

The Hope of His Calling

by A.W. Pink

A.W. Pink's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the hope associated with God's calling and the necessity of spiritual assurance for believers.

Scripture: John 14:9, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 2:6-7, Hebrews 13:8

Topics: "Christ's Humility", "Divine Sacrifice"

Description

The preacher delves into the deep meaning of 'grasped' in Philippians 2:6, explaining how Christ did not selfishly cling to His divine position but willingly relinquished His rights for the redemption of mankind. Jesus emptied Himself of His divine glory but not His nature, veiling His deity in humility and taking on the form of a servant. This act of self-renunciation was a profound demonstration of love and sacrifice, as Christ identified with humanity and laid aside His divine attributes for the benefit of others.

Transcript

What is meant by "the hope of His calling"? This is really a double question: What is meant by the word hope in this passage, and what is meant by His calling?

In Scripture hope always respects something future, and signifies far more than a mere wish that it may be realized. It sets forth a confident expectation that it will be realized (Ps. 16:9). In many passages hope has reference to its object, that is, to the thing expected (Rom 8:25), the One looked to: "O Lord, the hope of Israel" (Jer. 17:13). In other passages refers to the grace of hope, that is, the faculty by which we expect. Hope is used in this sense in 1 Corinthians 13:13: "Now abideth faith, hope, charity." Sometimes hope expresses the assurance we have of our personal interest in the thing hoped for: "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:3, 5). That is, hope deepens our assurance of our personal confidence in God. In still other cases hope has reference to the ground of our expectation. The clause "there is hope in Israel concerning this thing" (Ezra 10:2) means there were good grounds to hope for it. "Who against hope believed in hope" (Rom. 4:18): though contrary to nature, Abraham was persuaded he had sufficient ground to expect God to make good His promise. The unregenerate are without hope (Eph. 2:12). They have hope, but it is based on no solid foundation.

Now in the last mentioned sense we regard the word hope as being used in our present passage: that you may know the ground on which rests your expectation of His calling, that you may be assured of your personal interest therein, that you may stand in no doubt regarding the same, that you may be so

enlightened from above as to be able to clearly perceive that you have both part and lot in it. In other words, that your evidence of this ground of faith may be clear and unmistakable. First, Paul prayed for an increased knowledge of God, that is, such spiritual sights and apprehensions of Him as led to more real and intimate fellowship with Him, which is the basic longing of every renewed soul. And what did he desire next to that? Was it not that which contributed most to his peace and comfort, namely, to be assured of his own filial relation to God? What does it avail my soul to perceive the excellency of the divine character unless I have scriptural warrant to view Him as God? That is what I need to have continually kept fresh in my heart.

What is Meant by "His calling"?

Here is another term which is used by no means uniformly in the Scriptures. Broadly speaking, there is a twofold calling of God or call from God: an external one and an internal one. The former is made to all who hear the gospel: "Unto you, O men, I call; and My voice is to the sons of man" (Prov. 8:4). "Many are called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16). That external call through the Scriptures is addressed to human responsibility and meets with universal rejection. "I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded" (Prov. 1:24). "Come, for all things are now ready; and they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luke 14:18).

But God gives another call to His elect; a quickening call, an inward call, an invincible call, what the theologians term His effectual call. "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified" (Rom. 8:30). This is calling from death to life. Out of darkness into God's "marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). As the closing verses of 1 Corinthians¹ tell us, not many receive this call; it is one of mercy and discriminating grace.

Our Text Then Speaks of the effectual call, and it is called His calling, because God is the Author of it. The regenerate are "the called according to His (eternal) purpose" (Rom. 8:28), because God is the Caller. Yet, having said that much, we have only generalized, and we must bring out the various shades of meaning which the same word bears in different verses. In some passages the effectual call which God gives His people refers to that work of grace itself, as in 1 Peter 2:9. In others it concerns more especially that to which God has called them--"unto His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12), "unto holiness" (1 Thess. 4:7). There seems to be nothing in our present verse which requires us to restrict the scope of the word, so we shall interpret it in its double sense; "that ye may be assured ye have been made partakers of God's effectual or regenerative call: that ye may perceive the sure grounds of hope which God has called you unto."

Take the Calling Itself first. Paul desired that the Ephesians might have a better knowledge or assurance that they had been supernaturally quickened, personally called out of darkness into God's light. If the Christian measures himself impartially by the Word, he should have no difficulty on that score. He should be certain of his salvation. he ought to be able to say, humbly yet confidently, "one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). If I see, with a feeling sense in my heart, what a heinous and filthy thing all sin is, what a depraved and loathsome creature I am by nature, what a sink of iniquity still remains within me, what a suitable and sufficient Savior Christ is for such a wretch as me, what a lovely and desirable thing holiness is, then I must have been called to life. If I am now conscious of holy desires and endeavors to which I was previously a stranger, then I must be alive in Christ.

Take, second, that to which the Christian is called - in this verse, an assured expectation: "that ye may know what is the hope of His calling." As God has called His people to holiness, so also He has called them to be full of hope and good cheer. The apostle prayed in another place, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:13). Thus, we may understand that by His calling we may know that hope which God has commanded us as Christians to have; --(1 Thess. 4:7), "God hath called us not to uncleanness, but unto holiness," means that He bids us to be holy, for the third verse of the same chapter declares "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." In that passage the will and calling of God are one and the same thing. Thus it may also be understood here: "That ye may know the hope of His revealed will," which He requires us to have.

"That Ye May Know," not being ignorant or doubtful. This denies one of the doctrines of the Council of Trent: "If any affirm that a regenerate and justified man is bound to believe that he is certainly in the number of the elect, let such a one be accursed."--The very fact that Paul was inspired to place on record this petition shows clearly that it is God's will for His people to have assurance, that it is both their privilege and duty to earnestly seek it, and that an increased experience of assurance should be theirs. A doubting Thomas does not honor God.

Now let us put the whole together. Only as the eyes of our understanding are divinely enlightened are we able to know "what is the hope of His calling"--know it, not by carnal presumption nor by mental acumen but perceive it with anointed vision. Nevertheless, if our eyes are not enlightened, the fault is entirely our own, for it is the revealed will of God that each regenerate person should have assurance that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit has given us one whole epistle to that very end: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). Hence, those who would have the Christian believe that a firm and abiding assurance is not desirable, are standing on an unscriptural doctrine.

Note how Emphatic it is: "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that YE may know." That cannot signify less than that your own eyes should see what grounds of assurance the Christian really has to know that eternal life is his, that his own heart may realize the hope which God has bidden him to exercise. Not to see with someone else's eyes, not to read through creedal spectacles, not to take any man's say-so for it, but to live by your own God-given faith and read in the light of Holy Writ your own clear evidences. The apostle prayed here that they might know what great, infallible, multitudinous grounds of hope God had called them to; that they might appreciate what grounds of assurance and evidence they had that heaven was theirs; that they might have assurance of their own interest in heaven! Every time I truly mourn over my sins, feel my poverty of spirit, hunger and thirst after righteousness, I have an indubitable evidence that I am among the "blessed".

Precepts and Petitions are complementary one to the other. The precepts tell me what God requires and therefore what I need to ask Him for most, that enabling grace may be given me to perform the same. The prayers intimate what it is my privilege and duty to make request for, thus they indirectly reveal my duty.

"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10), is the divine precept making known my duty. That "the Father of glory, may give unto you... wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling" is a request that I may be enabled to successfully carry out that task of making my election sure. This petition tells us we ought to labor after and pray earnestly for a clearer insight into and a fuller acquaintance with

the great objects of the Christian's hopes and expectations.

We cannot obtain a true and influential knowledge of the grounds which regeneration gives its subject to hope that he has passed from death to life, nor realize what confidence in God He has bidden him to have (for both things are included) unless our eyes are divinely anointed. No matter how clearly and vividly the landscape appears when the sun is shining, a blind man does not behold it. Christ is manifestly set forth in the gospel, but the hearer must be given spiritual sight before he will perceive the absolute suitability of such a Savior in his own desperate case. Even after regeneration, the Christian is still completely dependent on divine illumination in order for him to continue apprehending spiritual things.

No reading of commentaries can secure an answer to his petition, and even a searching or study of the Scriptures will not of itself convey to the believer a spiritual and influential knowledge. Only as and when the eyes of his understanding are enlightened will that delightful and wondrous experience be his.

Quoting Thomas Watson on Exodus 20:2;

In former times (before the Reformation) we worshipped God after a false manner: we had purgatory, indulgences, the idolatrous mass, the Scriptures locked up in an unknown tongue, invocation of saints and angels, image-worship. O what cause have we to bless God for delivering us from popery!

If it be a great blessing to be delivered from Egypt, popish idolatry; then it shows their sin and folly, who, being brought out of Egypt, are willing to return into Egypt again; having put off the yoke of Rome, would fain put it on again. The apostle says, "Flee from idolatry." But these rather flee to idolatry; herein they are like the people of Israel, who, notwithstanding all the idolatry and tyranny of Egypt, yet longed to go back to Egypt; "Let us make a captain and let us return into Egypt" (Num. 14:4). But how shall they go back into Egypt? How shall they have food in the wilderness? Will God rain down manna any more upon such rebels? How will they get over the sea? Will God divide the water again by miracle for such as leave His service, and go into idolatrous Egypt? Yet they say, Let us make a captain, --And are there not such spirits amongst us, who say, "Let us make a captain, and go back to the Romish Egypt again?" And if we do, what shall we get by it? I am afraid the leeks and onions of Egypt will make us sick. Do we ever think, if we drink in the cup of fornication, we shall drink in the cup of salvation? O that any should so forfeit their reason, as to enslave themselves to the see of Rome! That they should be willing to hold a candle to a mass-priest, and bow down to a strange god. Let us not say we will make a captain; but rather say as Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Pray that the true Protestant religion may still flourish among us, that the sun of the gospel may still shine in our horizon.

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