

SESSION II -- THE EFFECTUAL CALL OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT - Notes

End of Part 1 -- Election and Calling in The Old Testament

- What Elijah & Elisha teach us about Election and Calling & the Independent designs of God
 - Judah, Jacob and Abraham -- the Grace and the Power to heed The Call of God
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Good morning Church.

Please turn to 2 Timothy:

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. **2**

Timothy 1:8-12

Last week we started our new and controversial series on the doctrines of Election and Calling.

We started off in the New Testament from Revelation going backwards in time to the Gospel of John. We saw that Predestination or Election and Calling are quite clearly expounded by not only the Apostles -- but even Jesus Christ Himself.

Here are two simplified definitions of Election and Calling:

Election simply means "choice." The doctrine of election is that, ultimately, it is God's choice that determines whether someone will be saved or lost. - **John Frame**

The calling of God is both general, the gospel call that goes out indiscriminately to all, and particular, the effectual, spiritual call wherein the Father calls the elect to the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. - **TGC**

Effectual Calling -- is how one is born again in time (Election/ Predestination is in Eternity Past while Effectual Calling is in space and time) -- i.e there is a specific day and time when you

switched from being a child of wrath to a child of God.

***Next week we will define some big terms and acronyms used in Reformed Theology -- like TULIP and the Five SOLAS.**

Today we are going to crossover into the Old Testament -- still going backwards -- to see whether God's purpose of Election and calling were also real in the Old Testament.

Since the Old Testament is too large and wide for us to go through it all -- we will replicate what we did last week. Last week we took a sample of 3 of the most pre-eminent Apostles of Jesus -- Peter, John and Paul -- and looked at what they taught about Election and Calling. Then we finished it off by looking at Jesus's own teaching and saw what He had to say about Election and Calling.

So today we will pick a few patriarchs and prophets and then show that God's character in the NT is exactly the same even in the OT.

God did Elect and Call His Patriarchs and Prophets -- the same way Jesus Elected and Called His Disciples in the NT.

Now naturally -- it would be easy to just pick the 3 prominent Patriarchs -- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob -- but I want to switch it up a little and actually start with 2 famous Prophets -- Elijah and Elisha -- to see how God clearly paints the pictures of Election and Calling and then we can look at 2 Patriarchs -- Abraham and Jacob. But we will only look at these two after zooming in on a very neglected story that I think powerfully illustrates Election and Calling for us vividly -- the story of Judah -- one of Jacob's 12 sons.

As we look at these stories -- we are going to seeking to answer these question: **What are the characteristics of a person Elected and Called by God?**

In other words: **(When the Effectual Call of God happens on the outside, what has been going on/ is going on - on the inside?)**

Please note that last week we put more emphasis on the Doctrine of Election -- so this week we will shift the weight onto the other doctrine and emphasize more on **God's Call**.

These are 2 big doctrines and since we are taking them together -- we have to shift emphasis from one to the other in alternate sessions - so we cover both effectively.

So let's start today by looking at two very famous and powerful prophets -- and see what we can glean from them about God's sovereign and Independent designs in Election and Calling.

a) What Elijah & Elisha teach us about Election and Calling & the Independent designs of God

Let's Read the whole Chapter of 1 Kings 19:

Here is some background to the story since chapter 19 starts with Elijah on the run....

Elijah is depressed -- He is frustrated with God. He has done everything in his power to change the people of Israel -- he has tried to single-handedly destroy Baal worship in Israel -- but instead of a revival -- He gets death threats from the Evil Queen Jezebel. Spiritually depressed and at the end of his rope, Elijah lets go of his servant (his ministry staff) -- at Beersheba and flees into the desert -- collapses under a Broom tree and prays to God to take his life! He wants to die...He waits to die.

What is happening to the Man of God here? Elijah is calling it quits. He is throwing in the towel. He is saying, I am done! Notice he lets his servant go (end of verse 3) He is basically saying -- go home, find something else to do. I am done! He has fired his staff. Elijah most probably didn't have a family to go back to -- most of the OT prophets were lone men -- they had given it all in ministry -- they lived hand to mouth. So Elijah here has abandoned his post -- he has left his post as God's Prophet in Israel - he goes off into the desert -- where there are no people to minister to -- he is saying: "I am leaving the mission field behind me! I am through!" And now as he lies under a tree, he begs God that he might die!

But God has other designs -- God knows how to practically nurse a spiritually depressed man back to health! He sends an angel who feeds him -- twice -- and lets him sleep off his fatigue. The man was tired and hungry and depressed. Sometimes, what a man of God needs is good food and a lot of sleep before being shoved back into the mission field!

So with a full stomach of Angel-baked bread and having slept off the fatigue -- he goes in that strength of heavenly food for 40 days! What is this quest Elijah goes for 40 days? It is a spiritual journey -- to rediscover who this God He serves and believes in is -- because He has just realised that he doesn't understand this God I serve! This God has His own mind and designs!

Where does he go? He goes to Horeb /Mt. Sinai -- where God appeared to Moses and gave him the Law. He is going to demand an answer from God! He wants to understand what God is doing -- because he just can't figure it out!

So that's the first part of the story: We can divide this story into 3 simple points -- like a Good Baptist Sermon!

- **The Crisis that God's Prophet finds Himself in**
- Then we move to: **The Quest that God's Prophet goes on to find answers**

- Then we will finish off with: **The puzzling fore-ordained Plan of God that solves the Prophet's crisis**

Notice that when he gets to the Mountain -- God asks him **twice** -- what he is doing there -- (Why did he abandon his post? verse 9 and verse 13) Notice that another element of God's therapy for his spiritually depressed child -- is to let the man talk! God just asks 1 question -- What are you doing here? -- and the man spills all his guts out! Talking to God is therapy in itself! **Do you 'take it to the Lord in prayer'** when you are depressed? Or do you run first to a professional therapist?

Also note that in his replies -- Elijah is a bit self-righteous -- he seems to suggest that he has done his part and he is the only one left standing for God -- and God hasn't done anything about it. Elijah's replies suggests that he was expecting that if he held his end of the deal -- fiery preaching -- then God would bring a fiery revival -- remember Elijah is the prophet of Fire! It's all about power displays and shock value! It's all about -- Calling down fire and killing false prophets -- Do, do Do! Elijah is a man of Action! But has he learnt to trust God who sometimes works in small and quiet ways?

Notice that God is not in the Earthquake and in the Thunder and Lightning ⚡ -- but in 'a still, small voice." God is saying - you are all about the big show and the drama -- and yet you miss the small and quiet ways that I work among my people --- You think you are the only one? I have preserved 7,000 who are not Baal worshippers in Israel!

You think I have no plan? I am about to show you my plan!

God is very calm at Elijah's accusations -- He doesn't seem too bothered at all -- in fact it becomes clear that God has always had a plan... **HIS OWN PLANS** and so Elijah is told to go and anoint several people:

- Hazael
- Jehu
- And Elisha, who will be Elijah's successor....

Note that on this list -- only Elisha was a Prophet of God - the other 2 were blood thirsty men -- and yet God sends Elijah to anoint them! We will talk more about this next week...(when we draw distinctions between **The General Call of God vs The Effectual Call of God**)

For now, We want to see several things about the Effectual Call of God from this story.

1. It is (Sovereign) -- it is God's choice and does not depend on man's will -- Elijah did not choose Elisha -- "What have I done to you?" (End of verse 20)

2. It is at God's timing -- Elijah wanted to initiate a spiritual revival in Israel and he had brought all the fireworks with him to make it spectacular on Mt. Carmel -- it did not work!

God had other ideas -- God was looking for agents of judgment -- Elisha is part of those Agents and God decides when he is going to call Elisha and the other two Kings. (Remember Pastor Kogo's sermon last week -- the call of Zacchaeus or even Saul of Tarsus - at God's perfect timing!)

3. You can't do it to yourself -- God called Elisha through Elijah -- but it was God who called -- you can't save yourself or call yourself and give yourself a purpose!

4. It is necessary -- this is why you need the Call of God -- otherwise you are a lost cause -- Elisha was rich and free -- but he lacked something -- the Call of God. It flipped his life upside down!

****5. It is radical** (it comes with a transformed life) -- Many people want freedom -- and that is why they are miserable -- when you are called, you need boundaries - just like an athlete has to restrict his diet to become a great sportsman --- you can't follow the Call of God -- by keeping your freedom to 'do whatever you want'. You have to give it all up - to surrender to God and say -- 'God, you run my life now, You can do whatever you please with this life!' Unless you do that -- You can't accept the call of God -- the call of God demands you lay it on the line --- See how Elisha does it (verse 21) Elisha burns his ploughs and slaughters 12 yoke of oxen (these are 24 bulls!) **

Elisha then hosts a party where he cooks up a storm! He has basically barbecued his source of income and shared it all with the community! What Elisha is saying symbolically is -- I have burned my bridges -- I have abandoned my old life -- There is no plan B. Just plan A -- and that is -- to answer the call of God -- no matter what! He has burnt his career as a rich farmer -- it's all up in smoke and everyone in his village or town has not only seen it -- but they have also eaten his retirement package! Elisha ain't planning to come back! **He is walking into the unknown...**

6. It is powerful (it changes everything) --- Elisha could have rejected the call of God and remained a rich farmer and we would have never heard of him again -- just like Orpah - remember her in the story of Ruth? She went back to her old life in Moab... and that is how she walked off the pages of the Bible and lost her way from the pearly gates of heaven -- FOREVER! If you are chosen and you make it into heaven -- you will see Ruth but not Orpah. You will also see Elisha because he did not turn down God's calling -- he ran into it! He kissed his family, his wealth and his independence goodbye -- and that is why He is in your Bible. The Call of God changed everything. It has power! It transforms you from a petty selfish person -- into a man or woman of greatness!

The call of God is not only powerful - it is gracious and as Tim Keller used to say -- Grace changes Everything!

Talking about Grace, let us switch over to our next lot of men -- our final story:

b) Judah, Jacob and Abraham -- The Grace of God and the Power to receive His Call

Judah, Jacob and Abraham -- in that order. Remember we are going backwards... Judah is the son of Jacob who is the grandson of Abraham -- so it is all one family.

7. **It is gracious** -- Let's read Judah's story -- Genesis 38 to get Judah's story. Then we will barely mention Jacob today because next week it's all about Jacob and Esau -- so we will focus on Judah, barely touch on Jacob and then some concluding remarks on the Father of Faith -- Abraham and be done with today's session.

Read Genesis 38:

Notice that the story of Judah feels very out of place -- it is in-between the story of Joseph. In fact at first glance you might think --hmm, the author messed up -- here is a very interesting story of a very moral young man trusting God at all costs and then out of nowhere we have this Judah -- this immoral man with a very immoral family? Judah marries a Canaanite woman and has wicked children -- Err and Onan -- and God kills 2 of them? This man is so immoral that his daughter-in-law found it so easy to trick him with sex? (verse14)

But that is exactly the shock value that Moses was going for! He puts Judah's immorality and wickedness right smack in the middle of the beautiful and inspiring narrative of Joseph -- to deliberately compare Joseph and Judah -- God is saying -- look at these 2 brothers -- Joseph is more moral and upright than Jacob -- ==but my purpose of Election is not on merit! I am going to choose Judah over Joseph! ==

The point of the story is very simple:

Joseph is way more righteous than Judah -- but he doesn't get picked!

Jump to Genesis 49 and hear what Jacob -- and remember this is Jacob who loved Joseph more than all his other bothers! This is what Jacob prophecies about Judah:

⁸ “Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.

⁹ Judah is **a lion's cub**;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down; he crouched **as a lion**
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?

¹⁰ **The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,**
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and **to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.**

¹¹ Binding his foal to the vine
and his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
he has washed his garments in wine

and his vesture in the blood of grapes.

¹² His eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth whiter than milk. **Genesis 49:8-12**

This is the clincher of the story -- Joseph was God's vessel for the sake of the preservation of his other brothers and their families! In fact Joseph's whole purpose was to preserve his other brothers who make up the 12 tribes of Israel -- but more importantly to preserve Judah --- his betrayer because Jesus was to come from the tribe of Judah!

Can you hear the gospel there? Joseph is sent ahead into slavery and suffering to preserve God's Elect? Jesus -- like Joseph -- left his home in heaven -- He was sent out (John 3:16) to come to save and 'preserve' the lives of his 'brothers'! Even though they reject Joseph at first -- they eventually bow to him. Even though Jesus came to His own and His own did not receive Him (John 1:10) He was sent ahead to seek and save the lost! "The Son of Man has not come to be served -- but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45

This is what Joseph says to his brothers at the end of Genesis:

God's Good Purposes

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. **Genesis 50:15-21**

"You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good!"

Do you see Jesus in Joseph? --- he laid down his life , his power, his position -- to protect, provide and preserve God's elect. If that is not grace, I don't know what is!

So that is the gracious nature of the Call of God.

We need to wrap up... so let's quickly mention Jacob and wrap it up with Abraham:

**** JACOB -- The Heel-catcher! ****

As I mentioned earlier -- we will spend a lot of time on Jacob next week so let's just mention him now and move to Abraham - our final character.

Jacob was a deceiver -- he cheated his older brother out of His birth right. (Genesis 25: 29 to 34)

Jacob was polygamous -- he took 2 wives and then also had their handmaids-- so he had 4 wives -- his 12 children are from 4 women! Not the moral poster boy for Saints now is he?

Jacob was deceived by Laban and he deceived him back by getting rich from Laban's flock -- Jacob never saw it as too big a deal to con or deceive people and get his way -- and yet God chose him over Esau -- that is Grace!

Jacob's Call screams -- God's Grace Alone!

No one who is a child of God deserves the gracious nature of The Call of God!

Abraham -- Father of Faith

Let's close off our last and final characteristic of God's Calling by looking at Abraham:

8. **It is lived out in Faith** -- please turn to Hebrews 11....

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. **Hebrews 11:8-12**

Abraham went wither he did not know... when God calls you he does not give you Google Map coordinates... Longitude, latitude -- do this for 5 years then stop doing that and pick something else... **NO!**

God says: "Leave your father and mother and your land and your people and I will give you an inheritance" You ask: **Where** are you taking me God? and God says: "I will show you later!"

God says: "I will give you a son -- a special son of promise. All your blessings are tied in him. Just wait for him." You ask: **When** will you give me that son God? And God says: "I will show you later -- just trust me!"

God says: " Take your son, your only son and go offer him as a sacrifice on the Mount I will show you." You ask God: **Why** God? Why would you do this to me? Give me a son and then

demand that I go sacrifice him?" God says: "Just trust me -- I will show you later!"

Walking in God's Calling is a matter of walking in Faith. Remember what God told Habakkuk? In Hab. 2:4, God says -- "The righteous shall live by Faith"

In fact God's call is about two main things happening to you:

- becoming someone and
- doing something

-- **The becoming is clear** --- God saves you to be conformed into the image of His Son. Abraham started off as a pagan (a moon worshipper from Ur of the Chaldeans). He is far from perfect -- he would lie about his wife's identity to save his own skin -- but read his story slowly and see what he becomes! He becomes a priest who tries to intercede for the wicked twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:22 -33) -- and even though he fails -- He still talks to God on behalf of the wicked -- Doesn't that sound like Jesus? -- He who stood in the place for sinners like you and me -- but unlike Abraham his prayers were answered. The Father accepted his pleas and cries for us. He is the successful advocate and High Priest that Abraham and Aaron failed to be! We are also called to intercede for the wicked -- we are Priests -- becoming just like Jesus! Remember Stephen? "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they are doing?"

- **The doing one is not so clear** --- This one changes from time to time... In fact your whole life is lived out trying to figure out -- *"In this season, what does God want me to be doing?"*

So for Abraham, sometimes it was to fight other people's battles (remember he attacks 4 kings with only 318 men to save Lot -- Genesis 14),

Then another time -- He is asked to go and offer his son Isaac... (Genesis 22)

But for the most part of His life, Abraham is called -- to WAIT ON GOD! He eventually starts to realize that -- *"I am heading to a city whose maker and builder is God! This is NOT home!"*

So the doing changes from season to season. But the Becoming never changes -- conformity into the image of His Son -- Romans 8:29

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

But the point is -- Abraham was transformed by the Call of God until He was called -- 'the friend of God.' -- James 2:23

**If you are to become something greater than what you are now -- a self-centred man or woman fooling with money, sex and cheap ambition -- you need God's radical Call in your life -- like Elisha and Judah and Jacob --- otherwise you are doomed! You are heading nowhere fast! You and I NEED the Call of God - it is absolutely necessary to our lives-- it is the Game Changer. It takes us from being rebels and turn us into Children of God -- and even more astounding -- into Friends of God! **

You can become a friend of God today -- all you have to do is receive the Call of God -- and you can spend the rest of your life learning to to walk by faith just like your spiritual Father Abraham and make it into the very courts of a heavenly city whose maker and builder is God Himself!

Amen?