencerate with our desires. In verse 7 when you really look at that, in verse 7, you see it comencerate with our desires, we see that each one of us has been given grace Christ aportioned it. The grace of God has been given to each one of us.

Now when we talk about grace, we know that it's Christ doing in our hearts what we cannot do for ourselves. And that grace is

God giving to us what we really desire. There are so many people that go through life never accomplishing what they really want to accomplish, never doing what they really want to do. I have the idea that the will of God is going to release in you the legitament deisre of your heart.

PSALM 37:5

DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD AND HE WILL GIVE YOU THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART.

PROVERBS 3:6

TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL THINE HEART. LEAN NOT ON THINE OWN UNDERSTANDINGS. IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM AND HE WILL DIRECT YOUR PATHS. I'm your pastor today because it's a desire of my heart. When the Lord called me to preach, I said I want to pastor a church in a large metropolitan area. And He gave that to me, the desire of my heart. And that desire was hammered out. I could have done other things. I could have gone into, you don't know this, but I could have gone into politics one time. I had a group come to me one time wanting me to run for governor. But I, I was too embarrassed to tell anybody. (laughter) Besides that, I knew I'd lose and I just couldn't stand the rejection. (laughter) You know, I could have been a general official, whatever that is. (laughter) You know, we have general officials. I don't know what you, we've had a few of them in our church, you remember them? Well I could have been one of those. But God gave me the desire of my heart, to be your pastor, whether you like it or not. (applause) You see?

You know, I don't know if you ever see our television program or not. The television is a result of the desire of a man's heart. The Lord woke him up in the middle of the night, told him to sell his yacht. Sold his yacht, bought all the equipment, put us in business. What you see happening around us and what you see going on, is the desire of the heart. When you give your money and you put it in that envelope, the desire of your heart is to see it work for God. And it goes around the world touching the hearts of everybody. What we've got to understand is our God is not some kind of lily of pution God who sits in some kind of an image on somebody's dashboard. Our God is the God of the Heaven and the earth, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and His greatness covers the earth. Amen, amen and amen. (applause) That's the kind of God we serve. Hallelujah.

And He's apportioned grace to you, should have the desires of your heart. Now when you go on, the first step now is it's a creative conceceration. The second step is, that it's comencerate with our desires. The third step is, it is coralated with our gifts. When you look at verse 8 and you begin to see what the Word has to say there, we can see Paul as he begins to quote

PSALM 68:16

and he says, WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE TOOK CAPTIVES IN HIS TRAIN AND HE GAVE GOOD GIFTS TO MEN. HOW IS IT OR WHAT IS IT OR WHO IS IT THAT ASCENDED ALSO DESCENDED TO THE HEART OF THE EARTH AND HE ASCENDED UP ABOVE THE HEAVENS SO THAT HE COULD FEEL THE

WHOLE UNIVERSE. THEN HE GAVE SOME APOSTLES AND PROPHETS AND EVANGELIST AND PASTORS AND TEACHERS. Now what that all says is, that He takes the gifts that we have and uses them for His glory. He correlates our calling with our gifts. He's not going to call you into the music ministry if you're a monotone. If you can't carry a tune in a bucket, don't go to some kind of a music insolvency. You're going to flunk the first course. He's not going to call you to that. He's not going to call you to be a mathematician if you're like me when you add 2 and 2, it comes out 5. You know, I've told you before, I'm convinced math is of the devil. (laughter) I believe that with all of my heart. And I believe every math teacher is demon possessed. (laughter) Where's Terry? Terry Obannon back here is our drummer and our percussionist and he's also a professor of mathematics at Lee College. We're going to pray for Terry. (laughter) Alright. But He's going to correlate with your gifts, whatever your gifts are.

Well you say, I don't have any gifts. Yes, but you do have gifts. You say, I can't give great sums of money. But you do what you can do, you see. Someone asked me one time, what was one of the most moving experiences I'd ever had in worship? I remember in Baldwin Park, California several years ago. We were in a mission service and at the close of that mission service, we were giving a response of money for that service. And it was going kind of tough and I was taking the offering so I knew it was going tough. And the response wasn't coming like I felt like

it should come. About half way through my appeal, a little lady came down the aisle, she'd been a street person, she'd been delivered out of a terrible life. She'd cleaned up, straightened up, gotten herself a job, was moving on but was very, very poor. And I'll never forget it, she came walking down the aisle and she had her shoes in her hand, coming down barefooted. She walked up to me and gave me the shoes. And she said, "These are brand new shoes. This is the first Sunday I've ever worn them. I've been saving six months. And six months, I've saved fourteen dollars to buy these new shoes. This was the first Sunday for me to wear them. And the Lord has layed on my heart, I want to give them for Him, because it's the only gift that I've got." Well, it moved that congregation and those two red shoes turned into \$2000.00 for that pair of shoes. I literally sold that shoes to that congregation for \$2000.00. We took the \$2000.00, we built a church in India. That church in India turned out to be about a thousand in attendance, turned out 100 workers. Those 100 workers built 300 more churchs in that total complex from that one pair of red shoes, there were 10,000 people that found Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their souls. (applause) Amen, amen and amen. Corolated with your gifts. That's your gift. Well praise Him in this place. Magnify the name of the Lord.

But you see this whole thing has to be conditioned on your motives. When you begin to look at verse 12, He says, He didn't just give the apostles and the prophets and the evangelist and the pastors and the teachers for nothing, but He gave us so that

the people of God could be built up for works of service. He gave it to us to prepare the people for works of service and to build up the very church, to build up the people of God. That is our motive. So it's not that we're giving for show. It's not the interest of how big we are. It's not the additude of how many people we have. God's sick and tired of that. I'm tired of the statistical game, have been for many years. That's not the issue here. We're glad to see the numbers. Our responsibility is to readh the numbers, but that's not the reason we do that. Our motive for all of this, the motive of our calling is to build each other up. The motive of our calling is for the strong to bear the infirmity of the weak. The motive of our calling is to carry one another's burdens. The motive of our calling is to come up as one body and let the world know that there is a better way and that better way is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen, amen and amen. (applause) Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

My doorbell rang one day and a man stood at the door that I hadn't seen in a long time and I looked at him and my heart sank. Because I see him inebreated. He had a big glass in his hand, I don't know how he made it from his car to my front door. I don't know how he got his car in my driveway. I'm just glad he didn't hit the garrage like my wife always does. (laughter) I was really glad about that. Is she in this service? I hope not. Because when she comes back for the rebuttle, you know what happens, I just get drilled to the back wall. But there he stood

and my heart was saddened and we came in and I spent three hours with him, sitting around my dining room table, pouring coffee in him, trying to get him sober enough to get him on his way. At one time, had been a pastor of one of the greatest church's in the country. At one time, had a great heart for God. And I'll never forget what he said. He just come to me out of the clear blue. He said, "You know, I could have been the greatest preacher in the Church of God, if I had just had your discipline". Well, it's not my discipline, saved for the grace of God, there goes all of us. That wasn't the issue at all. The issue was, his motives were wrong. Who wants to be the greatest preacher in the Church of God? Where does that cut any slack? Where does that have any merit? Who wants to be the greatest anything? What I want to be is the disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that the Lord of the pots and the pans is my Lord. (applause) Hallelujah be to God. That's what I want out of Him. That's the greatness I've got to have in Him. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Well praise the Lord in this place. Well praise Him right now. Magnify His name. Let the Lord be glad and praise in this place. Hallelujah. Amen.

But what we have to see is that this thing is continuous in scope. When you look at verse 13, it tells us where we're headed with this whole calling. You see, we're headed to this calling, we have the unity of the faith. The unity of the knowledge of the son of God. We can become mature and we can obtain the greatness of the fullness of Christ, you see. The whole measure

of the fullness of Christ is what He wants us to obtain. Said, I don't want you to be anymore like infants. Don't want you to be tossed around like a wave. I don't want you to be blown around by every wind of teaching and the cunning craftiness of men through their deceitful scheming. Don't want you to do that. I want you to see that it is continuous in it's scope. It's creative in it's consecration. You see, it is commensurate with our desires. It is correlated with our gifts. It is conditioned by our motives. Now He says, it is continuous in it's scope. It goes on and on, that we might become mature. You see, we're growing into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. That's what He wants us to do. That's the whole image that we're after. And it's that kind of image that we're trying to seek.

You know, John Wesley was a great preacher and we come out of the Wesleyan tradition. And that continuing thing, you know, there are those times when we get to feeling that we're down and out and there's no way to go and there's no where to turn. Then it is that the Lord speaks to us in a very special kind of way. And Wesley, when he came to this country as a missionary, left here defeated and dejected and rejected. And that's when he had that great encounter when he got back to England and the altar's gate and his heart was strangely warm and his ministry broke open. And he had that great revival. And wherever John Wesley preached, it always tore up the organized church and they got upset and they asked him one time, Wesley, where is your parish?

Where is your church? And Wesley said, "My parish is where I am and wherever I preach, that's my parish". And he set off a revival in England and he set off a revival in America and we come out of that revival. Every protestant church who's ever had a revival movement comes out of that great Wesleyan revival. And Wesley during his life only traveled 225,000 miles. He'd only preached 40,000 sermons. And he preached sometimes as many as 20,000 people back in those days. He traveled 50,000 miles by horseback. And the marvelous thing about John Wesley was the fact that it was continuous in its scope. It never gave up. And the thing you see in Wesley, that once he got his grips and got filled with the Spirit of God, we see that great revival movement that it's never stopped. It's continuous in its scope.

You know, we've got Mark Rutland here, if you don't know John Wesley, you're going to have a hard time listening to him preach. We're going to have to have a course in Methodist history to understand him. And Mark's doing a super job for us but we come out of that revival. We come out of that tradition. That's what we came out of.

Now the problem we have is we get we're in well doing. No wonder Paul wrote in

GALATIANS 6:9

LET'S NOT BECOME WEARY AND WELL DOING. BUT IN DUE SEASON, WE'RE GOING TO REAP AN APPROPRIATE HARVEST IF WE DO NOT GIVE UP. IF WE DO NOT GIVE UP. We've all felt that sometime.

. . .experiences in my own ministry when I'd come to that

point I'd thought I'd preached long enough. I'd been your pastor, I don't know, 15, 20 years at that time. And I thought, well, you know, it's all over. And I had an opportunity, opportunity to go another direction. You know, the thing about opportunity is another direction for preachers that it always starts with money. Double my salary. You know, that always looks good. And so I'd made some tentative decisions. I'd even signed some papers. And I thought, well, I've had 20 years in the ministry. That's a career. A lot of people change careers. What's wrong with that? But a lot of people aren't called. That was the problem with it. And I was wrestling and struggling with it.

One day I was at home in the afternoon and I was in my study praying. And I heard the doorbell ring and I went to the door and there stood a man that I'd never seen before. He was well dressed, appropriately dressed. He wasn't real handsome, wasn't really ugly, just kind of a man. (laughter) You know, nothing unusual about him. And it's not the person that would engage you either way, just a man. And he looked me in the eye and the first thing he said is, "I've got a message from God for you". Now when anybody rings your bell and looks you in the eye and says, I've got a message from God for you, you listen. So I invited him in, we sat down. He said, "Your name Paul Walker?" I said, "Yes". He said, "God sent me to tell you that your ministry here is not finished, that He has called you to a greater work and He's going to empower you in a greater way. And

if you don't listen to His voice, it's going to be disasterious for you." And then he gave me a prophecy, prayed with me, bid me goodbye and left. I've not seen him sense. I've not seen him before. Now I don't know what angels look like, I don't know whether they wear Hartshafter Marks or not. I don't know what kind of clothes they have on. But I know that message peirced my heart. And I got down on my knees that day, in my study, in the parsonage you have given for me to live in. And it was there that the Holy Spirit touched me and said, "I'm going to shake this city and within two years, this church had trippled by the grace and the power of the living God. (applause) Our God is going to do what He said He was going to do. Amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah. Well praise God. Well praise the name of the Lord in this place. Continuous in His scope. Amen.

But what you have to see finally, is that this calling is contengent upon our discipline. When you look at verse 16, it says that, you know, what we really have to do is we have to, we have to speak the truth in love and we have to then, grow up in Christ who is the head. And then it says, from that head, the whole body is joined together and held together through supporting ligaments that grow, build themselves up in love and each part does it's own work. And the three words in that 16th verse are grow and build and work. And discipline requires that we grow, we build and we work. Discipline is not just power of positive thinking. Discipline is just not possibility thinking. Discipline is not just a stiff upper lip. It's not being tough

when the going gets tough, although that may be important. But when the Bible uses the word discipline, it's growth, it's development, it's training and it's self-control. And the discipline means that we grow, we build and we work. And that brings us supporting ligaments into strength. And that gives the power of support to the church to do its work and to accomplish God's will in the world.

Now it's tough sometimes to come to that point of discipline. Paul understood that in

I CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

when he said, LOOK, EVERYBODY WHO RUNS IN A RACE RUNS TO WIN THE PRIZE. SO YOU RUN IN SUCH A WAY TO WIN THE PRIZE. Everyone who runs in a race goes into strict training. And they go into that training so they can win a crown, but the problem is, their crown is only temporary. It last a little while. We're running for a crown that is eternal. It last forever. And then he said, I DON'T RUN LIKE ONE JUST RUNNING IN A CIRCLE OR AIMLESSLY. I DON'T BOX LIKE SOMEBODY OR FIGHT LIKE SOMEBODY THAT'S SHADOWBOXING. BUT I BEAT MY BODY AND MAKE IT MY SLAVE SO THAT AFTER I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS, I, MYSELF, WILL NOT BE DISQUALIFIED FOR THE RACE. I DISCIPLINE MYSELF.

You know, Patty Risky, the great concert pianist, practiced 8 hours a day. He said, "If I miss one day of practice, I know it. If I miss two days of practice, the orchestra knows it. If I miss three days of practice, the audience knows it." It's that kind of daily discipline.

In my earlier days as a minister when I was struggling with really wanting, before I'd come to be with you. And I wasn't sure just what God had for me at that point and time. But Jim Elliot affair in Equidor had just taken place. And it really touched me. And I made a real study into his life at that time and periodically, I've gone back to his life. Jim Elliott, as you remember, came out of college, went with the Wickliff translators, had a burden for the Aca Indians in Equador. Aca Indians were primitive. They've never heard the gospel. They had no written language. And there was no way to really get to them. They were hard to find. They went down into Eduador, established a camp in another area that was more accessable, finally located them, begin to fly over their camp. Were able to communicate with them by dropping gifts and presents and let them know they were coming on a certain day. On January the 8th, 1956, Jim Elliott and four of his friends flew in in a small plane. They went over the village and made all the signs and the motions and though the loud speaker made it known that they were coming to the beach. And they saw ten men as they started from the tribe to the beach. They flew down and landed on the beach. From all evidences, at first they must have been friendly. But then they turned hostile. And as you know, they killed all five of those missionaries with their spears. They were to have called back to the main camp on the radio of the airplane but they never got back. They were to call back by 4:30 in the afternoon and the call never came. Four days later, a search

party finally got in there and found their bodies strown all across the beach. You'd think the story would end there. No, a year later, Jim Elliot's wife Elizabeth and the wife of the pilot of the plane went back to the Aca Indians, were given entre and access, preached the gospel to them, helped them write their language. All ten men involved in the murders came to Jesus Christ. Everyone in the tribe came to Jesus Christ. That whole tribe was turned around.

But often when I've been down in the debts of dispair and in the ditches so to speak, I've listened to what Jim Elliott had to say. When Jim came out of college, he said, "Oh Lord, I don't want to be just a sign post. I want to be a crossroads. And Lord, when people come to me, they'll have to make a decision about which way to go." But what he really wrote that touched my heart, he said, "That man, that person is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose". That person is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

And there have been times in my own life when I've had to go back to that and understand that the intangible things are what really matter. We look not at the visible things, for they are temporary. We look at the invisible things, for they are eternal, and there's going to be a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness and we're going to rule and reign with Jesus Christ forever. Amen, amen and amen. (applause) Well, hallelujah. Praise the Lamb of God in this place. Magnify

the Lord.

Will you bow your heads please and close your eyes. Brethern will you come? We're going to have communion folks. And I want you take this bread and take this cup and the Holy Spirit's speaking to me now. And no one leaving unless you just have to. If absolutely necessary, it's understandable, if it's not, I hope you'll stay just a few more minutes. Your time is precious and I try to respect that. But this is an important time we're doing right now. The Holy Spirit's speaking to my heart. And I feel He's witnessing in my life right now. My people, if you'll hear my voice and listen to my Word, I the Lord God who loves you with an everlasting love, I call you to a higher height in me and a deeper dimension of my understanding, that I might send you forth, even though you go a sheep among wolves, I the Lord, will insulate you and protect you and show you the way. I know the need of your heart and the cry of your soul and the longing of your Spirit. And I, the Lord, this day will give you the desire of your heart if you will follow me. Behold, my healing is in your midst. Behold, my Spirit is searching your heart. Behold, my presence is within you that you might know that I am the Lord Jehovah God. Therefore, seek my face. Be filled with my Spirit and I the Lord shall set you free, saith the Spirit of the living God. Hallelujah. Give me C please. (We Are Standing On Holy Ground)