

Answering to the heavenly calling

Part 1

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[00:00:01] Verse 19, chapter 2, the Epistle to the Ephesians, reading from verse 19.

Now, therefore, we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the buildings, thickly framed together, grow unto a holy temple in the Lord, in whom we also are built together for an [00:01:01] habitation of God through the Spirit.

Chapter 4, verse 2, or rather, verse 1, chapter 4.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[00:02:01] There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called, in one hope of your calling.

The connection between chapter 2 and chapter 4 is in the first verse of chapter 3.

We go back to this connection. For this cause I fall, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Jehovah's Witnesses. And then, of course, the rest. Chapter 3 is a parenthesis.

To read it properly, we pass on the verses I've already read. For this cause, in verse 1 of chapter 3, I fall, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles. And then in chapter 4, I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord. [00:03:01] The verses we have read.

We are handed the 16th of Matthew.

It's hard, then, to have it and to insist upon it.

In the days of feeble ears, and the days of fainted hearts, the remedy, there is one.

And as believers, we should avail ourselves of that remedy.

The remedy is God and his purpose in Christ Jesus.

[00:04:02] The scripture in Matthew 16 is clearly that.

The verses I read at the end of chapter 2 of Ephesians, equally so.

And Peter takes up another side of things of the same thing.

We also are being built up a spiritual house.

Those three scriptures go together as to how divine persons are engaged in this matter of gathering a people out for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is clearly defined.

In our chapter, chapter 4, there is one body. An only one.

[00:05:05] In Matthew 16, my church proprietarily writes, in the face of all the universe, devils included, the gates of Hades shall not, they will try, and continue to try, violence and corruption.

They will not prevail against it. Jesus said it.

In our scripture, and put alongside it, I refer to verse 21.

In whom? In Christ, of course. In Christ.

This is equivalent to the statement of Peter.

[00:06:05] The revelation from the Father, after whom he is. It is this person, in whom all the buildings are viewed now as a building.

The church, here, as a building. The same company.

And of course, we as believers in the sealing of the Holy Ghost from that August company. It has a destiny, determined by God himself.

Glory, glory with Christ. Heaven, glory with Christ.

However long it takes, a matter where Jesus exercises his patience.

God is long-suffering, and we, as we are instructed, become intelligent. [00:07:04] We also learn what patience is.

So, the kingdom, according to Revelation 1, is looked at in another way. We read this afternoon about being translated into the kingdom of the Son of Israel.

In Revelation 1, it takes another character. It's the kingdom which is in patience.

A time of patience, when the Lord Jesus is waiting. Waiting. He waited before we were born. He's waiting now. We are inclined to be impatient. We have to learn patience. Patience in communion with

him. Patience is his patience, and the kingdom has now that character. Well, to go back to our verse in chapter 2.

[00:08:03] In Christ, he also, I suppose this would refer to the Gentiles, but what comes to light in Ephesians is, in regards to the mystery, where Paul speaks of we, that is Jews, and then he, the Gentiles. Believers in each case.

But now, as this chapter tells us in earlier, that God has made, there has been made in himself, that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, well between, been made one new man.

In view of reconciliation, there is that to be reconciled, as we read this afternoon, there is that which is not intended for reconciliation, [00:09:01] but it will go down to judgment. But there is that which is to be reconciled. The things on earth, the things in heaven, two separate items which are to be reconciled. In chapter 2, it's a company who are reconciled, and reconciled to God, in one body, and how?

By the cross.

What a lovely thing it is to be instructed in the truth of the cross. Certainly, the Son, he gives character to every office. People take an office in this world, and they become enhanced.

In a way, they were not when they were not in that office. They qualify, and they are in an office which enhances the individual.

[00:10:03] The contrary, the Lord Jesus enhances the office in virtue of who he is, the Son.

At every office, whether it be the Son of David, the New Testament, as a previous speaker drew attention, we cannot read in regard to the fulfillment of David's Son in view of the meaning that it is a divine person, Jesus, who is that who will fill the office. Similarly, the Son of Man. Similarly, the priest of Hebrews.

And so we can illuminate, they are illuminated in the scriptures, but it is the person of the Son who gives character and dignity to the office by virtue of who he is.

[00:11:02] We are reconciled to God by the death of the Son, Romans 5, here it's in view of the one body. We are reconciled both in one body to God by the cross, that's the agency. The necessary work, what a real thing it really is, that which bows our hearts in will for coming together if the Lord spares us, and for the breaking of bread. That glorious person, great the glory thou art given, and he is the Son, the eternal Son. But equally so, the Son in manhood, Hebrews too, for the purpose of doing that great work on the cross. For us individually, but in the epistles and the Ephesians, it is in view of the one body, not making a Gentile, [00:12:02] lifting up a Gentile to the level of a status of a Jew, or bringing a Jew down to a Gentile, making a cross like of a Gentile to be a Jew, to claim Jewish privileges, but the cross is the means. That is, in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, everything, all that man is, is brought down to its proper level of nothingness and ignominy and shame in the place that is necessary for the Lord to go into to effect this reconciliation. To reconcile both in one body, to reconcile them to God in one body by the cross.

And in that way the enmity is slain. No longer a Jew and a Gentile in this one body. And so it is this company, which is in view in Ephesians 2, [00:13:07] built together for a habitation of God by the Spirit.

This is a development in the ways of God. For God did not dwell with Adam, nor with Abraham.

And the first mention of God's dwelling is after redemption is accomplished in the Lamb slain in Exodus 12, and there being brought across the Red Sea the song that was sung in Exodus 15.

There is reference to it further in Exodus about God dwelling amongst them. Of course, the Talmud, which comes into view from chapter 25 of Exodus to chapter 38, to give us typically that God has such a port [00:14:02] of being the center in that tabernacle system and where the twelve tribes in their order are assembled around that tabernacle and where God dwells in that way typically.

We have now this dwelling, this thought pursued in that this company, which is destined for glory even in the present moment it brought unto a holy temple in the Lord and as a future aspect.

And in verse 22, build it together for an annotation of God through the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. And so the character is of God and the Spirit of God is in the midst of mistakes [00:15:03] to produce the appropriate character that alone can answer to God. And I suppose the apostle has in his mind this when we turn to chapter 4 of this epistle.

He is said in verse 1 of chapter 3, Paul is a prisoner. For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles.

And then he repeats it. In verse 1 of chapter 4, I am therefore the prisoner of the Lord. This is what it is to be the chief servant of the Lord in a world like this. The world is opposed. It's opposed to God. It's opposed to Christ. It's opposed to his servant. It's opposed to the testimony of his servant. And the chief man whom the Lord has raised up, [00:16:03] you've read of it in chapter 9, who is to preach that Jesus is the Son of God, he is a prisoner.

It's very remarkable that he has used the Lord in regard to the highest truth that we have given to us. Whether it be that of the Colossians this afternoon or this of the Ephesians, it is after Paul has been disillusioned in regard to his pursuit at the Jews, in regard to the gospel. If only he had the opportunity to present it to his own countrymen, whose love he felt that they would hear it and receive it as he himself had done. So it's not until the end of the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul is a prisoner, God using the strength of his own affections for his people [00:17:04] and the ways of God in this matter, where Paul appeals to Caesar, and unto Caesar thou shalt go. So it fulfills what the Lord has asked of us to bear witness and to be at Rome. And it's at the end of the Acts of the Apostles where we find the Apostles really fulfilling his appointment by the Lord Jesus as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

He went to some of his own countrymen, Jews, they didn't believe him. And they took exception to what was written, especially in regard to God's favour towards the Gentiles. That is, from then, when he was disillusioned entirely and in his prison epistles, he devotes himself fully to his service to the Lord [00:18:01] regarding the Gentiles. And we have in these prison epistles the highest truth, which shows God's great purpose in Christ, purpose of love in Christ Jesus, where the Gentiles are included in this great matter along with the Jews. And here we read of this distinction of the being, even here, the appreciation of God by the Holy Spirit. Chapter 4 gives us a practical result and is known for it. But the purpose of this meeting is to glean from the highest truth what is the way we answer to it in the normal lives of his people.

We definitely are not in heaven, although we have a heavenly calling. And the very fact that we need instructions [00:19:01] as to husband and wife, according to such a standard, and wives being subject, according to another standard, the highest, as the Church is subjected to Christ, that's another standard. And then we have the household. God is concerned about the household. Will that emphasize the fact that we are not in our proper place with not Jesus, and we're not with Christ yet. And so in circumstances which are not changed even by the highest truth of Christianity, it is the highest truth of Christianity that gives character and color to even the menial things in which our responsibility is here. God does not wage, he does not, the fact that we are blessed as we are with all spiritual blessings, and are to be with Christ in reigning, and it is shining out.

The matters of our responsibility [00:20:03] are matters which are insisted upon in every position. I would refer especially in regard to our living here, in regard to wherever we live, and that is the 13th chapter of Romans is found in the explanation of that gospel. And the importance of that is seen. There's no excuse, even for Christians, to get into lawlessness even with the power of the Greek. For there's such a thing as a sword just as there is the grace of God. And so here in chapter 4 we get a mention to our calling to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Whatever we have in our secular employment, [00:21:02] it is this which has first consideration. To walk worthy of the Lord.

To walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

And then in verse 2 we have how to receive.

And what a remarkable thing, instead of coming out in high-mindedness or pride, and even with Christians there is a danger even to use our privileges to enhance oneself.

I suppose for that reason Paul had a distinction in the 12th and 2nd Corinthians caught up in the third heavens [00:22:02] and experienced peculiarity there. And even Paul needed to be dealt with by the Lord in returning to his normal responsibilities. He says, lest I should be exalted. What a solemn thing to say. Lest I should be exalted. And wonderful things that brethren know taught by the Spirit. And there is an tendency even that the flesh would use those to claim a certain distinction. And so with Paul it was necessary to give them to God. There was given unto me, yes a given unto me. God will give us all things. And he will give us the necessary discipline in order to comply with how we should come out here to please him. He will spare not his own son. [00:23:01] How shall he not also with him? Freely give us all things. Some time to think. It is the material things and the things that we personally desire and forget those along with Christ. But what is higher than that is character. And the way in which we answer to God. And it is ever necessary according to Paul in his experience in the third heavens it was even necessary for an apostle for him to answer to the Lord in a balanced way. There was given unto me a form for the flesh and from such a source a messenger of Satan to profit me lest I should be exalted above measure.

A very solemn thing. For this he restored to the Lord Christ another four times. [00:24:01] He submitted.

He learns this.

That it is weakness weakness the power of Christ with law and evidence and then he says henceforth henceforth he will accept it. He will accept everything that ministers not to his tribe he will accept everything that ministers to his conscious sense of weakness. That's a very remarkable thing.

Because naturally we'll be as far as far away from him as ever we can to his use of every means. But in the light of this and we're dealing with the highest truth the glory of divine person the high calling to which we are called and left in this world we shall not need it in the glory of Christ.

[00:25:02] But here these things are necessary. And so the way we answer to this calling wherewith we are called and bear in mind that this calling refers to our being a habitation of God by the Spirit. That's the calling. God dwells in us by his Spirit and the effect of being in the presence of God in the conscious sense of God dwelling there by his Spirit where everything contrary to God is judged in the power of the Spirit and everything that is pleasing to God is maintained in the same power of the Holy Spirit. It's in persons like ourselves those who constitute the habitation of God by the Spirit there is the answer to walk in worthy of this vocation what comes out is all lowliness [00:26:03] all lowliness and weakness not weakness, but weakness instead of answering for oneself we leave it to God who is well able to take up everything on our behalf, leave it to him I believe that would answer him for this weakness. An example of this is Moses in Numbers 12 when Miriam and Aaron they had something to say in the way of envy and resentment to the place that Moses had it's there where it says the man Moses was very mean he left it to God the Lord took it up come out you three they three came out and he put Aaron and Moses in that place [00:27:01] Moses never said a word they had they were obliged as a result, for respect the man in that responsibility and God in call and so this matter of meekness say to the Lord, I am meek and lowly at heart whatever they say, whatever they did Isaiah 49 my judgment is with the Lord and my work with my God and God will give thee appropriate answer there is a verse going back to chapter 2 where it speaks of and it's so beautiful it is to see it in this light in verse 20 verse 20 it is a person like this where the Lord Jesus had over all the things in the church and here it says the one who is the chief cornerstone the conspicuous stone [00:28:02] in all the building it doesn't say the Son of God it says Jesus Christ what a lovely thing that God who has witnessed all this the crucifixion of Christ the mockings and the deridings the Lord left it with him and God is well able to give the adequate answer is according to Philippians 2 which was quoted this afternoon God has decreed, he will see to this God has decreed that at the name of Jesus he is the Son of God every knee two knees every tongue everybody has a tongue everybody has two knees every tongue Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father how lovely to see God's answer [00:29:02] Jesus Christ himself being the cornerstone and so as we refer to verse 4 in the way God being an allegation of God where God knows by the Spirit these are the features that show how we answer and walk worthy to the vocation wherewith we are called to be humble in this and meekness and here we get the word longsuffering excellence marks us naturally insufferable we need to be very much on our guard in our local meetings being overbearing always an overbearing man he learned what it was what this matter of meekness and longsuffering was what a lovely thing it is in Christianity is not assessed by gift [00:30:02] if that was so we should only have to consider the brothers and the sisters would be left out but the assessment properly of any Christian anywhere if not any special gift even though that gift the Lord uses and it is necessary the assessment properly of every one of us is growth in the divine nature and we get these features here our practice of being the habitation of God by the Spirit our being together on two occasions already how beautiful to see a room filled with people and where a looker on would like to say there is respect [00:31:02] to an unseen authority where everyone is seen to be subject isn't that lovely? isn't that a sight in a world like this where there is dissent and noise and confusion and to sit crowded in a room without a word spoken in proper deportment and with our hearts going out to the Lord and in love with one another and all the saints is surely a sight for heaven and God will be in this these are the features and so the true assessment of saints sisters and brothers in the divine nature with the presence of God by the Spirit produces it is seen to be contrary [00:32:02] quite the contrary in the world and of course it is in chapter 4 and in this epistle where saints have this calling we are not to walk as the other Gentiles walk in the land of their

mind darkened in the dark in the ignorance of not knowing God and the ignorance of self indulgence and self pleasing and having no motive the lowest motive what a lovely thing to be given the privilege to answer to God where God is able to assess looking on the heart and not what is outward looking on the heart oh Lord in us someone remarked this afternoon about the saints and the body being a perpetuation that Christ is here [00:33:02] and that is what we get in conscience when we are reading this afternoon Christ was here and the heavens opened upon him the Father's delight expressed on a man to the man of Genesis 6 and all the outcomes and even when we get the Jews who read this afternoon and this all came from a family of Romans too that were a privileged nation that were able to represent God and it has to be said the name of God is blasphemed amongst the Gentiles through the Jews a privilege a misrepresentation what a lovely thing it is for the company to be called and where God by his very dwelling by the Holy Spirit not in the tabernacle [00:34:02] of the wilderness not in the temple of Solomon but in the company of people this is the material the material where that material is produced from the ungodly and the sinners and the enemies of Romans 5 to be brought into the true redemption and the work of Christ and to be tossed by the Spirit of God like stones dressed skillfully dressed to be able to take their place intelligently in this building where God is pleased to dwell by his Spirit so these are the features that within this world loneliness, all loneliness and weakness and this matter of long suffering [00:35:02] not discounting the seed for a long period this long suffering and this growth in the divine nature will take us into the presence of God each of the sin offering as though it were our own and how God would be in a situation like this and to be able to come from his presence and to act as Christ would have acted what a lovely thing it is that there should be long suffering and this in the epistle, the highest truth long suffering is essential and God has placed it together, we do not choose our own company God has chosen us to be that company and he gives us the grace where being as good as we are there is the grace of Christ [00:36:02] and the divine nature coming to light in this matter of long suffering and forbearing one another in love this is the divine nature in Colossians 3 we get this said Paul enumerates and uses the doctrine which is necessary, so necessary the doctrine but after then he says having given all this he says to this add love which is the bond of perfectness doctrine is not so said to be the bond of perfectness, doctrine is necessary, we have it in the doctrine Christ is up to twice today twice today or once today and we expect it tomorrow but this matter of love, the practical side of things which God is developing in us subduing us breaking down the will [00:37:02] giving us a deeper appreciation of Christ and in that self just state that gives room to Christ in the spirit we have to see the saints in the grace of Christ and in the acceptance of Christ instead of the failures which mere human nature would not be able to get so we have these blessed features forbearing one another in love and then if we conclude verse 3 says endeavoring we are placed in this place in the where is there is the unity of the spirit it exists the unity of the spirit but since we are caught in the spirit's place we have the exercise to maintain and how is this fulfilled the very absence of self assertion the very the way that the spirit of God would enable us to do as growth [00:38:02] in the divine nature in this forbearance and non-suffering and instead of instead of being always on our dignity and quick to be insulted the very opposite is the result, it's our personal continuation to maintain the unity of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace in the way we judge ourselves and our hearts go out in love to the saints in the growth in this growth in the divine nature the verse I did read is so assertive verse 4 a lovely thing to hold to this this is where we have God's purpose there is we don't get this in the world this is excluded to the saints who are taught of God here it is, there is one body just as there is one spirit and if we consider the young [00:39:02] the young know the difference between one and two one, there is one body and one spirit and one focus of our calling I believe this reference to our calling could be the ultimate how the saints will come out publicly, if it says in chapter 2 Jesus Christ the cheap corn stone and the conspicuous places reserved for him every eye to see it so there is a public display in them and I believe the heavenly city of revelation revelation 21 there could be the answer the way this calling

could be one hope of our calling the first chapter in the prayer speaks of the hope of God's calling this is the [00:40:02] one hope of our calling and a wonderful thing it is that whilst there is yearning on suffering there is the answer to that in the saints who receive an adequate vessel called reigning with Christ and what it is to judge all that is unto the God they are capacitated in that day to be the vessel of God's administration in association with Christ Jesus