

Sent To Preach

I have shared my personal testimony in the past about the events that led up to my being a preacher, but if you will bear with me, I would like to share it again because in some ways it has some similarities to events within Jesus' experience as He began His ministry.

My story begins sometime in the mid-1980s, when I began to experience a strong desire and calling to preach and to teach these truths of the gospel that I had been learning about over the years after my becoming a believer in Christ. And that desire was a very compelling force within my spirit.

But because of the admonition given in the Book of James that "not many should be teachers" and "preachers", because teachers will be held to a much higher standard, I resisted the compelling call for some years.

But as God would have it to be, by sometime within the year 1987, that compelling demand overcame my fears, and I began to teach and to preach. While at first the opportunities were limited, they soon began to open up more and more.

At some point during those years, I received a visit from the pastor of the local church where I regularly attended when I was not out preaching. And he made an odd request of me. He said that my attendance and involvement was valuable to his church and to the students at French Camp and that I should stop preaching at those other churches and attend only his church.

I vividly recall the answer to his request coming immediately to my mind from the words of 1 Corinthians 9:16 where Paul said, "woe be unto me if I preach not this gospel!"

And so, it has been for me all the days since that day. I know exactly what God's call is for my life. He may at some point give me rest from that call, but until then, I really must keep preaching.

And so it was also with the Lord Jesus. He came to this earth with that same calling to preach this gospel lodged firmly within His heart, and He would not be deterred from that calling until the moment of His final breath.

Here in today's passage, we read where some very earnest people, similar in some ways to those people who came to talk to me, came to the Lord Jesus and sought to alter His calling and have Him just stay and minister to them. But

thanks be to God, Jesus would not be deterred. Listen to these words, beginning in verse 42 of Luke chapter 4.

⁴²Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him and tried to keep Him from leaving them; ⁴³but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." ⁴⁴And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. (Luke 4:42-44)

A point of understanding that I have shared often with us from these scriptures is that God is always intentional, and He truly does have a plan, a desire, a purpose for each one of us. It really is not enough that we are born, that we survive the years allotted to us, gain whatever enjoyment we can gain out of life, and then one day fade into someone's distant memory.

Not at all! Each one of us is part of a much broader plan that God put into place long even before He formed the foundations of this earth. And it is a personal and an intimate plan. And if we will only have eyes to see and ears to hear and accept His plan, we will truly be blessed beyond measure.

And that plan is given very simply in the familiar words of Jeremiah 29:11, where God says to us . . .

¹¹For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

The question that we must face ourselves with at every opportunity is, "are we walking according to God's plan for us"? Do you, do I even believe that God has a specific plan for us individually and personally? Or do we believe His plans to be, as most seem to believe them to be, just a wide-ranging group of general Christian principles that He would like for everyone to generally agree to and to try to follow?

Folks, may I give us a stern warning concerning these words. God's plans are not just a collection of general Christian principles that will help us to live some idealize pattern of life.

God's plans are personal, and they are intimate to each of us individually. And while His plans may seem to be just about Christian principles, they are not. They are about a Person, and about an intimate relationship with that Person, the Person of Jesus Christ.

And yes, God's plans do in most every way look to be just a set of rules. And they are called that in the Old Testament, rules, laws and statutes. But they are so much, much more than what our understanding of what rules and laws and statutes are supposed to be. God's plans, His rules, His laws and statutes actually reveal His very Heart to us.

I'm reminded of the time when Moses pleaded with God to let him see God's Person. And God did grant Moses a quick glimpse of His Glory. But that was not all that God revealed about Himself. Immediately after God revealed a glimpse of His Glory, God also gave Moses the Ten Commandments.

And folks, those Ten Commandments revealed far more of the Person of God than any quick glimpse of His blazing Glory. Those Ten Commandments revealed the intimate Heart of God, and they revealed the "plans" that He has for us.

Most people seem to have a natural aversion to rules and laws. To them, rules and laws are considered as being more of a restriction than a blessing. But folks that is just not so. Rules and laws are given as a loving provision and protection.

But unfortunately, that natural aversion to rules and laws, is strong within each of us. And because we don't take the time necessary to get to know the heart and the character of God, we find ourselves needing to "rearrange" God's provisions and especially His "plans" into an order that makes them a little more acceptable and convenient to our own ideas and plans?

And while we might not think that we do that sort of thing, we do. And as we intermix in our own desires and plans, and then filter those through the distorted messages we receive from the world and its ways, we can find ourselves living an uncertain and sometimes ambiguous form of Christian lifestyle.

Yes, we believe all those big and more broad teachings of God, that He created the heavens and the earth, and all that sort of thing. And yes, we can also believe that He created all of the systems and ideas and processes that keep the world going each day, the ecological systems, the governmental systems, the economic systems.

And even further, we may also believe that God has placed within the minds of men and women, all the intellect and abilities necessary to carry out man's part in all those systems.

But unfortunately, if we listen carefully to the words that come out of our mouths each day, we will hear threads of a philosophy that are not really consistent with these scriptures. We'll hear words to the effect that there is a point in which we believe that God steps back and leaves all the rest of the plan to you and me. Some people will even give the quote, "God helps those who help themselves" and they think that those words come from these scriptures, but they do not!

Now, most of us, if seriously questioned about that kind of belief would certainly say that we don't intentionally live that way. But again, in the reality of daily life, this really is where most of us live and carry out the activities of our day.

We live as if we are players on a field, who have been trained up and put into shape. And all the matters of daily life are our "game time". And while yes, God does call the right plays, but when we are on that field, we play as if we are "on our own", to do the best we can. And that's disappointing. Very disappointing.

But thankfully, even though we go about trying to do most things all by ourselves, God remains faithful. He is ever and always "Providential", ever and always at work within the background of our daily activities, intimately working, bringing about those plans that He has for us. Again, those words in Jeremiah 29:11!

¹¹For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

And then God goes on further in those words to tell us in verse 12,

¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:12)

With verse 11 being God's part of the plan,

¹¹For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Our part then can really become very simple. Verse 12,

¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:12)

Folks, this really should not be as difficult for us as we often make it out to be. We should not be so easily dissuaded by the events of our day.

Yes, we do know that there is always an opposing plan being forced upon us by the world, the flesh and the devil. But folks, God is God! And His plan is able to overcome that opposition. The one and only obstacle that you and I really have to overcome resides within our own hearts, and that is our willingness to fully put our trust and dependence upon God and in His plan.

To the degree that you and I are able to “look up” and to see, and to grab hold of the plans and to the provisions that God already has put into place, that is to the degree that we will get ourselves back on course, to calm down, to stop worrying, to stop being afraid, and to stop going places and getting involved in things that are not good for us.

This is simply a matter of choice folks, a decision. We make them all day, every day anyway. God is simply reminding us to choose His plans and His purposes for our lives rather than being consumed with all the opposing possibilities that the world, the flesh and the devil throw at us.

Here in these words of today’s text, Jesus is allowing us to see similar choices that He Himself was faced with. We might not be able to easily comprehend it, but the truth was that Jesus was very human in the matter of making choices. He had emotions and inclinations and temptations pulling at Him every moment, just as you and I have. And He could have made any number of choices and decisions along His way, any one of which might have been a really good choice.

But as strange as my next words might sound, let me say them with emphasis, “making really good choices is not always the really right thing to do.”

Why is that so? It’s because within God’s plan, the really right choices are limited to the very narrow path that He wants you and me to follow. Remember those words that He gave to us in Matthew 7 where He said,

¹³“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴Because

narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

I'm reminded of some of the tests that I used to take while I was still in school. Some teachers and professors liked to give multiple choice questions where all four answers would be very close to being correct. But it took really close examination to determine which of the four answers was the really right choice.

Here in today's text, we see that Jesus was being well received by the people. He was believed and appreciated and was asked to remain with them, at least for a while.

Often, that is our method of decision making. If we are successful in our work, in a ministry, in a relationship, we take that as being a stamp of approval from God to remain where we are. . . . And sometimes, that is the thing to do . . . but not always.

These words of the Lord Jesus tell us about a "more perfect way". And they are intended to be a testimony and a witness to you and me to instruct us about the choices that will face us each day. Let me read the words of our passage again.

⁴²Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; ⁴³but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." ⁴⁴And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. (Luke 4:42-43)

Here, Jesus was intentionally walking away from an opportunity that you and I would probably accept. We often tend to stay when asked to stay. But Jesus knew that He had a greater calling, and He knew the purpose for which God, His Father, had sent Him.

But, a question, how would Jesus have known that purpose for which He had been sent? He knew it because of the ongoing, intimate guidance taking place within His heart from God's Holy Spirit. We know that is true from the words we read earlier in this chapter, where Jesus said.

¹⁸ *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,*

*To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18-19)*

Folks, the plans of God are complete in every way. He forms the plan, He calls those that He wants to take part within the plan, He equips them for the task, and then He sends them forth to carry it out, but ever and always personally remaining with those people and those plans throughout every step of the way.

The plan that Jesus was following began sometime before the foundations of the earth, deep within the mysteries of the Trinity. There God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit formed all the plans for the redemption and salvation of mankind. And there, at that time, it was determined that Jesus would be the one to step forth and carry out that plan.

And that was what Jesus was doing as He gently responded to these people who asked Him to stay with them. He simply stated the plan, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.”

Jesus was faithful to carry forward His portion of the plan. Nothing would be allowed to deter or dissuade Him from His appointed task. The redemption and salvation of mankind was far too important!

And so, as the people begged Him to stay where He was, He made the simple choice. He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.”

What does this mean for you and for me as we go about our ordinary day? It means simply this! You and I are the remaining “Body of Christ” on this earth. And as the “Body of Christ”, we also have a calling. And we also have been equipped by the filling of God’s Holy Spirit. And we also are being sent into all the world to preach this gospel. Whether it be from a pulpit, or a bible study or a Sunday School class or just in a phone call to a friend, we must preach and teach this gospel!

Dear Friends, we don’t have the privilege of just laying back and receiving all the benefits of being a Christian without doing our part within God’s plan. We do not have the privilege of working hard just to have stuff and entertainment for ourselves, self-centered pursuits that benefit no one but us and our families.

That's not part of the plan. You and I are to be about the same work that Jesus began.

And may I add that friendly advice and personal opinions can be helpful, but friendly advice and personal opinions cannot save a person's soul. They need the "gospel".

Just look around you. There are people that you know who truly do not know the gospel, and there are new people being born on this earth every day. They are missing out on the plans of God, and we must not allow that to take place.

Yes, salvation is by grace alone through Christ alone. But you and I have been called and equipped to be the "means" through which His grace is ministered to all those unsaved people. And we have been sent to tell those people about this "good news" that the Lord Jesus has given to us. And woe be it unto us if we preach not His gospel.

Yes, God does have a plan for you and for me,

¹¹ . . . "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

And part of God's plan is that you and I must invite others into His Kingdom. And so, when you and I are asked to remain somewhere that we should not be, we must say as Jesus said, No, I must go and preach this kingdom of God to whomever will listen, for it was for this purpose that I have been sent.

Let's pray!