

Whereunto Have You Been Called? – I Peter 3:9

I. Introduction:

- A. How many times have you been sitting in a reception area, waiting for someone to call your name?
1. How many times **in the last month** have you been in a doctor's waiting room?
 2. The last time I was in such a place, my wife and I had been there for more than hour before a nurse came out, holding a file folder and calling Judy's name.
 3. At that point we got up and followed the young woman into a treatment room.
 4. We were called, and we responded, leaving four or five other potential patients still awaiting their call.
- B. In our text, Peter uses the common Biblical word, "*kaleo*" which means "*to call*" or "*to bid*," meaning "*to invite*."
1. We will get to them in a minute, but he also refers to two other things, and between them he says, "*knowing that ye are thereunto called*."
 2. In that reception room to which I just referred, I heard a couple of people grumbling about the long wait.
 - a. Someone said, "*this is ridiculous*," and there were threats about leaving.
 - b. But everyone stayed, because they were awaiting something which was important to them.
 3. The calling to which Peter refers is important – more important than a doctor's examination.
 4. It is **also** important that you and I **know** "*whereunto we have been called*."

II. Before getting to Peter's point, consider a couple things about the calling to which he referred.

- A. First, this is not the calling of Doctor Peter or his nurse. Peter is pointing to the calling of God.
1. It is a calling motivated by grace. It is undeserved.
 2. He implies that it is a calling which all of God's saints have heard and to which they have responded.
 3. Peter is speaking to you and me. This is a calling which has been given to us.
 4. In the light of this verse, we could ask, "*Do YOU know whereunto you have been called?*"
- B. Without going into a lot of detail, I'll just point out that our calling has various aspects to it.
1. **Paul** refers to it in **I Corinthians 1** – "*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:*
 - a. *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;*
 - b. *And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.*"
 2. Whereunto have you been called? You have been called unto salvation through Christ Jesus.
 3. Earlier in that chapter Paul said, "*God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*"
 4. Just think about that: we have been invited into the presence of the Son of God in order to enjoy the conversation, grace and eternal glory of God.
- C. A couple of New Testament scriptures speak further about that glory and our invitation.
1. To the **Thessalonians** Paul said, God "*called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*" – (**II Thessalonians 2:14**).
 2. And **Peter** tells us later in this epistle: "*the God of all grace... hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus...*" – (**I Peter 5:10**).
 3. We have not only been invited into the doctor's surgery to be blessed with eternal health and salvation, but we have been invited into the Great Physician's home, where He has a glorious mansion prepared for us.
 4. We have been invited and called unto life; into a life worth living.
- D. It needs to be kept in mind that with these **great blessings** come some **great responsibilities**.
1. To the **Philippians** Paul testified, "*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" – (**Philippians 3:14**).
 - a. Doesn't this suggest that the calling of God has some sort of goal attached to it? Some purpose?

- b. Paul was not content to simply “go to heaven” when he died.
- c. He pushed himself to reach the mark which God’s high calling involved.
- 2. And then he told the **Ephesians**, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye **walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called**” – (**Ephesians 4:1**).
 - a. Literally, you and I have been **called** to a high **calling**.
 - b. “Vocation” is the word “klesis” a word which is related to “kaleo.”
- 3. Like Paul, you and I have been invited into a specific vocation – an extremely high calling.
- 4. And there are duties which go with that blessed invitation.

E. **Peter exhorts** us to **know** and **understand** the high calling to which we have been invited.

- 1. The things which Peter is listing, beginning in **verse 8** are all appropriate to our heavenly calling.
- 2. Be of **one mind**; be **tenderhearted** and **courteous**. We have been called unto these things.
- 3. Have **compassion** for each other and **love** each other as brethren.
- 4. And toward those who are still outside Christ and perhaps who consider you to be their enemies, never render evil for evil or railing for railing.

III. In light of your high calling, imitate your Saviour.

- A. “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing.” The root of all sin grows in the soil of self.
- 1. It began with **Lucifer’s** “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high.”
 - 2. From Lucifer it descended into the human ranks: “Don’t you want to be like God? Aren’t you feeling deprived of your rights?”
 - a. “Don’t you deserve to be happy and to feel good, despite what it costs other people?”
 - b. Go ahead and puff on that weed, and drink that vodka, because you have a right to be high, even though it is destroying God’s creation – your body, and risking the lives of others.”
 - 3. This is the way that Satan works, insinuating himself into our self-seeking flesh.
 - a. And after that “every man is tempted when he is draw away of his own lust and enticed.
 - b. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death” – (**James 1:14-15**).
 - 4. All human sin involves fleshly self, and part of the nature of that filth and dirt is our pride.
 - a. “Aren’t you being deprived of your rights? Eat that forbidden fruit. You deserve it.”
 - b. “You have been wronged. You must defend yourself. You must retaliate.
 - c. You owe it to yourself to punch that girl’s lights out.”
 - 5. All of this is wrong; it is evil; it is sin.
- B. The Bible tells Christians to live “not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing.”
- 1. Not “rendering” means not “returning,” not “repaying.”
 - 2. “Not rendering **EVIL** for evil” speaks about not replying to a wicked action with the same kind of reaction.
 - 3. “Not rendering **RAILING** for railing” refers to not replying to verbal abuse with evil words of your own.
- C. A part of many sports today is something called “trash talk.”
- 1. “Trash talk” is the flinging of insults at an opponent with the intension of making him loose his confidence or his control. It is employed in everything from basketball to boxing.
 - 2. Sometimes it is loose and fun, but at other times it is absolutely filthy and disgusting.
 - 3. What is the best response to “trash talk?” Usually it is to do nothing.
 - a. To say nothing back. Let your deeds answer the other person’s words.
 - 4. Remember when you were little, jousting with your brother or sister, when he or she became really angry?
 - a. Nothing increased that anger – nothing was more victorious for you – than laughing at their punches and their abuse.
 - b. Nothing except perhaps tickling them in return for their attempts to hurt you.

- D. Earlier, Peter said, *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”*
1. **Whereunto** have we been called? Unto *“not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing.”*
 2. Among other things, we have been saved for the purpose of blessings those who abuse us.
 3. There will never be a rule in sports against most forms of *“trash talk.”*
 - a. The only exception being threats & evil gestures against the life of a person, but not for a simple insult.
 4. But in the rules of Christianity there are clearly defined regulations against such things.
 5. Never render *“evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called...”*
- E. A Christian is one of Christ’s people. He is supposed to look like and represent the Saviour.
1. That means we are to live the way He lived. We are to love the way He loved.
 2. We are to respond to sin in the way in which He responded.
 3. *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”*
- F. Remember, in order to purchase your salvation, Christ was *“lead as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is (silent) so he (opened) not his mouth.”*
1. At His trial, *“the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace.”*
 2. When the wicked spit on Him, He didn’t spit back.
 3. When they lied under oath and blasphemed Christ, He didn’t respond, although He could have instantly incinerated them.
 4. When they beat Him, He didn’t give them the pleasure of cursing them or trying to fight back.
 5. He was *“as a sheep before her shearers... so he (opened) not his mouth.”*
- G. One of the types of Christ which the Old Testament gives us is the rock in the wilderness.
1. In **Exodus 17** the people of Israel were once again complaining about their circumstances.
 - a. They expected heaven on earth, and they only found a place on earth where they could serve God.
 - b. Upon the leadership of the Lord they pitched their tents in Rephidim, *“but there was no water for the people to drink,”* so they began to complain once again.
 2. *“Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me.”*
 3. God replied, *“Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so.”*
 4. And God also did as He promised.
 5. Hasn’t the Lord Jesus been smitten for our benefit?
 6. Hasn’t He been beaten in order that we might drink of the water of life?
 7. There is our great example.
- H. Lest someone assume that Jesus’ behavior was simply to fulfill the requirements necessary to purchase our salvation, we are told that we have been called to this kind of calling. This is Christian behavior.
1. Jesus said in His **Sermon on the Mount**, *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*
 2. *And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.*
 - a. *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*
 - b. *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*
 3. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*
 4. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

5. *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*
 - a. *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*
 - b. *And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*
6. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*

- I. Remember that one of the reasons we have been left upon this earth, and not taken to Heaven immediately upon our salvation, is that we might bring glory to our Heavenly Father in the eyes of the lost.
 1. *“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.”*
 2. High on the list of our purposes in this world is to draw the attention of others to our Saviour that God might be glorified in salvation.
 3. *“Rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing: rather than blessing”* is contrary to our purpose.
 4. Know not that ye are called thereunto?
- J. As I was first thinking about this message, I considered the title *“An eye for an eye.”*
 1. The Lord’s instruction in **Matthew 5** began with, *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you...”*
 2. Obviously, the age-old pattern toward someone’s abuse to us – the response of our sinful flesh – has always been to retaliate.
 3. If he has hit you with a stick, breaking your tooth and blinding one eye, then return the favor. Blind him.
 4. But today, the words, *“an eye for an eye”* can be taken in a more Christian sort of way.
 5. Although medical science has not yet come up with a way to transplant one person’s eye into the eye socket of his enemy, parts of eyes have been transplanted for years.
 6. Retaliation is condemned by our Saviour, but to be a blessing where blessing is not deserved or expected is a part of the vocation to which we have been called.
 7. Does your enemy need water? Is he thirsty? Then give him water. Does he need food, then feed him.
 8. Does he need an eye, then give him an eye, so to speak.
 9. If we want to see revival in these last days, then this is something we all need to put into practice.

IV. Peter concludes this verse by saying, “that ye should inherit a blessing.”

- A. Some might try to twist this verse around, saying that Christians have been called to inherit God’s blessings.
 1. *“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that he should inherit a blessing.”*
 2. No. We have been called to the ministry of being a blessing to those who abuse us and our Saviour.
 3. The inherited blessing, salvation, is not a result of our good behavior.
- B. The word *“blessing,”* which is found in this verse in two slightly different forms, is the Greek word *“eulogia (yoo-log-ee’-ah)”* from which the English word *“eulogy”* is derived.
 1. A eulogy is a speech, usually given at a funeral, in which the deceased person is praised.
 2. The Christian has been called to a ministry of replying to verbal abuse with words of praise or some other positive blessing.
 3. And when we come to the end of our earthly lives, we shall stand before the bema throne to be judged by our Saviour, and if He deems our behaviour to have been Christ-like He will eulogize us.
 4. *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward” – I Corinthians 3:13-14.*
 5. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” – II Corinthians 5:20.*

- C. After salvation, which is by God's grace alone, part of our eternal inheritance will be the reward which we have earned through our obedience and service.
1. Part of our eternal eulogy from Christ will be whether or not we have obeyed the precepts of this verse.
 2. *“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that he should inherit a blessing.”*
 3. How much praise do you think the omniscient Lord will have for you?