

## WHY GOD CHOSE YOU – SPECIFICALLY, part 2 of 2

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Final message on why God chose YOU. We may not know the exact reasons why you or I were called (until God tells us), but here are 7 points to give us some possible reasons for your calling that can encourage and enlighten you.

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Hello everyone. This final of 2 part message – titled “why YOU specifically were chosen by God” – started as a question that several had asked, and frankly, I had asked myself often too. Most of my sermons start as a frustration I’m feeling, a question I have, a thorn I’m struggling with...you get the point. I’m very human, struggling with lots of issues we all face and trying to find peace and answers in my Great God. As I do, I share those with you.

**Several of you sent in your ideas** and I’ll read a couple of them and use a sentence here and there from several of you. You know, using one person’s idea is called “plagiarism”. Using a lot of people’s ideas is called “research”. (ha!). Some of you sent in some thoughts on this, and thank you.

**So why *were* you called and chosen? Why YOU? Why ME? And I *don’t* mean the generic question and answer of why were we *all* called, which is worthy of a whole sermon by itself.**

***Those broad generic answers include:*** we’ve been called to bring God glory and joy, we’ve been called for salvation, to help others in the kingdom so we’re being called now and trained to be servant rulers, priests, judges; to marry Christ; to teach the world God’s ways, etc. Plus the “generic” answer, which is wonderful, includes being part of the Body of Christ, and also to support God’s work through tithes and prayers. ***But I want us to focus on why YOU specifically were called, so don’t despair if I don’t dwell on the other great-- but generic-- answers.*** And frankly, I’ve personally never heard this topic – why you and I specifically were called -- ever addressed before, though I’m certain *someone’s* covered it, and probably many times. I just haven’t heard them.

**I certainly hope you children, teens, young people and unbaptized brethren are listening carefully too.** You’re part of this family and calling. You kids are called “Holy”, sanctified, because of your parents – and eventually because of your own decisions for or against God’s way. Peter told the crowd on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2:39, that his message was for them and their children. Here’s what he said: **Acts 2:39** “For the promise is *to you and to your children*, and to all who are afar off, ***as many as the Lord our God will call.***”

That seems to imply that at least some, and maybe *most* of the children and teens in the church, are being called, or at least have an open door into God’s presence.

A contributor to this sermon from California wrote: “*He didn’t want to wait to live with me and in me. He wanted to bless me with Himself. His specific reasons may be His business. I only know that I am so happy God chose me! God also ‘so loved the world’ – but because of His mercy, I didn’t have to wait in the darkness. I got to come out into the light sooner*”. *So this person really appreciates being called now. I wish we all did, more.*

**She added this:** “specifically why you or I were chosen won’t fully be known until God tells us personally”, and until we see the completed project of God’s spiritual temple. **True, but we can get**

some ideas that can inspire us, get us thinking on the possibilities, and help us value and appreciate our high calling more.

*People always perform at higher levels when we understand WHY* we're doing what we're doing, and what the *reward* could be at the end of the hard work. **I feel the church is languishing** right now, frankly. There's a sense that we've lost our way, we've lost our sense of direction, our purpose, our *zeal* is flagging. I'm hoping this 2 part sermon helps us regain some of that! If this message helps you, then let others know about the website and message.

One person in the Midwest wrote: "I don't think anyone can even imagine what God has in store for each of us because it ***will be so much greater than anything we can know here***". We are part of what God's Word calls the "high calling", to be part of "the better resurrection", so it's well worth thinking about. At another time I'll give a sermon on "Why the First Resurrection is called the 'better' resurrection". For now I want to focus on possible reasons why God chose you.

You've heard the analogy before, and I think it's a good one: **we're like the individual knots in a tapestry Someone is working on.** We see it from the back end, and the "picture" is not clear to us. Only when all the other "knots" are put in, and the tapestry is turned over, and we step back a ways – then we can see what the Artist had in mind, and *then* we will know how our life, the one or two few knots in the tapestry, *fit in*. Our lives can seem, from this side of things – pretty "knotty" at times.

**I'm going to go over some of the points from last time – to partly review, but also to add some new material within those points that I didn't get to say last time, then we'll add some new points at the end.**

Last time, we discussed that you were picked, according to **1 Cor 1:26-29**, because of the very fact ***you and I have so little*** to offer – and God did that to confound the wise, mighty and noble, to show what His power can do (1 Cor. 1:26-29). ***That's point #1, why YOU were chosen, according to scripture. God's power, God's glory, is magnified, when He shows what HE is able to do with such weak, untalented, untrained people like most of God's people are! God is going to shock the world when He is ready to reveal His sons and daughters – all polished up, perfected in Christ – and ready to rule the world. We're not there yet! But don't limit what God can do in you and me if we submit ourselves to His work.*** Look what Jesus did with Galilean, untrained fishermen and tax collectors! God rocked the world with their message and their work! You've also been called to bring God glory.

### **GOD HAS ALWAYS CALLED PEOPLE WITH HANDICAPS or "BAGGAGE"**

**I want to say more about this for a few minutes:** Some of you feel like there is no way God could ever use you significantly. Some of you doubt you could ever even begin to be on the same page as the great men and women of the Bible. So let's look for a few minutes at those God chose in the past. People we normally think of as incredible spiritual giants. I will review these not to "grave dig" in their past – but to remind you and inspire you, that God uses whomever He chooses. God, in fact, has *usually* called people with handicaps or baggage! Have you ever thought of it that way before? We would tend to think God would pick people who had "no baggage" – but I'm going to show you otherwise.

God calls, then changes people as He uses them, and He can do the same for you. Yes, YOU. ***GOD called even you to do a specific task for specific reasons – and He has called you for specific***

*reasons as well. You have not been called simply for your salvation. Simply for what's in it for you. Not at all. I hope this list inspires you that its not over til its over. God works with all types. Don't limit him by doubting what God has in mind for you, or could be doing with you. I'm not going to read all the verses. THIS LIST, though I'm putting it under point #1, was not covered last time. Last time we covered the few "mighty and noble" God has called; this one is about how the ones He used also had baggage.*

- **Abram** (Abraham) had to be told *twice* to go all the way to Canaan (compare **Acts 7:1-4; Genesis 11:31-32; 12:1-2**). Read the verses carefully and you'll see what I mean. It seems Abram wanted to wait until his father died, and stopped half-way at Haran on the way.

He was already an old man. Don't think you're too old. Plus this great Father of the Faithful, with his incredible faith in being willing to sacrifice his only son of his very old age, had lapses of faith. He lied *twice* about Sarah being his sister to avoid having to admit she was his wife. He let Sarah talk him into having sex with Hagar as the *human* solution to God's promise of a son. And *so* on. But guess what? God's glory was declared in Abraham's weakness and he became "father of the faithful".

- **Sarah**, Abraham's wife, was *harsh* and abusive to one of her servants (**Genesis 16:6-9**), and yet we know her today primarily as a model wife (**1 Peter 3:1-6**).
- **Moses** was an exiled felon and murderer who stuttered. Have you been a jailbird? It's not too late, if you believe what God can do with anyone who submits to Him. Moses was also hot tempered at times. God used him mightily, in spite of all that.
- **King David**, a man after God's own heart, was a brutal murderer of one of his most loyal men PLUS others who died alongside Uriah (**2 Samuel 11:17**). And that was after David stole Uriah's only wife, when David already had at least eight of his own (**2 Sam. 12:7-12**). In spite of his murder and adultery, and other sins, God used Him to write MANY of the psalms. *You are still willing to read David's writings, including some he wrote after his horrible, "major" sins.* God still allowed him to continue as prophet and king. Think about it, when you feel you can't listen to someone you've heard bad things about. Be consistent. That would be also true of David, Herbert Armstrong, Samson, and so many others.
- **Hosea** had a wife who was a prostitute (**Hosea 1:1-3**), so don't ever complain about *your* wife. Later he had to buy an adulteress (**Hos. 3:1-3**). **Esther** had a husband so mean that if you approached him without his permission, he could execute you the very next moment (**Esther 4:15-16**). Don't complain about *your* husband. God still used Esther and Hosea, *in spite of the kind of spouses they had.*
- **Noah** got stone drunk after the flood (**Genesis 9:20-21**). Our overall record however, is that out of the whole world, only Noah "found grace" with God. Have you had a DUI on your record? That's past. We're talking now about God's gift to you – which we'll call "the Present". You've been a drunk? Get over it. So were Noah, Lot (**Gen 19:32-39**)
- **Samson**, a judge chosen before he was even born, was a *womanizer* par excellence! In the end, God used him mightily and he's listed in the God's "hall of fame" in **Heb.11:32**. Have you been a womanizer? Repent, overcome, and let God's spirit clean you up and use you.

- **Paul** was *mean* when God called him. He probably even *killed* early Christians. He called *himself* “chief sinner”, as well as a “blasphemer, persecutor and an *insolent* man” (**1 Timothy 1:12-15**), yet look how powerfully God used him! Are you far from being the nicest person around? Trust God. He can use you if you turn your life over to Him.
- Are you but a **widow**? God also called and used for His glory ordinary *widows* (like Naomi and Ruth), the widow of Zarepath, the widow who gave a widow’s mite, Tamar and so many others. Don’t think you’re limited because you’re “just a poor, old widow”. ‘
- **Have you lost faith? Elijah**, after one of the greatest *demonstrations* of **faith** in God when Elijah called down fire from heaven and then killed hundreds of priests of Baal (**1 Kings 18:20-46**) – guess what? The very next day is a whimpering, burned out, worry-wart when a woman named Jezebel threatened to kill him (**1 Kings 19:1-5**). I take great comfort in that, for at times I can have strong faith and at times my faith waivers. Thanks, Elijah.

*Are you getting the picture? Why am I going over these? So you realize you’re in good company, even among the Biblical “greats”. God is using you, will continue to use you – if you submit and stop limiting what God may want to do in and through you. Here are a few more.*

- **Rahab** the Innkeeper, and most agree was also a prostitute, a harlot, when God chose HER to be in Jesus’ family tree! **Have you had an immoral sexual past?** Get over it. God can use you, even if people want to reject you. And yes, **Heb 11** says “Rahab the pornee” – where we get the word “porn” or harlot, from.
- **Another woman** of questionable past – the **Samaritan woman at the well who had had 5 husbands** (**John 4:39**) was used to be the primary witness to the whole city about who Jesus was! Read it yourself!
- Are you too short? Or worse, someone despised by many? Talk to Zacchaeus. Jesus called *him* too. Had dinner with him – even though this brought persecution and criticism (**Luke 19:1-8**). Whatever your past, Jesus came to seek the lost. That includes *you*. Yes, *even me and people like me*. We’ve all, after all, earned the death penalty and we all killed Christ by our sins.
- Are you a **gossip**? So was the prophetess **Miriam**, Moses’ sister (**Numbers 12:1-10**). God considered her one of the 3 main *leaders* He used to bring Israel out of Egypt (**Micah 6:4**).
- Perhaps someone hearing this has had **demon problems**!? The ONE person Jesus *first* appeared to after His resurrection, the *first* witness of the risen Messiah, was a woman who once had *seven* demons inside of her when Jesus called her (**Mark 16:9**) – Mary Magdalene. Could **someone like that** be used? You bet! So can you, if you believe in the power of God to change lives. Even yours, even mine.
- **Isaiah**, who is now known for his incredibly inspiring and beautiful verses, claimed he had a dirty mouth, *before* God called him! Did you know that (**Isaiah 6:4-6**)? God still used him and turned around his filthy mouth into one of the greatest examples of prose and poetry in the Bible.

Obviously God can override evil and make things come out for good in the end, for His purposes. So don't give up. (Be sure to hear my sermon on "the New Creation").

**In fact, it's in the hard time when we grow the most! I'm sure you'll agree with that.**

All of these men and women – *just like you and I will have to come to – had to come realize it wasn't going to be their talents, their abilities, their money, their ideas, that would get the job done, but by God's spirit that would get God's will done (Zechariah 4:6).*

*In other words, I for one do not subscribe to the notion many seem to have that God is choosing people who have certain strengths He can use. I take more the other side: God purposely calls people like you and me, with minimal talents compared to what is "out there" in the world, so it is clear to all that whatever God is doing through us must be His grace, power and open doors – and not our doing. In other words, I believe God is calling people who in fact have baggage, and He does a great work with these people *in spite of* their baggage. Take heart! God will polish you too, into something beautiful and useful in His holy temple.*

**2 Corinthians 12:8-10** "Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And **He** said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, **for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**" **Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.** 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. ***For when I am weak, then I am strong.***"

***Our Husband is telling us that it's true, we don't have to have a bunch of talent. We don't have to have a lot of strength, energy, abilities, or come from royalty. He says "your weaknesses in fact accentuate my power". So accept that you have weaknesses, let God use and change you as He pleases, because when you are weak, GOD'S strength is hi-lited.***

What God does with me and with you has to be *God doing it* – or we'll get the big head and fall flat on our face. That's why I believe **Samson** did *not* look like Schwarzenegger but appeared as any ordinary man. His strength was not in his muscles, but when the spirit of the Lord came upon him (**Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14; 16:28**). Read it. The lesson is there for all of us. We need to know, trust in, and be in such contact with God every day that we can receive God's power, God's blessings, God's open doors, God's workings in our lives.

**We also went over last time how it was God the Father personally planned you and chose** you and did not relegate that to anyone else, not even Jesus. That's doesn't answer "why YOU" – but it must be said. ***We have a personal, direct relationship with God.***

**The fact that *anyone* important would even know I exist, let alone take *note* of me and say He *wants me*,** tells me He wants to spend the rest of *eternity* with *me*, then invites me to marry His Son – who will be King of kings, then offers you and me everything He has, bestows on you and me His love-joy-peace and way of life – and He *personally* handpicked me and you for all this -- just *boggles* my mind. I sometimes don't want or like *myself*, so I ask how can such a holy, perfect, blameless God and Father hand-pick someone like *me*? Do you ever wonder that? Of all people on earth, I'm the *last* He should have chosen. But he did! And He picked you too.

Then *add* to that the fact this holy God sent His one and only Son to live a perfect life and then die for ME so I could be washed, forgiven and have everlasting life with Him – just sobers me real quick. So regardless of what people say about you – or me – my God lived and died for me. Though people may reject you and many have rejected me, it doesn't matter. *Ultimately, the only One who matters hasn't rejected me or you. WOW! Isn't that just awesome!?* He must love me, and must love you more than you'll ever grasp. Just as you love your children more than they'll ever comprehend, God loves US more than we'll ever pay back or comprehend. So no matter your past, if God is calling you – you've gotta feel so special.

God the Father has turned His heart towards His children, and now He's asking us to turn *our* hearts to the Fathers, and to HIM (**Malachi 4:5-6**). He's *very* accessible now to His children, we pray directly to Him because of Jesus' sacrifice, we can come boldly before His throne of grace as *we come as boldly to our Holy Father as Jesus would Himself*. That's part of what it means when we end our prayers with "in Jesus' name". Father *loves* hearing from you and watches you, knows you intimately, directly. Have you given Father that pleasure of hearing from you, much – lately? God the Father is *very* involved in your life. Jesus said clearly – look it up in a newer translation – that God loves us so much that He – Jesus - *doesn't* have to petition Father *for us* when we ask directly (**John 16:26-27** NIV, TEV). Read it carefully.

**We also showed how God had plans for you, I believe, from long before you were even born**. I gave numerous scriptures in Part 1 to show that. People resist this idea, in spite of the many scriptures, because we get hung up on "free moral agency". I really feel I need to spend more time in this sermon today on this to clarify a couple things better. There is free choice, but I showed last time that God is *so* all-knowing that He *still* accomplishes His purposes *while* allowing us what seems to be free choice on our part. Some of you commented after part 1 that you were struggling with that – so that's fine, but let me say a bit more about that for you to think about:

**I believe God is so wise and all-knowing that He could *declare* the end, not just "know" the end, from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10; Acts 15:18) and *still* allow for free choice on our part.** As we each practice free choice, God still orchestrates everything to work together exactly as He had planned. How else can He "DECLARE the end from the beginning"?

### **How about the case with Abraham – "now I know"**

Even in Abraham's case when God said, "NOW I know you fear and obey me..." (**Gen. 22:12**) after He saw Abraham willing to obey to sacrifice his only son. I think most have read too much into that one verse when put with all the other verses about God being all-knowing. Think about that. You need to put that verse alongside the one that says God won't test us beyond that which we're able. ***He knows ahead of time that we can pass that test with His help – or He won't present us with the test (1 Corinthians 10:13). We can fail the test, but God is so wise and all-knowing that He can still work things out for good in the end, all the while giving us free choice.***

Gen. 22:12 also takes on different meanings when you emphasize different words within the sentence. Try reading it several times, changing the word you emphasize. Read the whole sentence by first by emphasizing "now", then emphasize "I", then "know" ... and you'll hear the different meaning. Then read the verse without emphasizing any word. Just read it as a statement of affirmation.

Also, the word “know” in the Hebrew is a far more expansive word than our English word. It also means “approve”, among many other meanings. He’s also saying, “Now you’ve PROVEN your love and obedience...”. God knows what we’re going to pray for before we do (**Matthew 6:8**). He knows our thoughts and the intent of our thoughts! **Read the first 10 or 12 verses of Psalm 139.**

**Psalm 139:1-12 NIV**

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

“O LORD, you have searched me **and you know me**. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you **perceive my thoughts from afar**. 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; **you are familiar with all my ways**. 4 **Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.**

5 You hem me in--behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”

We can’t hide *anything* from God, not even our motives, intentions, our true feelings, our fears. He knows us. He made us, He fashioned each of us to function a certain way. There’s no hiding! How can He not know how His creation will function? I really feel we have often put too much weight on this matter of “free moral agency” or “free will” that sometimes doesn’t square with scripture.

**1 Chronicles 28:9** “....for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts..” also check out **Psalm 94:11; Jeremiah 17:10**; God’s Word discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart (**Hebrews 4:12; Rev 2:23**).

**We just can’t have it both ways:** we can’t say God is all-knowing, but doesn’t know what we’re going to do. That’s a contradiction! Either He’s all knowing or He isn’t. And God’s word seems to indicate He is all-knowing. So we have to take Genesis 22:12 and understand that God is saying there to Abraham, “Now you’ve PROVEN you fear and will obey me...”

Surely God is never caught by surprise, or caught off guard. ***Did God really have no idea what Abraham was likely to do?*** Don’t we, mere mortals, even know 95% of the time at least, what our own children will likely do in given circumstances? God who knows our thoughts, our hearts, our minds, our loves, our hurts, surely knows us very, very intimately! He even knows our needs before we do, and knows what we’ll ask *before we ask* (**Matthew 6:8**). But somehow so many conclude that He didn’t know Abraham would obey in this matter of offering Isaac? To me that just doesn’t square with the rest of the Bible and neither does it square with an Omniscient, all-knowing God.

God even knows and understands our frustrations we can’t put into words. Read **Romans 8:26-27 again; Ps 38:9**). **Psalm 139:15-16** David could say “all the days of my life – or, the days allotted to me-- were written in your book before I was born” – but somehow God had no clue what Abraham would do? That wouldn’t make sense! Let’s read that!

**Psalm 139:15-16** “My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth (the womb).

16 **Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.** And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.” Be **turning next to Genesis 50**.

God was there, involved with you and me, before we were conceived, before we were born. He watched you and me grow in the womb. He made you *unique*. One of a kind. Even your *pupils* are so unique they now use that to verify I.D. even more effectively than fingerprints.

He was there watching, when you were born. He was there with you when you began to take your first steps. He was watching you grow and develop from a baby. He watched you during your teenage years. He felt your pain over the acne or pimples that seemed to pop out on your cheeks. He smiled when you made right choices, and shook His head slowly when you made dumb ones. But He was there, and He *is* there now, with you. He promises He'll never leave you nor forsake you. This is God the Father I'm talking about. A real father, a GOD who wants His children to wake up to Him before the times get really rough!

So the way I read it, God gives us free choice, but *knows* us so well He's not going to be caught off guard. And God is so *smart*, that He even works out our sinful mistakes, or horrible tragedies, so in the end they work out for good. Remember Joseph? All the bad stuff he had to go through? Was God in that? God certainly *used* it all for good.

**Genesis 50:19-21** "Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, *you meant evil against me; but GOD meant it for good*, [let that sink in!!] in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. [Joseph is saying: "God was *involved* in all this you did to me!" Now go figure!] 21 Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."

Oh that we'd learn this! God is involved in your life – He uses for His eventual glory, even the bad stuff that is happening! I wouldn't say He *made* it happen, but He knew it would, allowed it, and then uses it to His glory! God was involved in my life and my wife's life, when He let our son die. Even in the evil things that happen to His people – God will work all that out, if we give that junk to Him to turn into good (Romans 8:28 is still in the Bible). **Turn now to Job 42.**

*Even in the story about Job*, after all the trouble we usually think of as caused by and coming from SATAN, notice how it all wraps up:

**Job 42:11** "...and they [his brothers] consoled him and *comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him*. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold."

So God is more involved in every aspect of your life than you might realize! Yes, we still have to work hard to obey and we still have to strive to make our calling and election sure, as Peter tells us in **2 Peter 1:10**. But somehow God still declares the end from the beginning (**Isaiah 46:9-10**). Paul admits at the end of **Romans 9** that this brings up a lot of questions, but basically says we can't question the Potter, when He makes some vessels for honor and others for dishonor.

You don't need to agree with me on this point – but I hope I've at least made you think! And I hope it leads you to do more study of God's word.

**Point #2 from last time : You were created for a specific role, an exact spot in His spiritual temple and to accomplish specific tasks in this life and in the world to come.** We are "living stones" in His ongoing project. Right now we're in "the quarry" – a dirty, noisy, painful place – and we're being shaped and chiseled on to become the finished product. Right now no one would guess



how perfect that finished product will be as we put on Christ and *His* righteousness. What's happened to you all your life will be used by God in the end, to shape and mold you into exactly what He wants and needs.

**Any builder** knows *exactly* what parts He needs in a master building, especially a temple. He not only knows how many blocks of marble, but where he wants the marble to come from, and what each block must look like long before the building is even started! **Remember Solomon's temple?** He brought in master craftsmen from all over the known world and used the finest of materials from around the world. If you're unfamiliar with the care Solomon took in having the finest craftsmen and used great care in choosing *specific* wood and stone available, read these verses: 2 Chron 8:17-18 (gold of ophir), 1 Kings 5:5-6, 10-11 (cedar and cypress; using the skill of the Sidonians). Analogies break down, but God surely also knows what *His* final product will look like when He finishes it.

Would God do any differently than He inspired Solomon to do? Even the ones working on individual blocks may not realize exactly where the stone is going, and it's not clear until they all come together, beautifully and silently like in Solomon's temple.

Yes, you have a *specific* purpose in God's plans. You are *unique*. You are not here due to an accident of random DNA getting together! No way! Every detail about you was carefully thought out *by* the Eternal Himself – your looks, your strengths, your weaknesses, your eyes, your talents, your lack of talents. *Everything*. You are *unique in the universe*, planned by God specifically to fit into a specific spot in His spiritual temple. *We* may not have chosen the way we were put together, but the pot can't question the Potter! The fact is, God wants you, planned for you, loves you and chose you and me for a mission He has in mind. We need to become more like Jesus, who was so aware of His mission even from a child. At age 12 He said, "I must be about my Father's business." His very last words – "It is finished" – "the mission's accomplished". Our lives should be driven by a realization that God has a purpose for us.

One lady from Texas wrote to me about this topic by saying this:

"Hi Philip,

I believe that God "calls" me to be His child and a member of His family because He loves me. Plain and simple. And when you think about what an awesome thing it is to be loved totally and fully by the Almighty Creator God...well your heart swells.

Does He have specific and unique chores and tasks for ME to do for Him? Probably--if I have a willing heart and am observant and open to those opportunities. Does He want me to learn certain things for His Big Picture Plan for all of eternity? Probably--if I obey and respond to trials the way HE needs me to do.

The Bible is packed full of examples of people who just lived and others who lived with purpose and design--not always what THEY would have chosen, but important and special to God and because they had a willingness to do and be WHATEVER He needed, they have fulfilled that purpose."

This woman said a ton in her message. Even if you don't yet know your purpose – live with a sense that there is a purpose for your life. So #2 – you were called because God, I feel, has a unique purpose for you that He's preparing you for. And for a specific spot in His spiritual temple.

**#3 from last time – GOD may have chosen you because He was working with you and your FAMILY. He may even have bigger plans for your descendants, than for you. WE NEED TO**

**THINK MUCH BIGGER, EVEN GENERATIONALLY, in MUCH BIGGER CONTEXT than we usually do.** God may have chosen you, not just for you – but for some of your descendants, or because of something a righteous ancestor did. There are people being blessed today because of Abraham, or because of Phinehas, and so forth. And God chose certain ones to get in motion the DNA and the ancestry He needed to have certain people on the scene at the right times in history!

Don't forget again the lesson of Joseph. He said GOD did all of what he went through, to get him prepared, and in place to be able to save a lot of people alive (**Gen. 50:19-21**). *Turn now to Philippians 1 please.*

*Paul also saw the bigger picture, as He was beaten and imprisoned – he could see God's hand at work in this, in working out all that bad stuff for a good end result. Are we learning that yet? We didn't read this verse last time – so let's read it now because it makes the point.*

**Philippians 1:12-14** “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, 13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; 14 **and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.**”

**THIS NEXT POINT is completely NEW to today's sermon, WE DIDN'T DISCUSS IT LAST TIME.** It builds on that last point:

**4. GOD CHOSE YOU BECAUSE HE may WANT YOU TO BE THE INSTRUMENT THROUGH WHICH HE CALLS OTHERS, PERHAPS EVEN A LOT OF PEOPLE – in this life, and certainly in the Kingdom.**

**That main witness we can give, is by our EXAMPLE OF A CHANGED LIFE.**

One dear friend wrote me from the west coast to say God used *her* to bring her husband-to-be into knowledge of the truth and to bring him out of the darkness of the way of life he was into before that time. What a wonderful thing to know: God used you to call someone else.

I know it's happening! *Several* of you listening to this know you are a member of God's church, or maybe are even listening to this, because someone – a spouse, a friend, a neighbor – SPOKE UP, and said something, and “came out of the Christian closet”, openly declaring their belief and faith in God and Jesus Christ ... and now you're here! Praise God for people willing to do that.

How many more could be hearing about God and His way, if we'd all come out of the closet, figuratively speaking? We've been so indoctrinated not to “cram religion down someone's throat” that we've gone to the other ditch!

**You and I have been conditioned by churches and religion to believe that God works solely through trained people, ministers mostly.** Brethren, God does a *ton* through His faithful ministers- and I'm not taking one iota away from them. *But I'm just adding that God wants to use ALL the parts of His Body – not just the mouth (1 Cor. 12:15-27).* All parts are needed to make a body function properly. You and I are parts, important parts of that body. *You've* been chosen to do more than just pay and pray but to do your calling faithfully.

When persecution broke out strongly against the early church, and the apostles stayed in Jerusalem, but the brethren were scattered, guess what happened? **Acts 8:3-4** “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. 4 ***Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.***” **THEY HELPED PLANT A FEW SEEDS** of God’s word that made it A LOT easier for Paul and others later to follow.

**1 Peter 2: 9** – says we are a chosen generation – for what? “***that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light***”. When was the last time you did that?

When you’re trying to sell something, one of the best ways to get people using the same product, is by testimonials from people using the product – or people can *see* obvious improvements and benefits from using the product.

If people can see the changes in our lives because GOD, Jesus, lives in us now - - it too can help people want what we’ve got! If people don’t see any benefit in being a real Christian, why would they want to be one?

But what do we see in the church today? God’s children not united as we should be. Ministers declaring *their* congregation is the ONLY “true” church. God have mercy on us!. So visit across church lines. Show the leaders that we brethren *are* united. We sing “Onward Christian soldiers” and within the song we sing, “*all one body* we, one in hope and doctrine, one in charity”... what a joke! We’re not. At least not yet. But we can repent of that and those of us of like mind can get together and cross church lines and become more effective witnesses of the Way.

We limit God, we impose restrictions on what *we* believe God could possibly do with each of us. Like Israel of old, who ***limited*** the Holy One of Israel (**Psalm 78:41**), *we are now doing the same thing as the modern “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16)*. JESUS taught us that we would do, *could* do, even ***greater works than HE did***, if we would only believe (**John 14:12**). But we’re not seeing that, are we?

Start letting your light shine that men see your *good* works and glorify our Father. Start being much more open about your faith, your beliefs. Everywhere I go in my job, people hear about God, the Bible, and how God has been with me in my life.

Do you think you have nothing much you can say? You think God spoke only through ordained men? Don’t forget: He even spoke through an ass, Balaam’s ass or donkey (**Numbers 22:28-32**). So there’s a precedent: If God *has* spoken through an ass *before*, I guess He doesn’t always need an ordained speaker. I guess He can speak through you and me too, if we let Him. I’m not calling anyone a donkey. I’m just making the point: if God can use animals to speak for Him, He can use you and me! Remember what He said to Moses: “Who made mouths!?”.

That’s why I share this website. Some have said its helping them, so why not? We’ve been called to “***PROCLAIM THE PRAISES of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light***”! (1 Peter 2:9-10). That wasn’t said just to ordained ministers! That was said to ALL of us!

**The most effective sermon** you and I can preach – and I preach this to myself too – is not a bunch of words in a formal sermon like this. No way. **The most effective sermon I can give, and you can ever give, is the eloquence of a changed life.** A life powered by God’s spirit. A life so different that you

“adorn” the way of God – you make God’s way attractive (**Titus 2:9-10**). Though they may think you have strange beliefs, they can’t say anything bad about you and me. I’ve got a long way to go on that, but with God’s help and grace, in the end I’ll be there. And you will too, if we do it by God’s spirit. You may live in SIN CITY. There are many “sin cities”. Still, let God’s light in you so shine, that people may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven!

**Question: If it were a serious CRIME to be a zealous and loving, Godly Christian, would there be enough evidence to have you arrested and convicted?** (pause and think about that) In the days of Paul and Peter, many were arrested – even killed – because they were *known* as Christians. Are you known by your neighbors as a Christian? The good kind of Christian? If it were like in the days of Peter and Paul, would you and I get arrested, because people everywhere know we are God’s people? **Please turn to Romans 1.**

**Let our faith become well known.** Let people everywhere start to speak of our example. This is a noble goal. If you’re like me, we have some repenting to do for our lack of zeal, but we can start now, if we’ve failed in preaching *this* kind of sermon.

**Romans 1:8** “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that **your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**” Wow! He says something similar to the Thessalonians in **1 Thess 1:6-8**. Would Paul write that about you and your church?

**Here’s some homework for you: how are you limiting God?** How are you keeping God from using you the way He could, and would, if you would only believe? What miracles are NOT happening, due to our unbelief or our sins? What wonderful *marriages* could we all be enjoying now, if we’d let ourselves get out of the way and let Christ live in us? What powerful *witnesses* of what the spirit can do in us mere mortals would be happening – if we’d LET the light of God shine in our lives as a light for our neighbors?

- 5. GOD CALLED YOU, and allowed what you’ve been through, because YOU can RELATE to people with similar experiences AND SHARE THE ENCOURAGEMENT you’ve received from God while in your troubles.**

**SO, YOU’VE BEEN CALLED because you CAN RELATE with certain backgrounds and trials - and encourage others with the help you received.**

This is why you have gone through what you have gone through in life. That is why there have to be people from all backgrounds called – some royals, some nobles, some fishermen, farmers, housewives, career women and so on. *And this is one reason why YOU specifically have been called.*

**But back to the point: Yes, your background could come in very handy for God now, or in the future. The very things you may feel are such curses in your life could be things God is going to turn around for a blessing to various ones some day.** Maybe not even in this life but way past today.

*Something in your experiences, your quirks, your personality, your character, and your strengths and weaknesses – and even your forgiven SINS –all of that is going to be used to help a lot of people in the coming kingdom. God isn’t done with you yet, and let’s get excited about this! He uses people, servant leaders, who understand what ordinary people go through.*

We are called to be priests and kings. Even our High Priest had to become flesh so we know He understands the limitations of flesh. HE was the one who said “the Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”. Job asks God, read it in **Job 10:1-5, especially verse 4** – “Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you, CAN you, see as a man sees?” He’s asking, “God, can you *understand* what I’m going through?”. **Please be turning now to Hebrews 4.**

Well, for 33 years, God did see through eyes of flesh, God *did* understand what it was like to be human. For 33 years, God – made flesh – *did* feel fatigue, persecution, rejection, being called a bastard, a glutton, a wino, a sinner; He felt pain in the extreme with the scourging and crucifixion. I’m sure the little towns he grew up in were not very kind to a boy of questionable parentage. Yes, for 33 years, *God knew what it was like to be human*, for He *was* human. And now we can read Heb. 4. The principle we’re about to read applies to you and me as well, as future priests under our great High Priest:

**Hebrews 4:14-16** “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.** 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

This principle applied also to the Old covenant human priests.. and *we’ll* be priests under Christ. Now get this in Hebrews 5 – remembering we too will be priests, teachers, with Christ.

**Hebrews 5:1-2** “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 **He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.**”

We know what its like to have no money. We know what it feels like to have lost a child. I know what its like to have been fired from a job. To be without work. To come from divorced parents. To *feel like I was* abandoned by my father. I’ve come to understand that better lately though. I could go on and on... and so can you, about *your* life history. **And I know what its like to have committed what some call “major sin”. And so do you.**

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11** “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. [now he lists some so-called “major sins”] Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

#### HERE’S THE POINT:

Former adulterers will be able to best understand other repenting adulterers. Former homosexuals (yes it can be past tense) are in the best position to work with homosexuals God is calling. Former drunkards understand how hard it is to give up the bottle. And so on. “And such WERE some of you”. God will use even your sins to help work with all kinds of repenting sinners in the future! That is another reason why you were called: even your sinful past will be used effectively, as one who understands those kinds of sins more than those who have never done that particular sin can

understand. God will have eventually in His kingdom, people who have come out of EVERY vile sin. Someone has to understand them.

Yes, you're in good company! And don't ever suppose there *aren't* all those kinds of people in the church – and praise be to God that He can take such *misfits* and turn them into a holy spiritual temple! *So even your sinful past will be used to be the one who understands and can help encourage others like you once were.*

**Cite Mark 2:17** “When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. **I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.**”

Paul says in **1 Timothy 1:15** that “Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

*The church is a place where the spiritually sick should feel welcomed and can get well. You've been called to be saved, and to encourage others from that saved base! Start thanking God that He can use even what mere mortals might consider “waste experiences”. **He's not going to waste any of your experiences but use them to bring people to Christ and into relationship with Father in heaven! You can tell people even now, that in spite of your sins, Jesus died for you and saved you.***

*And you know what? It's often the case that people who committed bigger sins, end up loving God more. They end up more zealous for God. Guess who said that? Jesus did. He who is forgiven much, loves much! “To whom little is forgiven, the same loves little” (Luke 7:47)*

**I said at the beginning of this point 7, that you were not called just to relate with others, but also to share the ENCOURAGEMENT.**

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, **4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**”

*When our son David died, I couldn't believe how dark a time that was, and yet my wife and I also felt incredible peace and we felt God's help and presence, as thousands around the world were praying for us! (STORY of the burial – and what the gravedigger said.) If any of you hearing this were among those praying for us in 1982, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. The point is this: I can now share that experience and the encouragement and hope we received -- with others going through the same thing. MANY have said over the years that we seem to understand their pain and its all because we went through it ourselves.*

Who is going to help someone who has had a horribly failed marriage, or a failed family life – unless you have been there and received the help you needed from God and His people, and were able to move on? If you've been through a divorce, you know how it feels! If you've been the child of divorcees, you know that too. You get the point.

This is at least one huge reason why we go through the hellish things we go through. This is part of the reason *why* your son died, why your house burned down, why *you* were burned badly. This is why you lost your job. This is why you suffer racial prejudice. This is why you've lost your family due to your beliefs. This could be why you have cancer, arthritis, aches and pains, setbacks and problems. This is why you even wonder if God is even hearing your prayers at times.... **Why? So you can help**

*others who are struggling with the very same things realize they won't be going through this alone! To help them see God will never, ever forsake them— but you'll be able to add, "even though at times you were sure He had!" And then share your experience.*

*If you've overcome sins, as we all are hopefully doing—guess what? We can encourage others that the sin they're struggling with is something they can overcome, but we'll be able to say so with a sense of understanding how hard it can be for them!*

You were not called to be a preacher, perhaps. Perhaps you don't give sermons or sermonettes or play the piano or sing in the choir. You can be a listener. You can be a shoulder to cry on. You can bring comfort to people. And certainly – if you've really goofed up in your life – and I feel I sure have – you can bring hope to people that God never gives up on us, if we don't give up on Him. ***You can bring hope to people that no matter what they've done, God will help them overcome, if they'd just believe – because look what he's doing even with folks like me, and like you.*** Of course we should be practicing this matter of relating and comforting now.

**6. YOU'VE BEEN CALLED TO BE PART OF A TEAM, A FAMILY, A GROUP that is "a people prepared for their God" (\*\*) and who will help represent the very KINGDOM of God on earth.**

I won't take the time in *this* sermon to go in depth into this point, but it has to be said. You have been called indeed to be priests of God, to be teachers of His way, to be servant leaders of the new way. (**I Pet 2:9; I Cor. 6:1-3**). You've been called to show what godly leaders can be like today. We can *practice* that kind of leadership *now* where God has placed us, or has given us opportunity, right now: in our marriages, our families, at work, at church, everywhere we go.

**Ephesians 4:11-16**

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ -- ***16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.***

Unfortunately right now, I feel the "body" has allowed itself to be at odds with other believers, to claim they are "the one true church", some ministers even disallow attendance at other congregations. But my point, we need to fellowshiping with others, involved with other believers.

Also read **1 Corinthians 12:12-29** on your own. God has set you in His body as He sees fit.

The parts nourish one another. **Colossians 2:19** "and not holding fast *to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.*"

There are so many ways we can encourage one another. If we're not meeting with others, how can we know who needs our prayers? There's a verse in Ephesians that says we can speak to one another in a way that edifies one another, even in psalms and spiritual songs. Sometimes by meeting we can be "ear" that someone needs, the encouraging pat on the back. God is into relationships. We have to have relationships.

Two are better than one, and a 3-fold cord is not easily broken. A *group* of dedicated people, working together in harmony, will sure get a whole lot more done.

One problem is that too many denominations, incorporated by man, are claiming to be the "one true church" and are not showing any love to those who are not part of their system. So many brethren are so turned off by this one-upmanship, by a lack of real zeal, by a dearth of solid sermons – that more and more don't even go to any particular group anymore. I understand. But we have to understand that we've been called to be part of a group, a team, a family – a KINGDOM.

**It's not the right time to be a loner Christian – unless you have no other choice or option. Make sure you're in contact with other believers. Make sure you're involved in the group, helping, praying, encouraging, physically helping – stay in contact. By phone, email, by prayers....**

**7. One final reason why YOU were chosen to be the elect: *BECAUSE GOD CALLED AND CHOSE YOU TO BE AMONG THE CHOSEN, THE ELECT – THERE WILL BE A REMNANT OF HUMANITY SAVED ALIVE.***

**Mark 13:19-20** "For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. 20 *And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom HE chose, He shortened the days.*" TEV and NIV say "nobody would SURVIVE". NLT says "the entire human race would be destroyed".

**Malachi 4:6** also says that if we don't turn our hearts to our children, and they to their fathers, God will strike the earth with "a curse" – or some feel that could be translated "with utter extinction".

Remember what **Joseph** said? He said God meant everything that happened to "save many people alive" (**Genesis 50:19-20**). *Don't forget we are "Israel of God" today* and I've come to believe that verse is a prophecy, I believe, for us today! We are, like Joseph, going through a lot of hard times to prepare *us* to help others be saved alive.

We know the end of the story. Apparently there will be *enough* worthy elect for God to save humanity alive. Your calling – and especially your "election" – or being chosen, is of the *utmost* importance!

You were called to help save alive *your* neighbors, your family, even total strangers on the other side of the planet. Don't fail them. Make your calling and *election* sure!

We have a *high* calling. He called *you* for *His* specific reasons. You've been chosen for a mission! Commit your life to God and He will reveal it to you at the right time. We may not know *our* specific reasons until He tells us, when He gives you your new name. But I hope today we've given you some *food for thought* of what some of those reasons *could* be.



Besides the big things we're all being called to – to be priests, kings, rulers, judges in the world tomorrow, you were chosen specifically:

1. To confound the wise and noble. Look what God can do with people like you. Handpicked by God the Father himself - You were planned, and declared, probably long before you were even BORN.
2. You were chosen because you have a unique purpose to fulfill and an exact spot to fill in the spiritual temple. God has a specific mission for you. You've been created for a purpose.
3. You were chosen because God may have even bigger plans with some of your offspring or descendants someday. There's perhaps a bigger reason – like in Joseph's case – we won't see til later. We need to think generationally – way past the day to day business of each day.
4. YOU were chosen because God may want to use you to call others to Him. You were chosen because God wants you to witness for Him through your changed life: the best sermon anyone can ever preach.
5. YOU were chosen so that you can relate to people who've been through what you have been through, and so you can share with them the encouragement *you've* received.
6. You were chosen because God wanted you being part of the *team* of people He's working with; the people prepared for their God. You and I need to support the team by being actively involved in God's people – and for that matter, everyone we come in contact with. Christianity is about contact with people, and relationships.
7. You were chosen to help save friends and family *alive*. For the elect's sake, those days shall be cut short.

Share the word. Spread the word. Live like you understand the fact you're here to fulfill whatever mission and purpose God placed you on His earth for! And may the light of God's truth and His way shine brightly in your lives! This is Philip Shields, saying til next time, God be with you, my dear friends and family!