

Laying Hold on Your Calling

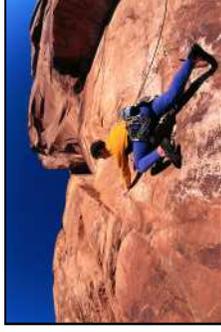
We've considered the call of God for salvation plus all the general invitations offered to all believers to participate in with God. But what about our individual, specialized calling, those spiritual activities (good works) that God has designed for us do before we were even Christians? That was of great interest to the Apostle Paul and should be to all sincere believers.

Rarely have I seen God share all the details about someone's calling "**ahead of time.**" Most often it becomes increasingly clear as the person moves forward by faith responding to the opportunities that God has presented them as in the story of Esther. She was doing her best to live a life pleasing to God when she found herself in a completely unexpected situation where she could make an impact for God. As she conferred with her godly uncle it became clear to her that she was called by God "**for such a time as this**" (**Esther 4:14**) - to fulfill something valuable for God's purposes. So what do we do as we wait patiently for God to call us off the bench and have us fulfill a strategic role in His mission?

Paul said, "**I press on...**" in our opening verses. He moved forward knowing that, as a believer, God had called him for a purpose. Being aware that at any time he may be used by God gave Paul inspiration to follow after the Lord in a state of readiness. Unlike Paul, we are not going to be called on to write one third of the New Testament or help establish the early Christian church but we shouldn't underestimate what God might call us to do!

Three More Points

The Apostle Paul did not count himself as having apprehended or understanding everything that God had in mind for him. He lived his life as if there was always something more; another adventure, new things to be learned, or new challenges to conquer in his partnership with the Lord.



Secondly, Paul did not let past failures stop him from moving forward in his calling. Even when we respond to an opportunity that God provides, we may not perform successfully, especially our first time on the field. We learn from our mistakes, seek forgiveness if necessary, and "**forget those things that are behind**". Otherwise our past failures will distract us from being ready for a future adventure.

Lastly, Paul "**...pressed toward the goal...**". You can easily envision him, like a Olympic runner, stretching chest forward at the finish line. He wanted to finish well. But he wasn't focused on the level of his personal achievement. He was concentrating on **where** the call had come from - it was a heavenly call! He wanted to please his heavenly Father by running all out to fulfill his call. We should do no less than run our best!

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"The Calling of the Believer"



By Pastor Curt Carter

The Calling of the Believer

"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you."

-Philippians 3:12-15 New King James

In a believer's life they will receive various callings from God. A "calling" is an invitation or a summons by God to participate in a specific divine activity beginning with the call to salvation (Romans 8:30). Some believers may think that the call to salvation is the only one that they will ever receive from God.

However God is not intent on simply setting us on some spiritual knick-knack shelf to look pretty. He has called us to partake in many other purposeful activities now that we have become his

sons and daughters. It was that purpose beyond salvation that the Apostle Paul was concerned about in our opening scripture. He wanted to know what interest the Lord had in him and what plans He had for his life.

The Apostle Paul—Sports Enthusiast?

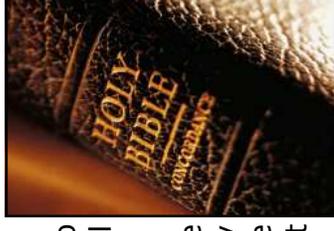
It may have been quite interesting to have lived in the time when the Apostle Paul, on his missionary journeys, was preaching in many Greek communities. There are hints, here and there, in his writings that he was an avid sports enthusiast. He probably knew who was winning the local sports contests and who might be the best bet to win gold in the upcoming Olympics. He used the phrase for "exercise" from which we get the English word, "gymnasium". He also spoke passionately about running races and boxing matches. And in our opening scripture, Paul may be prophetically speaking about football with his use of the phrase "lay hold" ("apprehend" in the King James). He uses a prefix indicating a downward motion. He seemed to be imagining running hard after the thing that he wanted to fully understand, grabbing hold, taking it down, and making it his own. He appeared to be describing the action of a football player chasing down an opposing player and tackling him to the ground!

The Call Beyond Salvation

Have you ever wondered what was next after you became a born again child of God? The Apostle Paul tells us, **"...for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10)**. This verse is so intriguing because it tells us **what** we are created to do and **when** that decision was made. In God's plan of salvation for us, He thought about what we would do long ago.

Divine Invitations

Before we unwrap more about our specialized calling from God, let's consider the amazing list of things that God invites all believers to share:



- ◆ We're called to experience eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12).
- ◆ We're called to be saints, set apart by God for divine purposes in Christ Jesus (Romans 1:7).
- ◆ We're called to be transformed into the likeness of Christ (Romans 8:28-30).
- ◆ We're called to have fellowship with Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9).
- ◆ We're called to have fellowship/partnership with the other members of the Body of Christ (Colossians 3:15).
- ◆ We're called to experience suffering in this world for Christ's sake (1 Peter 2:20-21).
- ◆ We're called to give a blessing to others (1 Peter 3:8-9).
- ◆ We're called to experience God's eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10) and to obtain the glory of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:14).

Some of these things, like eternal life and God's glory, clearly will only be fully realized in heaven. However, eternal life starts at the moment of salvation and I believe there can be glimpses of God's glory in our daily lives.