

The Call of God

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon emphasizes the urgent call of God for personal commitment to the Great Commission amidst the world's spiritual needs.

Duration: 46:03

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:12, Jonah 1:3, John 3:16, Revelation 1:9-11, Revelation 1:20

Topics: "Call Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God and fulfilling our missionary responsibilities. He highlights that living in a global village means that the world is much smaller than we think, making the task of spreading the gospel even greater. The speaker also mentions the inspiring example of retired individuals serving the Lord on the mission field. He references the story of John, who was exiled on a lonely island for proclaiming Jesus Christ, to illustrate that persecution and opposition still exist today. The sermon concludes with the reminder that the church, represented by the seven golden lampstands, must shine brightly by actively spreading the message of Christ.

Transcript

Would you turn with me, please, to the Book of Revelation and Chapter 1. The first chapter of the Book of Revelation, reading from verse 9. I'm taking the liberty of reading the Living Bible paraphrase. I'm careful to say paraphrase, not translation, of this chapter because I think it's very vivid. Revelation Chapter 1, verse 9. It is I, your brother John, a fellow sufferer for the Lord's sake, who is writing this letter to you.

I too have shared the patience Jesus gives, and we shall share his kingdom. I was on the island of Patmos, exiled there for preaching the word of God, and for telling what I knew about Jesus Christ. It was the Lord's day, and I was worshipping, when suddenly I heard a loud voice behind me, a voice that sounded like a trumpet blast, saying, I am A and Z, the first and last.

And then I heard him say, write down everything you see, and send your letter to the seven churches in Turkey, to the church in Ephesus, the one in Smyrna, and those in Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. When I turned to see who was speaking, there behind me were seven candlesticks of gold, and standing among them was one who looked like Jesus, who called himself the Son of Man, wearing a long robe, circled with a golden band across his chest. His hair was white as wool or snow, and his eyes penetrated like flames of fire.

His feet gleamed like burnished bronze, and his voice thundered like the wave against the shore. He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp double-bladed sword in his mouth, and his face shone like the power of the sun in unclouded brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.

But he laid his right hand on me and said, don't be afraid. Though I am the first and last, the living one who died, who is now alive forevermore, who has the keys of hell and death, don't be afraid. Write down what you have just seen and what will soon be shown to you.

This is the meaning of the seven stars you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the leaders of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the churches themselves. A word of prayer together.

Lord, what can we say to you this morning, but that we desire that thou wilt light up our hearts with your glory. Fill us with a vision of the risen Lord Jesus. Stab us awake, spiritually awake.

Get us involved in the mightiest task this side of heaven. And make us not to be ashamed on the day of thine appearing. Lord, have mercy on me.

Clothe me about with the spirit of the Lord. And may I be the Lord's messenger. In the Lord's message, amen.

The greatest purpose that God has for each one of our lives is that we should relate the Great Commission to the day in which we live. Each one of us, as a priority of necessity, has a portion in this. It's not optional, it's obligatory.

Your missionary responsibilities begin at the moment of your new birth. Just a moment to say one or two things about the world in which we live. It's a much smaller place than we think.

It is merely an overcrowded neighborhood, a global village. That's all it is. There isn't a place in the world more than 24 hours traveling distance from another.

And if the United States allow us to get the Concorde into the air, that'll revolutionize travel at supersonic speed. The world is far smaller than we think. Because of this, the task is far greater than we think.

The haves and have-nots, black, white, red, yellow, all flung together with the inevitable tensions which we all know and which we all see today are the outcome of it. I need scarcely remind you that the net increase of the world population is 75 million a year. It took from creation till the dawn of the past century for the world population to reach a thousand million.

It has now reached four times that amount. Four thousand million people alive today. Sixty million people die every year.

That's 1,200 an hour, 120 a minute, two a second. Every tick of your watch, two people out into eternity. Between the time of the beginning of this meeting and its closing, about 15,000 people will have gone out into eternity.

The relentless tramp of people without God going out into eternity. The task is far greater than we think. The time is shorter than we think.

When the disciples gathered around Jesus and asked him, tell us, what kind of a world will it be when you come back? He told them in the 24th of Matthew, which I suggest you read on your own sometime, it will be a world at war. A world in which there's famine and pestilence and earthquake. A world in which the church is persecuted.

A world in which the love of many has grown cold. A world in which there's an increase in missionary interest. And a world in which there'll be masses of people who couldn't care less, as it was in the days of Noah.

And in that world, I live today. I don't know what may be your view of his return, but I believe at any moment, in any time, Jesus could come again. And I'm sure the hour is later than we think.

Dangerous when we start talking about times and seasons, but I question whether our little children will ever see old age. Jesus is coming fast. The time is shorter than we think.

And the price is greater than we think. The price of getting the job done, I don't mean in terms of dollars and cents, I mean in terms of personal commitment and involvement. What's your favorite verse in the Bible? John 3, 16.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Listen, my friend, listen. You have no right to put your name in the whosoever in John 3, 16 until you have faced the challenge of the whosoever in Mark chapter 8. I give them to you.

Whosoever would come after me, let him leave himself behind, take up his cross and follow me. Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it. Whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospels will save it.

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me in this wicked generation, of him shall I be ashamed before my Father which is in heaven. I cannot claim the privileges of relationship to Christ until I'm prepared to accept the responsibility. No, I cannot claim salvation unless I'm prepared to accept discipleship.

The cost is greater than we think. And I've had to ask myself again this morning three questions and answer them to my satisfaction, to the Lord's satisfaction. I put them very quickly and lovingly to you.

Do you believe that the cross of Jesus Christ is adequate for the salvation of all men everywhere, from creation until now, until his second coming? My answer to that from the Bible is yes. He is not willing that one should perish but that all should come to repentance. Do I believe therefore that all people automatically will be saved because Jesus died upon the cross? That is the gospel of universalism.

I would like to believe it but I cannot believe it. Were I to believe that I'd have to tear out the book of Revelation, whole chunks of the gospel of Matthew and whole sections of my Bible. No, all men will not be saved.

The cross of Jesus is adequate for the salvation of all but effective only in the lives of those who repent and believe. My third question. Can anybody be saved without hearing the gospel? And at once I find myself right in the middle of Romans chapter 10.

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How shall they call upon him in whom they've not believed? How shall they believe in him of whom they've not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach except to be sent? No, I'm forced to the conviction that all men cannot be saved and nobody can be saved except to hear the word of God. Now I'm not entering into the fate of the heathen.

That's too big a question for now but I know that the judge of all the earth will do right and to know that every man will be judged according to the light which is received. I don't mean to suggest that every Christian should apply for overseas services, service, but I do know that we all ought to be asking at this conference, Lord what do you want me to do? And one day as a missionary of another generation has put it, as long as there are continents still stranded in utter darkness, the burden of proof lies with me to show that the circumstances in which God has placed me are meant to keep me at home. Now how may I know where and how I'm to be involved? Look with me at this chapter.

The call of God to John came in a very unlikely place. Write the things which thou hast seen. That was an unlikely place and incidentally at an unlikely time of his life.

He was 90. Bit late but never too late to start again. And if I may just interject this quickly, the thing that thrilled me in many a mission field is to see people who have retired from business doing a tremendous job down in the jungles of Brazil and Africa.

Men of 65 going out to serve the Lord on the mission field. It's a place for everybody. It came in a very unlikely place.

Here was John, as the Living Bible puts it, shut away on the lonely island for telling what he knew about Jesus Christ. Does that ever happen today? Oh yes it does. Ever read Leslie Lyle's book, Come Wind, Come Weather? The story of communism takeover in China? If you have, you'll remember that in it there's the incident of a student at a university, I think in Shanghai.

Who was witnessing to the Lord and the communist guards came along with handcuffs. And as they came to arrest her, she held out her arms and said, I am not worthy. Communism cannot kill that spirit.

John was in Patmos for doing just that very thing, telling what he knew about Jesus Christ. He was a key prisoner, the only man alive who'd seen the risen Lord. So they had to banish him and put him out of the way.

And it was there, in a very unlikely spot, that this call of Christ came to him. Now may I say to you this morning, this is a very likely place for the call of Jesus to come to you. What could be more likely than at a prairie missionary conference here at Easter? Than that Jesus would speak to you about missions and service and his will for your life.

But you may think I'm a very unlikely person. I'm the only Christian in my home. I'm a very shut-in sort of person.

I work on a farm miles from anywhere. He could never possibly want me or use me. Quite sure about that? Are you quite sure about that? You think you're in an unlikely place.

It isn't the crowd, it isn't the busy throng that creates the opportunity. May I say to you today that all through this week, in meetings, out of meetings, day and night, there's our Heavenly Father who has been

watching us, screening us. I don't mean like a night watchman on the march.

I don't mean like a policeman, but I mean watching us. Is that man faithful? Can I trust that girl where she is to live to capacity? Is she obedient right now or is she fooling around? Does he really mean business or is he too occupied with the opposite sex? Where are his thoughts day and night? Are they on me or on anything else but me? Dare I trust that man with the biggest service, biggest theater opportunity? Dare I? All the time in my life, everywhere, in the most unlikely place, Jesus is screening me, watching me. The call of God comes in a very unlikely place.

Am I living to capacity, to obedience right where I am just now? Then may I say the call of God came after a most unexpected revelation. Look at verse 10. John says, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.

Now that is not Sunday. But it is the day of the Lord. So often spoken of by the prophets in the word of God.

It's as though this man was lifted out of himself and his day and age and placed among the tremendous scenes in the judgment day of God that he might write what he saw. A spectator of the judgment day. I heard a great voice as of a trumpet.

I can't disconnect that in my mind from the fact that when Jesus comes, he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of an archangel, with the trump of God. Nor indeed with the great truth of 1 Corinthians 15, 52. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment.

In the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. I heard a voice, the voice as the sound of a great trumpet. I turned to see and I saw seven golden candlesticks.

From verse 20, I learned that these are the seven churches. And seven is the number of completeness always in the Bible. And here's the whole body of Christ throughout every generation from the first to the second coming of Jesus.

John sees the church like seven golden lampstands. Useless things, lampstands, unless they're burn and blaze. Lampstands can't do that, but that's what we have to do.

That sounds a total contradiction. Let me illustrate. My daughter is a missionary with the African Mission in Central Africa Republic.

I was out there one day with her. One time my wife and I were there and she, my daughter and I, walked along a jungle path one night in Africa, where there were no sounds except the strange noises of an African jungle. It was a brilliant moonlight night.

The moon was full, the stars were shining. The sort of night that makes people who are in love want to hold hands. Because I think it's Paul Rees who says that moon controls the tide as well as the untide.

I assure you that it was my daughter I was with. And we were walking along this path together and she said to me, Isn't the moon shining brilliantly? And I said, yes, it's wonderful. And then I said, you know how stupid, we're both wrong.

Because the moon can't shine. The moon can't shine. It is only a lump of lackluster material which has no capacity to shine.

But, by the way, our astronauts have confirmed that, if you need any confirmation. But it maintains itself in relation to the sun. And, as it moves in orbit in relation to the sun, It, it catches the glow, catches the light and reflects the light into the darkness of the world.

And, as it moves in orbit in relation to the sun, It, it catches the glow, catches the light and reflects the light into the darkness of the world. Ah, that's a Christian! That's my involvement, everywhere, all the time. I can't shine.

Nothing in me has any capacity to shine for Jesus, but I turn my eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and praise the Lord, I catch something of the glory, and the reality, and the warmth, and the thrill, and the love, and shine reflected into the darkness of the world. Isn't it thrilling to be a Christian? Tell you, there's no government on earth can do that. There's no education on earth to do that.

There's no philosophy on earth can do that. There's nobody can shine for Jesus. I'm a Christian, his child.

You remember that John the Baptist was a burning and a shining light. He shone because he burnt. And my friend, here's the whole church throughout all generations like lampstands, golden costly lampstands.

And, and as the church in every generation has trusted him, looked to Jesus, turned their face heavenward, counted on a miracle, looked to him to work on their behalf, they've burnt and glowed, burnt and shone all through every generation. And the Holy Spirit in them has caught fire. But look, in the midst of them, one like unto the Son of Man, and that is the fulfillment of his promise.

Lo, I am with you all the days, all the days, right in the midst. Oh, what a comfort that is to some harassed Christian with all his problems on the mission field. The whole church throughout all generations and in the midst, one like unto the Son of Man.

It's Oswald Chambers who says, if I may quote, missionary enterprise must be based on the passion of obedience and not on the pathos of pity. The thing that makes a missionary is the sight of Jesus Christ. When the need is made the call, it is artificial enthusiasm and never stands restrained.

Only one thing will, listen to this, personal relationship to Christ of a man who has gone through the mill of God's spring cleaning, until there's only one purpose left, I'm here for God to use me as he wants. However, do I get to that position, a sight of Jesus? What did John see? As I try to, I try to show you from these verses, I, I honestly tell you, I'd rather, I'd rather disappear. I'd rather disappear.

His eyes were as a flame of fire. Living Bible penetrated, penetrated like a flame of fire. And they penetrate you and they penetrate me through every moment of every day, like a flame of fire.

Power to read hidden secrets, hidden desires, hidden lust, secret sin. Power to bring to light and search every heart. Power, penetration to examine my motives, my self-centeredness, my selfishness, my self-preservation.

Oh, should I not pray as I speak to you, and you pray too. Oh God, search me at any cost. Bring hidden things to light.

Gaze into my soul. Shift the camouflage, remove the veil I put over it. Lord, Lord, I've got no talents.

You can't use me. I didn't ask for your talents. I asked your heart.

Friend, where is Jesus in your love life? Think of you, think of that. Some of you who've been just fooling around this week, making love. Where is Jesus in your love life? First, second, third, or one of the old friends? Lord, no talent.

I didn't ask for your talents. I asked for your heart, for you, for your worship. But Lord, what about my business? And he says to me, do you mean to tell me that material things matter to you more than spiritual? His eyes as a flame of fire, his voice as the sound of many waters.

Living Bible, his voice like the thunder of the waves that break on the shore. Isn't that tremendous? Have you ever listened and been overawed by the waves of thunder on the shore? I don't know where they do as much as they do in Durban in South Africa. And if I stand there on the shore, I'm absolutely overawed as I listen to the Indian Ocean crash, crash, crash perpetually on the shore.

See, God can speak to some people with a still small voice, because they're near. To a lot of us, he's got to use a megaphone, because we've got so far away. He used a megaphone to Jonah.

Huh? Huh. Said to Jonah, go to Nineveh. No thank you Lord, I want a Mediterranean cruise.

I'm after Tarshish. And when he got to Joppa, a boat labeled Tarshish was waiting for him. Not a bit surprised to find that.

Always the devil has a ready to, ready, a ship ready to take you out of God's will. And he went on his Mediterranean cruise, but I tell you, he was running from God, and God ran after him. And God thundered at him with a storm voice, as the sound of the waves, thundering on the seashore.

Has that voice penetrated this week? God has spoken to many people in a still small voice. He's spoken to others with like an alarm bell, trying to wake you up and stab you into conviction, into personal responsibility, but you've still evaded it. He spoke with a voice like thunder on the seashore.

And in his right hand was seven stars. Verse 20 tells me that these were the ministers of the seven churches in his hand. Oh my friend, my fellow preacher, my fellow missionary, what a place to be in the hand of a risen Lord.

That's protection anywhere. But what a responsibility to be in his hand. You notice that out of his mouth went a two-edged sword.

Not out of his hand, but out of his mouth, a two-edged sword. And listen, the Word of God is a two-edged sword. And what God speaks out of his mouth through a man held in his hand, that is authority.

And nothing else is. That's what the mission field needs. That's what the preacher needs.

That's what the pulpit needs. That's what every child of God needs to witness to Christ. What God speaks out of his mouth through a life held in his hand.

Do I know anything about that? Oh God help me. God help me. For often being like a preacher who had in his notes, argument weak, shout louder here, that text just corners me, corners, holds me.

It's as if Jesus right now almost gets me, gets me right in the corner and says, look how about that yourself. What God speaks through his mouth, through a man held in his hand, that's authority. Is your life in his hand? Then God speaks through his mouth through you.

And his countenance was, oh listen, his faith shone like the power of the sun in unclouded brilliance. His voice, his countenance was like the sun shining in his full strength, his faith. My friend, any thought about the face of Jesus? Oh that will be glory for me when by his grace I look on his face.

I wonder, I wonder, I really do. Someday we shall see his lovely face, one bright golden morning, his lovely face. I wonder.

I know that heaven has no need of a sun, for Jesus, the face of Jesus, lights up the whole universe. Then the face of Jesus. But say, say, this was the face that Judas kissed and then betrayed.

This was the face that men spat on. This was the face that men struck. That will be glory for me when I shall look on his face, will it? Excuse me, but have you ever spat on Jesus' face? Have you ever, like Judas, kissed him and then betrayed him? Oh you stood up at meetings galore.

You responded to full-time service, but you're still here. You responded to an invitation over and over again. You bowed your heart and head before God and said, Lord, Lord, I'm yours and I'll never, this thing will never happen again.

But, but I tell you it has. You kissed him and betrayed him. You mean to tell me that will be glory when I look on that wonderful face? I just feel like getting out of it.

Out the way. I wonder how many people I'm speaking to this morning have since dawn done that very thing today. Last night, yes Lord, today betrayal.

And one day we shall see his face. Lovely thing. And may I ask you to notice, lastly, that this, this revelation was followed at once by an unqualified surrender.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. Please observe that when John saw Christ that day, it was not joy, not a thrill, not excitement, not, not, not a sort of emotional upheaval. It was fear.

And you may disagree with me in you, if you like, but it's a deep conviction of my heart that I never know the indwelling Lord and his strength in my life until I've been afraid of him. John fell at his feet as dead. And I'm wanting to say to you that to venture into Christian service on the mission field, on the ministry, without that measure of surrender which has left you emptied, stripped, slain at the master's feet, is sheer presumption.

The highway of Christian service and witness is thrown with casualties, wrecked testimonies because of failure right there. Our surrender has had reservations. It has been the surrender of talents, but not of self-will.

The yielding of gifts, but not the giving up of my rights. The result has been marriage, out of the will of God, between one person called to the field and one who isn't, and the outcome shipwreck, sometime on your knee alone. Read that great hymn of Francis Ridley Haverkill's consecration hymn, Take My Life and Let It Be.

And observe this, that it isn't until she reaches the last line, but one, in the last verse, that she gets to the real point. Take my silver, my gold, my hands, my voice, my heart, my will, and then, then take my self, and I will be ever, only, all for thee. The last thing that we give up and give to Jesus is ourselves and our rights.

That's what he's looking for from us all. I had a letter from a missionary not so long ago. I want to read a paragraph of it.

You don't know him, and you don't know what field it is, and I'm not betraying any confidence. Pastor, I was considered spiritual on deputation work at home. I was rebuked for being too serious, having my nose in my bible too much.

It's different out here. I saw more souls saved as incidental result of preaching during furlough than I have in years of service on the field. There's nothing but death and discouragement.

My zeal lags. My interest wavers. My temper sours.

My zeal grows cold. My faith weakens. My weaknesses multiply.

The bible seems remote. Pastor, where's the joy? Where's the fire? Where's the victory? Oh yes, I know the answers. I know the verses.

But problems, problems, problems, and the greatest of these is myself. Pastor, this takes more than a commentary on Spurgeon's notes. This is total war.

And my friend, my dear friend, for every one of us in this place, it's not only total war, but total defeat. Unless I hear a voice, I turn to see. I see him, and I fall as dead.

I deceive. Have you ever read Spur, um, Churchill's war memoirs? A bit of an exercise, but it might be worth doing it. It all is so irrelevant now in the light of subsequent events, but it wasn't irrelevant then.

He records in one volume entitled, *Our Finest Hour*, the story of the Battle of Britain, and tells of one night when bombs were raining as they did every night for months down upon it. He went to an air force base in the southeast coast. It was evening time, and as he approached in the darkness, he just saw six aeroplanes, fighter planes, on the air force base, on the, on the tarmac.

He went up and looked at them, and they were riddled through, shot to pieces. He said, they'll never fly again. And he went inside, and he saw 12 men, six gunners, six pilots.

They hadn't had their uniform off for three weeks. They were bloodstained. They were bleary-eyed.

They were exhausted. They were chain-smoking, drinking coffee. Masses of it.

And just as Churchill got there, a telephone from Royal Air Force Headquarters in London. Enemy approaching, over channel, estimated strength 500. Churchill recalls that immediately, every man dropped his coffee, stamped out his cigarette, fastened his uniform, his belt around him, and dashed for those six shot planes.

And within a minute, they're all in the air, six of them, to fight, 500. And before leaving, one of them simply sent a message to air force headquarters. Message received, and understood.

And they went. It was total war. Their obedience was taken for granted.

It was never questioned. My beloved friend, I want to say to you, my last word to you, is this, that you and I are not in a picnic, in a fun and game situation. We're not playing at anything.

We're in total warfare. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. It's total war.

Can Jesus take my obedience for granted? Message received, and understood. Let's pray.

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