

The Call of Grace

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Galatians 1:15-16

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Now, the old writers used to talk about a general and effectual call. They wrote complicated papers and they preached lengthy sermons on the general call which comes to all men in some form and at some time and the effectual call, which comes in the power of the Holy Spirit to God's elect.

Now, it is clear from the Scripture. I want you to turn, first of all, to the book of Proverbs. Now, it is clear from the Scripture that God almighty does in many ways make himself known to the sons of Adam. God does in many ways, Proverbs chapter one, God does in many ways make himself known to the sons of Adam. There is a way that God enlightens. There is a way that God illuminates. And just how much light a man can have and still not know God is beyond our understanding.

Hebrews chapter six tells us just how far people can go. They can taste the good Word of God, the powers of the world to come, be enlightened and still not know Christ. But there are ways that God makes himself known to the sons of Adam. And I say to all the sons of Adam. He says in Proverbs one, verse 24, "Because I have called and you refused I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded. You set at naught all my counsel and would none of my reproof."

Now that Scripture tells us that God does call men and they refuse to come. God does call. God does, in some way, make himself known to the sons of Adam and they refuse his call and they refuse his offer and they refuse his inviting hand. He said, "I stretched out my hand." Just like you walk up to an enemy and you put out your hand. He won't shake it. "I put out my hand," God said, "And you won't take it. You won't take it."

So that is clear from that Scripture that God does call the sons of Adam. He calls those who refuse. He stretches out his hand to those who will not take it. He offers himself in some way, in some measure and men will not regard it.

Now, let's see if we can find out some of the ways that God calls the sons of Adam. Let's find out some of the ways that he makes himself known, that they know that there is a God, that he is God and that there can be a relationship between them and him. Let's see.

First of all in the book of Romans, in chapter one, we know that God makes himself known by his power, by his wisdom in creation in Romans chapter one verse 19.

Now, we know David said, “The heavens declare the glory of God.” You can stand out under God’s heavens and see the stars and the moon, the perfect order of the universe, the sun, the clouds, the rain, the snow. He makes every little snowflake. Not two of them are alike. He sends every rain drop. God may be known by the things that are made. So he leaves men without excuse. Look at Romans one, verse 19. It says, “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them or to them for God hath showed it unto them.

You say, “How?”

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead so that they are without excuse. They are without excuse.” God makes himself known to the sons of Adam in creation. They do know there is a God. “When they knew there was a God they glorified him not as God.”

Look at verse 21. “Because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God. They were not thankful. They became vain in their imagination and their foolish heart was darkened.”

Verse 23. “And they changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, birds, four footed beasts and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.”

So God makes himself known by the things that are made.

Now then another way...turn to Romans two, in which God does reveal himself to the sons of Adam. I am talking about even to the heathen in Africa, Russia, China, Mexico, South America, in the islands of the Pacific. Men know there is a God. God does not leave himself without a witness. God is understood by the things that are made.

And then, secondly, in Romans two, verse 14, “When the Gentiles...” That is talking about the heathen. Back here the Jews were the religious people. The Gentiles were the heathen. “For when the heathen which have not the law...” They have not the 10 Commandments. They have not the Mosaic Law. “But they do by nature the things contained in the law, in other words, you can go to a tribe in the heart of Africa who never heard the gospel, never seen the 10 Commandments and they know in here somewhere by conscience or an inward light that lighteth men, they know it is wrong to steal. They know it is wrong to kill. They know it is wrong to do these things, to lie. And God says, “These having not the law are a law unto themselves that show the law...it shows the work of the law written in their hearts.” Who wrote it there? God wrote it there. The law written in their hearts. “Their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”

God makes himself known by conscience. God does reveal himself by conscience. And then over here in the book of Amos in the little book of Amos God tells us that he makes himself known and there is a way in which he calls men by providence, by providential dealings.

Now, in the book of Amos chapter four we are familiar with verse 12. Verse 12 says, "Prepare to meet thy God." It used to be on the highways there were some crosses and on those cement crosses were the words, "Prepare to meet thy God." You are all familiar with that Scripture, but do you know, do you know what God said before he said that?

Well, now let's look at it in Amos four, verse six, he says, "I and I also have given you cleanness of teeth. That is you don't have enough to eat, a famine in all your cities and want of bread in all your places. Yet have you not returned unto me saith the Lord. That didn't break you. That didn't bring you down. I sent famine. I sent pestilence. I sent hunger. But that didn't humble you. That didn't bring you down. That didn't make you cry for mercy. You didn't return to me."

Verse seven. "I have withholden the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest. And I caused it to rain upon one city and caused it not to rain upon another city. One piece was rained upon. The piece whereupon it rained not withered. Two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, but they were not satisfied. Yet have you not returned unto me saith the Lord. That didn't break you."

You know, I have seen preachers at funerals...somebody will die and they will get around the casket and they will get a confession of faith out of all the kids. They will get a confession of faith out of the husband. If the wife died they'll get, "Do you want to meet your wife in heaven?"

"Yeah, I want to meet my wife in heaven."

"Well, shake my hand, you know."

And he will come to church for a while and then he will drift away. I have not found that the acts of judgment and the acts of providence, I have not found it very often to be used of God to bring sinners to conviction of sin and faith in Christ. That is what he is saying here. I have done these things.

Look at verse nine. "I have smitten you with blastings and mildew in your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased. The palmerworm devoured them. Yet you didn't return to me."

Verse 11. "I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha and you were plucked. You were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning. Yet you haven't returned to me."

None of these providential dealings...they don't break men.

I have known men and women to go through great sickness and great trouble and great sorrow and for a while it had some effect on them for a little while. They remembered it. But they didn't remember it very long. It didn't stay with them very long. They went back their own ways. They forgot God's grace. They forgot God's mercy in these times of trouble. When God said, "I sent this trouble upon you. I have sent this trouble and yet you didn't return to me."

All right. In verse 12 he says, "You get ready to meet God. You get ready to meet God." God says, "I called and you refused. I stretched out my hand and you won't take it. I have offered my fellowship to you and you refused it. You have gone your own way. I have called you in creation. I have shown you my power and my wisdom and my Godhead, but you didn't fall down." He said, "I have put a conscience in you and the conscience says you are wrong, you are wrong, you are wrong. But you go on being wrong. You don't pay any attention to that voice that speaks in here that says you are going the wrong way. You are going the wrong way. You don't pay any attention to it."

And then God says, "So I dealt with you firmly. I dealt with you in famine. I dealt with you in hunger. I dealt with you in slaying your young men with a sword. I have overthrown you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha and you are just like a firebrand plucked out of the burning. But you didn't...it didn't break you. It didn't bring you down. You didn't return to me. Therefore, you get ready to meet God. You get ready to meet God."

There is another way that God calls me. Turn to Hebrews chapter four. Hebrews, the fourth chapter, verse two. The gospel is preached. There are some places where the gospel is preached and men hear the gospel. They hear the gospel. They hear it at least with these ears. They see it, at least, with these eyes. It can't be denied. The gospel is Christ. The gospel is the blood. The gospel is the cross.

In Hebrews four, verse two. "Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them." Talking about Israel in the wilderness. "But the word preached didn't profit them." It didn't do them any good. Why didn't it do them any good? Because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it. The gospel didn't find any faith. Oh, they heard it. There was enough gospel in that movie on television last night, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, there was enough gospel in that to save this whole world.

But they look at it, "Isn't that a fine performance?"

"Yeah, that is real good. Pretty close to the Scripture."

Well, there is a point there. It wasn't straight away from the Scripture, but it never gets down here. It just circulates up here and never gets down here. The whole United States saw Christ on the cross last night and saw him buried and saw him rise again on their television screen. But it won't be mixed with faith. It won't be mixed with a man falling

on his face and saying, "Lord, God, let thy blood be propitiation for me on the mercy seat."

God calls men.

So it is clear from the Scripture. Let the case rest. God does call men. He is a merciful God. He is plenteous in mercy and slow to wrath. But he says, "Their foot will slide in due time. I make myself known to them. I stretched out my hand."

Turn back to Proverbs one, Proverbs one. Now, this is the tragic thing here. God says, "I called you. I stretched out my hand and no man regarded. I called you by creation. I called you by providence. I called you by conscience. You heard the gospel."

All right. Verse 26. "I will laugh. I will laugh at your calamity. Their foot will slide in due time." God says, "The cup of wrath is going to be filled up some day. And it is going to teeter there on the brink and then fall over." And God says, "When it does I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call on me and I will not answer. They shall seek me, but they shall not find me."

Why? "They hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They wouldn't have any of my counsel. They despised my reproof. Therefore they are going to eat the fruit of their own way. They are going to eat the fruit of their own way."

All right. I find another call in this book. That is what we call and that is what these old timers called a general call, a general call. It goes out from God to all the sons of Adam. There is not a son of Adam who does not know something about the Godhead through creation, through conscience, through providence. And many through the preaching of the gospel. But throughout the Word of God we encounter any effectual call, an effectual call, a powerful, divine call that produces a response.

For example, Christ walked by the seat of custom where a man is collecting taxes. And he is sitting there and Christ says to that man, "Matthew, follow me." And the Scripture said, "And he arose and left all and followed him."

Our Lord walked under a tree one day. There were so many people there that this fellow Zacchaeus had to climb up a tree in order to see Christ. And our Lord walked under that tree with that multitude around him and he looked up in that tree and he said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down for I must abide at your house today. Salvation has come to this house for he also is a son of Abraham."

Our Lord Jesus Christ was walking by the sea of Galilee and there were two men there fishing with their father and our Lord said, not to the father, and not to the other fishermen, but to these two men, James and John, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

And then, here in our text, Galatians chapter one. Listen to this. Here is a religious man. He said, a persecutor of the Church, a persecutor of the Church, one who despised the name of Christ, one who abhorred the way of the cross, one to whom the cross did not fit at all into his plans. And yet on this road to Damascus he said, "It pleased God," verse 15 of Galatians one, "who separated me from my mother's womb and called me."

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

And from the ground he lifted sightless eyes into that burning vision from heaven, that light from heaven, and he said, "Who are you, Lord?"

And he said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest."

"Lord, what will you have me to do?"

That, my friend, is an effectual call. That is not a call of nature that men look out and admire it and turn away from it. That is not a call of conscience that men say, "Well, one more time, two more times, three more times, four more times, you know. I will just ignore this little voice, this little inner whispering and it can't be all that bad anyway, you know. I will straighten this matter out some day."

No, sir. It is not like that. It is not a call of providence where a fellow stricken on a bed of affliction said, "Lord, if you will let me up I will serve you always. I will do you well."

You liar. Your feet hit the floor to walk in paths of rebellion.

No, this is not that kind of call at all. This is not that call that a fellow sits and listens to a preacher and goes out and says, "Wasn't that a nice sermon? I sure enjoyed your talk. You did a good job. You preached what I agreed with. That was good. I really liked it. I couldn't find any fault with it."

No, sir. This is an effectual call, an effectual call.

"Saul!"

"What will you have me do?"

"Samuel!"

"Here am I, Lord. Here am I, Lord."

That is the call of grace.

Look at 1 Thessalonians. Let me show you something here. Have you ever...have you been made a recipient of an effectual call? Have you been made a recipient of this divine call of grace? Paul said, "He called me by his grace. He called me by his grace."

And he says here in 1 Thessalonians chapter one, verse four, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God for our gospel came not unto you in Word only, in vision only, in providence only, in conscience only, in creation only. It came to you in power, power, divine power, life giving power, convicting power, Holy Spirit power. That is how it came. Our gospel came to you in power. It separated you. It divided you apart from everybody else. It operated on you. I stripped you. It broke you. It humbled you. It singled you out. It came in power. It came in the Holy Ghost. It came in much assurance, in much assurance."

That is an effectual call.

Turn with me to Genesis chapter 12. Now to illustrate this effectual call I think this is the best place to go in the Word of God. Genesis, chapter 12. Did you see what I am talking about, don't you? You see what I am talking about. There is a general call. Those old boys were right. Anybody that knows anything about the Bible who has done any studying at all, any of these old writers, all of them talk about a general call. There is a sense, there is a way in which God makes himself known to all the sons of Adam to a certain extent, some to a greater degree than others. Some men have little knowledge, just the knowledge of nature and conscience. Some men have some knowledge of providence and God dealing with them. Some men have heard a whole lot of gospel. Some men have walked aisles and been baptized and joined churches and believed doctrine and switched from Arminianism to Calvinism and from Calvinism to Antinomianism and from Antinomianism to legalism and from legalism to some other kind of -ism and still don't know Christ.

But this call I am talking about, now, this effectual call, that one Matthew received, made him leave everything and follow Christ, that one Saul received on the road to Damascus, that one Zacchaeus got and brought him down out of that tree, that call that Abraham...listen to it.

Now verse 12...verse one of Genesis 12. "Now the Lord had said to Abraham, 'Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee and I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee and I will make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing.'"

Now, there are five things about this call. Now, I want you to stay with me. And I say that every person who is a recipient of this divine call, this call of grace, these five things are true.

The first one is it was a sovereign call. It was a sovereign call. Paul said, "He called me by his grace, his grace."

Now, brethren, at this time in Genesis 12 I want you to listen to this. Maybe you never heard this before, but it is true. I am going to show it to you. At this time the whole world was bathed in heathenism, in idol worship. Men were not worshipping God. They were worshipping images and idols and creeping things and four footed beasts; even Abraham's family. That's right. Abraham's father Terah worshipped idols.

I'll show you that. Turn to Joshua 24 and I will show you that and you mark it in your Bible. In Joshua 24 when this call came to Abraham down there in Ur of the Chaldees he was living with his Father. They all lived in one community and they were all idol worshippers. In Joshua 24, verse two, now listen. "And Joshua said to the people, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old times, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor—that was Lot's daddy—and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, multiplied his seed and gave him Isaac. When I found your father Abraham, he was in an idol worshipping, heathen household."'"

That is what God said. "I called him sovereignly."

Turn to Isaiah 51. Here is a verse of Scripture here about Abraham before God called him, Isaiah 51, verse one and two. Now listen to it. This call, this effectual call, I hope you have heard it or I hope you hear it. In Isaiah 51, verse one, God says, "Hearken to me ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord. Look unto the rock whence you are hewn and to the hole of the pit whence you are digged. Look to Abraham your father and Sarah that bare you. I called him alone." Abraham didn't volunteer for this journey. God called him. Abraham didn't volunteer for this mission. The Scripture says, "A Syrian ready to perish was your father; a Syrian ready to perish."

But God in his sovereignty, God in his purpose, God in his divine plan came down there in Ur of the Chaldees among those heathen, idol worshipping, base people and called this man Abraham and said, "Abraham, get thee out to the land I will show thee." It was a sovereign call. And all these effectual calls are on purpose.

Turn to Romans eight. Let me show you that. They are not accidents. They are not accidents. They are on purpose. Any man who receives a call of grace, God sends it on purpose. In Romans eight verse 28, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called." You finish it. "...according to his purpose." Whose purpose? His purpose. "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the first born among many brethren and whom he did predestinate, them he what? Called. He called. And whom he called he justified."

Effectual call always follows eternal purpose, always. God never does anything by accident. He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Abraham was God's man. Matthew was God's man. James and John were God's men. Zacchaeus was God's

man. Saul of Tarsus, “He separated me from my mother’s womb.” But it wasn’t until he was 40 years old that God called him by his grace.

God said, “Jeremiah, before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee and I called thee. I called thee.”

We didn’t choose God. He chose us. He said that to his disciples. We didn’t love God. He loved us. We didn’t call him. He called us.

Turn with me to Genesis six. Now listen to this, Genesis chapter six. These are the great men of the Bible. In Genesis chapter six, verse seven, the Lord said, “I am going to destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast and creeping thing, fowl of the air.”

Well, you can repeat that right now. God is going to do the same thing to this world. He is going to burn it. He drowned it the first time. He is going to burn it the second time.

Watch verse eight. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” That is what I want. God is going to destroy this world. He said he is going to burn it. The heavens and the earth shall pass away, shall melt with a fervent heat, but somebody somewhere is going to find grace in God’s eyes.

“But Noah found grace.”

Never would I feel the guilt of sin nor the blessings of Jesus’ love unless my worthless name had been enrolled by God in his book above. I never would have been called. I never would have been warned. I never would have been convicted. I would have gone to hell with the religion of natural men if God had not, in his sovereign pleasure, been pleased to call me. Now that is so.

All right. The second thing about this call, the second thing. First of all, it was a sovereign call. It was a sovereign call. And then, secondly, this call of Abraham was a divine call. Who called him? Who called him? God called him. God called him. “And the Lord said, ‘Abraham.’ The Lord said, ‘Abraham.’” It was a divine call.

Paul said, “God who separated me from my mother’s womb, he called me. He called me by his...” It wasn’t an angel that called Abraham. It was God that called. It wasn’t a prophet who called Abraham, it was God who called him.

Turn with me to the book of Acts. I want you to look at this, Acts chapter seven. This is Stephen’s dying testimony. This is the servant of God, the deacon in the Church that was being stoned. And this is his dying testimony and listen to what he says about Abraham in Acts seven, verse two. Now, listen to it. And he said, “Men and brethren, fathers, hearken. The God of glory, the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Charan and God said to him, ‘Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and come into a land that I will show you.’” God called

him. And I say that this effectual call whereby a man is convinced of sin and brought to love Christ, I don't mean to profess Christ or to claim Christ. I mean to love Christ. That is an effectual work.

Now God uses means. It is true. His ministers preach. His law strips. His Word warns. His providence takes us to hear the gospel. But it is the divine Spirit that gives life. It is God who calls by his Spirit.

Listen to the Word of God. It says in John one, "To as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name which were born, not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God, born of God."

Our Lord said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth and you hear the sound thereof and cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. Even so are those who are born of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit quickeneth, listen, whom he will." Isn't that what the Bible says?

Turn to Matthew 16. This is revealed right here in the 16th chapter of Matthew. And this. also was in that *Greatest Story Ever Told* last night. They didn't word it exactly right, but it was in there. They were sitting around there and the Lord Jesus said, Matthew 16, he said in verse 15, "Whom do you say that I am?"

And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And the Lord Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon bar Jonah, flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but," watch it, "my Father revealed that to you."

Brethren, beloved, knowing your election of God...our Gospel didn't come to you in the words of a man only, the arguments of a man, the persuasion of a soul winner, the appeals of an evangelist. Our gospel came to you in power in the Holy Ghost.

Have you heard the voice of God? Once you hear his voice calling...look at 1 Corinthians one. Here is another illustration in 1 Corinthians chapter one. It says in...chapter two, I beg your pardon, 1 Corinthians chapter two, verse nine. "It is written, 'Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard...'" That is the natural eye, the natural ear of natural man, "Neither hath it entered the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us." Who did? God did.

Now, brethren, I preached this gospel. But if my voice is the only voice you hear it won't do you any good. If my voice...it may make you religious. It may make you a Baptist. It may make you a Calvinist. It may make you religious, but it won't save your soul. You have got to hear him who speaks from heaven in power, in power. Him who humbled you and stripped you and breaks you and brings you down. You have got to hear him, do business with him.

"But God hath revealed him unto us by his Spirit, by his Spirit."

The evangelist and all these Hollywood promoting preachers today are getting folks down the aisle and they are getting them to make decision. They are getting them to agree to go to heaven when they die, but only the Holy Spirit can make a man a new creature. That is right. I hope you don't miss that. I hope you don't miss that.

“While thou art calling, oh, call me. Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou art calling, don't pass me by. I don't want to just hear brother Mahan call. I don't want to just hear my momma say, ‘Son, don't you want to be a Christian?’ Momma can't speak with convicting power. Momma can't give me a new nature and a new heart and make me love God. Momma can't give me eyes that see beyond the vanities of life and see that city Abraham knew existed. I want to hear the Holy Spirit call, the Holy Spirit give me a life that is willing to bear up under all the trials and trouble and sorrows that God sends my way and come out overcoming, victorious.”

It is a divine call. That is what it is. And I challenge you, brother. I challenge you. It is a divine call. “He called me,” Paul said. Old Paul had heard Gamaliel. Paul had heard all of the fathers. Paul had read the Scriptures, but Paul never heard from God until on the Damascus Road and when he heard from God, God reversed his whole life, turned him around and he never went back.

God set his feet in paths of righteousness. God set his eyes on that eternal glory. God set his heart's affection on Christ and nobody could shake him. God called him. God called him.

All right. Watch this, now. It was a personal call. It was a sovereign call according to his purpose. Whom he foreknew he predestinated. Whom he predestinated he called. Now, you better deal with that. You deal with it now or you will deal with it at the judgment. God is going to have the glory. He said, “I am the Lord. My glory I will not share. I will not give it to another.” He said he called the foolish. He called the things that are nothing. “You know your calling, brethren, how that not many mighty things, not many noble, not many wise, but the foolish that no flesh should glory in his presence. Of him are you in Christ Jesus. But he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.”

It is a sovereign call. He called according to his purpose. It is a divine call. God does it. The preacher may preach and he does and we may pray and witness and we take the Word. But it is God who gives that Word life. This Word is nothing more than any other word unless the Holy Spirit makes it a quickening word, a life giving word. I am telling you the truth.

And then, thirdly, it is a personal call. He called me.

Look over here at Genesis 12 again. God said, “Abraham, Abraham, get thee out of thy father's house.”

Now, watch this. Abraham did what you and I would do. When the Lord called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, the first thing he did was persuade his daddy to go with him. Wasn't that right, Charlie? That was the first thing he did. He persuaded his daddy and the rest of the family, Terah. They all went with Abraham.

Abraham says, "Come on. We are going out of this place. We are going to a place God is..." And God had called Abraham. He hadn't called Terah. He hadn't called Nahor. He called Abraham. But Abraham says, "Come on. Let's all go." He must have been a persuasive young man because he certainly prevailed to a degree. They went with him. They followed him. And they went as far as the place called H-A-R-A-N and there they stopped. They said, "We are tired. We think we will just camp here a little while."

Why did they stop? Why did they stop? I'll tell you why they stopped. They stopped just the same reason all these other church members stay about a month or six months or a year, maybe 10 years or maybe 20 years. They stop because they hadn't got the divine call. Abraham had it. Terah didn't have it. He wasn't doing anything in the world but following men. That was all he was doing. Terah was following his son. He loved his son. He thought the world of him. But he was traveling on Abraham's enthusiasm. He was traveling on Abraham's enthusiasm. And God help your soul—and he won't—if you are simply going along with somebody else. Wives, be careful. "Remember," Christ said, "Lot's wife." You better remember Lot's wife. She was married to a man who knew God, but she didn't. She was married to a man who worshipped God, but she didn't. She was married to a righteous man, but she wasn't. She was married to a man whom God had called, but God never called her. And she went so far and stopped. And Abraham, God called him. And his father went with him and Nachor went with him and the whole shebang went with him and they got to Haran and they stopped. They said, "We just are going to stick around here. It looks awful good to us." And that is when we pick up the story here.

Now the Lord said, "Abraham, Abraham..." You know, natural love tries to understand. It is so...you take a boy who gets called to the ministry, we saw that here in town in Ashland several years ago. This fellow was in a denomination. All his family went with him. He changed his denomination. All his family went with him. He quit church and they all quit, too. Natural love does that, you know. It wants somebody that will get religion. Everybody, cousins, nieces, nephews, sisters, brothers, sisters in laws, in laws, out laws, all these others will go flocking after them. And that is what Abraham's family did. They tried to share his faith, but that is an impossibility. You can't share another's faith.

It always troubles me when a man or a woman is converted and their husband or wife comes right after them. That bothers me. I'm not saying it can't be. But I am simply saying this thing is a personal call. You had better not be riding somebody's coat tail down this divine trail because they will go in the kingdom of God and you will be shut out.

Abraham...finally God had to say, "Abraham," now watch it. "Abraham, you got to leave him. You got to leave him."

You know this thing, all of the listening to the gospel with a crowd, listening to the gospel with a group avails nothing. You have got to listen to the gospel yourself with your won heart. I have got to be convinced of my personal sins.

Have you ever gone through that personal Holy Spirit conviction? Are you going through it now? I don't think it ever stopped. I don't think God ever stops convincing us of sin. I don't think God ever stops stripping us.

Do you go through that personally? Have you ever been, yourself, convinced of your need, your own personal need, your own desperate situation? Has God ever revealed your inability? Has Christ ever been revealed to you as the only savior, the substitute? Do you really love him, him? There is a love affair between you and the Lord. You love him, you trust him, you believe on him, he died for you, you know it. If the whole world left his church tomorrow you would be here on the front row saying, "Preach to me. Preach that blessed gospel of Christ, of substitution. I love it. I have got to confess him with my mouth."

Have you ever done that? Who confessed for you?

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Now, I will tell you this. I love this gospel. It is my life. It is my heartbeat. I am devoted to it. I love to preach it. God's given me a little liberty to preach it. I believe it. Christ is my Lord. I trust and hope that I would die for him. But there ain't no way Doris can be saved on that faith, no way. She has got to have the same experience.

And, Madge, you can't ride Cecil's experience. There ain't no way. And, Sue, you can't go with Stan.

Do you know the Lord? Do you see what I am saying to you?

"Abraham, I didn't call your daddy. I called you. I called you."

And I will tell you something, fourthly, about this call. It is a separating call. Listen to what he said. "Abraham, get out of your country, out of your country."

Now, brethren, the believer becomes a citizen of another country. We love...we love our country here, America. I love it. And I think you do. But, believe me. What God does with it is God's business. I am looking for a better country. I am citizen of a better country. I am not nearly so much interested in the politics of this country as I am the politics of that country, not nearly so interested. I am not nearly interested who is president as I am who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. I am a citizen of that country.

I am looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. I have a desire to depart from this place of sin and be with Christ which is far better. My citizenship is in glory. Can you say that? Get out of your country.

Look at the next line. "Get out from your kindred." Abraham's old associates were idol worshippers. Abraham was supposed to form new associations. The believer will find that he has little in common with the old associates.

I will tell you this. You know, you heard what Dwight L. Moody said. He said that lady was walking down the street one day and there was a drunk lying in the gutter and a pig walked up and lay down beside him. And she looked at him and the pig looked at her and the drunk didn't look at all. But she said, "Birds of a feather flock together." And the pig got up and walked away.

But when a man comes to know Christ he has to leave his old associates. I tell you one thing. They usually leave him because he doesn't have anything in common with him. They don't talk the same language. They don't desire the same things. They are not interested in the same things. They don't...they can't have anything in common.

"Abraham, get out, out of your country, away from your kindred and out of your father's house."

Now, we always love and respect our parents and we should. We will always love and care for our families. But the family of God is first. The family of God is first. And it is a separating call.

And then, last of all, look at this, Abraham's call again. It is a call based on a very great promise. Listen to him, verse two. "And Abraham, I will make of you a great nation. And, Abraham, I am going to bless you, bless you. And, Abraham, I am going to make your name great, give you a name that will never fail, a new name, a new name. And you will be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless you and I will curse them that curse you and in these shall all families of the earth be blessed. I will bless you and I will make you a blessing." And God says that to everyone he calls. He says this. "I will make you a son."

"To them gave he the privilege, the right to become sons of God."

"I will make you an heir, an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. I will make you a man of peace. My peace I give unto you. A man of rest, I will give you rest. A contented man, I have learned in whatsoever state to be content. A blessed man, blessed is the man to whom God will not charge sin. A persevering man, and you shall never perish."

That is the divine call.

Do you see the difference? I see the difference. I see it so plainly and so clearly. I see the difference.

Come, humble sinner, in whose breast a thousand fears revolve. Come with your guilt and fears oppressed and make this last resolve. I will go to Jesus though my sins act like a mountain rose, but I know his courts. I will enter in whatever may oppose. For prostrate I lie before his throne and there my guilt confess. I will tell him I am a wretch undone without his sovereign grace. Perhaps he will admit my plea. Perhaps he will hear my prayer. But if I perish I am going to go and perish right there. I can but perish if I go. I am resolved to try. For if I stay away I know I shall forever die.

Our Father in heaven, we thank thee for the call of grace. We thank thee for the general call. We thank thee that thou hast not left thyself without a witness, that men may be known, men may know God by the things that are made, by conscience, by his eternal power, by providence, by the gospel. But oh, our Father, how thankful we are for that effectual, divine, personal, separating call which thou hast given to us. We thank thee.

Call others. Call others. Use our voice to be thy voice. Our message is to be thy message. These worship services to be means of thy grace to call sinners to thyself. For the glory of Christ we pray. Amen.