

The Calling of God

by Oswald J. Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of personal sacrifice and individual commitment to missions, and challenges Christians to obey God's call to evangelize the entire world.

Duration: 35:32

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 6:39-41, Acts 1:8, Acts 5:29, Romans 10:14-15, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Call Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker tells a parable about a master who returns to his estate and rewards his servants based on their faithfulness and diligence. The master is pleased with the flowerbeds, gardens, and lawns that have been cultivated, but disappointed to find the rest of the estate in wilderness and marsh. He rewards the one servant who has been working diligently in a distant part of the estate. The speaker then challenges the listeners to invest their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ, emphasizing the need for missionary work to reach the many tribes around the world who have not yet heard the gospel.

Transcript

Our speaker for this session is Dr. Oswald J. Smith. Dr. Smith, worldwide traveler, is now the minister of the People's Church, Toronto, Canada, which he founded more than 30 years ago and which today has a congregation of 4,200. Dr. Smith is a missionary and has led his church in a program that has brought in over \$4 million for missions, contributing toward the support of 360 foreign missionaries.

The circulation of Dr. Smith's 25 books is over the one million mark in 25 different languages. He has also written over 600 hymns and poems. The countries which Dr. Smith has toured number 66, including Great Britain, Europe, Asia, Africa, the East and West Indies, Alaska, Mexico, the Solomon Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Central and South America, the United States, and the Orient.

Many outstanding scholars and leaders in the Christian world have collaborated with Campus Crusade for Christ in the preparation of a series of recorded lectures presenting what Christians believe. This significant undertaking is designed to make the claims of Christ and the great doctrines of the Christian faith available to collegians of all lands. Today's lecture by Dr. Oswald J. Smith is entitled, The Calling of God.

It is my pleasure to present Dr. Smith. Years ago, I went through the Bible to see if I could stay in Canada and obey God. Would it be possible, I asked myself, for me to enjoy a comfortable pastorate, never cross

the boundaries of my country, and still carry out the post-resurrection commands of my Lord and satisfied God? And as I studied the Bible, I found such expressions as these.

All nations, all the world, every creature, every kindred and tongue and people and nation, the uttermost part of the earth. In other words, the gospel I discovered was to be given to the entire world. Every nation, kindred, tongue and people must hear it.

And if we neglect one nation, we have not obeyed God's commands. When I was 18 years of age, I went to the Indians of British Columbia. I lived in a little shack on an Indian reserve all alone up near Alaska between 3,000 and 4,000 miles from home.

I stayed away for over a year. Then realizing that I needed more education, I returned at last to civilization and settled down to a five-year course of theology, finally graduating and being ordained to the gospel ministry. I then applied to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions for work in India.

My case was carefully considered. I appeared personally before the board, and at last the decision was reached. I was rejected.

The board felt that I would not be suitable for missionary work, and so I was turned down. I then turned to work at home, became pastor in Dale Presbyterian Church, Toronto, and later the Alliance Tabernacle. But I was not satisfied.

I knew that I had to do something. I had seen the vision. Finally, I struck out on my own, going to the Russian mission fields of Europe and preaching to vast multitudes all over Latvia, Estonia, and Poland.

Finally, one day, after having preached till I was worn out, I fainted dead away and returned home. All over the United States and Canada, I traveled, holding evangelistic campaigns. Finally, I felt the urge again, and this time I went to Spain.

But again, I became ill and had to come back. Then I launched the People's Church in Toronto. That was in the year 1930.

Two years later, the urge came upon me once more, and I left for Africa. By horseback, I penetrated back into the interior in the company of Dr. Thomas Lambie, riding some 30 miles a day, finally collapsing in the long grass of Africa. And after a serious illness that lasted for six weeks, I was brought back once more to civilization.

By this time, I was beginning to feel that the board had been right after all, and that I was not fitted for missionary work. However, I had seen the vision. I knew that the other nations had to hear the gospel.

And in 1938, I went once again, determined to do my part, if at all possible, to help evangelize the world. This time, I left for the far Pacific. And after traveling by steamer for 31 days, I found myself preaching to the cannibals, the savages, and the Christians of the Solomon Islands.

At length, however, I contracted malaria fever, which lasted for three years, and again and again, month after month, laid me low. Finally, one day, Dr. Northcote Deck and the other missionaries put me on a steamer and sent me back to my work in Toronto. I had tried to go, and had visited all together some 66 countries, but I had discovered that it would be most difficult for me to live on the mission field.

In the early days of my ministry, realizing that I could not go myself, I turned to substitutes. One day, I approached Reverend J. H. W. Cook, the leader of the Evangelical Union of South America. You want to send out some new missionaries, I asked.

Yes, he replied, we have five ready to go. Why don't you send them, I inquired. We do not have the money, was his reply.

If I can succeed in raising the funds for their transportation, will you allow me to support them, I asked him. His face lit up as he responded in the affirmative. Never will I forget the day I placed those five missionaries on the platform of the People's Church and challenged the congregation to send them out.

They did so. Then the five became ten, the ten twenty, the twenty forty, the forty one hundred, the one hundred two hundred, the two hundred three hundred and sixty. Now we have an army of laborers serving as our substitutes on some forty different foreign fields, under thirty five faith missionary societies, and we contribute toward their personal support.

But, I was not satisfied. I am praying constantly, even now, and this is my prayer. Lord, let me live.

Let me live, if it be thy will, until we have four hundred missionaries on the foreign fields of earth. I feel that that is the number the People's Church should be helping to support. And I will never be satisfied until we have at least that many missionaries in the regions beyond.

This is what I am living for. I tried to go myself. As a matter of fact, I went, but each time it seemed that I had to come back.

I knew then that there was only one thing left for me to do, namely, to send others. That is why I travel all over the United States of America, the Dominion of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain. I go in order to hold missionary conventions and to challenge young people.

I must do all I can to find and send substitutes. But, you ask, why go before all that's been saved here? There is so much to be done at home. Why not complete the work of the homeland before going to the foreign field? Everywhere I go, that question is asked.

Let me answer it by asking three or four others. First, why did David Livingstone leave Scotland and go to Africa before everyone in Scotland had become a Christian? Why? There are still thousands in Scotland who have not even yet decided for Christ. And yet, years ago, Livingstone left his own land and went to dark, benighted Africa.

I ask you, why? Second, why did William Carey leave England and go to India before everyone in England had been Christianized? Why? There are still some in England who have not been one to Christ. Third, why did Judson leave America and go to Burma before everyone in America had been brought to Christ? Why? There are still a few in the States who have not yet been Christianized. Lastly, why did the Apostle Paul leave for Europe before Palestine had heard the gospel? Why? Paul, you'll remember, deliberately turned from his own country and went to our forefathers in Europe in order to evangelize them.

Why, I ask, did he do it? Ought he not to have stayed in Palestine at least until they had heard the message? My friends, there is only one answer, and I give it in the words of the Bible. The field is the world. The United States of America is not the world.

Great Britain is not the world. The field is the whole world. You never in your life heard of a farmer working in one little corner of his field.

The farmer works the whole field. The United States is but one corner. Canada is but a little corner.

The world, the whole world, must be evangelized. And since the field is the world, we have no choice but to go to every part of it. The world is one, and it must be done.

Not corner by corner, but as a whole. The tobacco firms have their agents in the most distant places. Millions of cigarettes are given away to create new appetites.

You mean to say that the reason for it is because there is no longer any demand at home? Of course not. Yet the tobacco firms are already sending their missionaries into foreign lands. They want new markets.

They are wiser than we are. For that, after all, is God's plan. And we would do well to emulate them.

It has never been God's will that we should remain at home until the work here is finished. He wants us to go to the entire world, to work the whole field, simultaneously. Do you know what you are saying when you say you do not believe in missions? You are saying that Paul made a mistake.

That he should have left your forefathers in Europe, pagans. That it would have been better if he had stayed at home in Palestine, so that you might have remained in heathenism. Is that what you think? Are you sorry you are not still a heathen? You must be if you do not believe in missions.

Do you remember when the Lord Jesus Christ said the 5,000? Do you recall how he had them sit down row upon row on the green grass? Then do you remember how he took the loaves and fishes and blessed them and then broke them and gave them to his disciples? Do you remember how the disciples started at one end of the front row and went right along that front row, giving everyone a helping? Then do you recall how they turned right around and started back along that front row again, asking everyone to take a second helping? Do you remember? No. A thousand times no. Had they done that, those in the back rows would have been rising up and protesting most vigorously.

Here they would have been saying, Come back here. Give us a helping. We have not had any yet.

We are starving. It isn't right. It isn't fair.

Why should those people in the front rows have a second helping before we have had a first? And they would have been right. We talk about the second coming of Christ. They haven't heard about the first coming yet.

It just isn't fair. Why should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard it once? You know as well as I do that no one individual in the entire company of 5,000 men besides women and children got a second helping until everyone had had a first helping. There was an absolutely equal distribution of the food.

My friends, I have been with the back rows. I have seen the countless millions in those back rows famishing for the bread of life. Is it right? Should we be concentrating on the front rows? Ought we not rather to be training the front rows to share what they have with the back rows thus reach them with the gospel, those for whom nothing has been prepared? You will have to decide.

You will have to decide whether you are going to spend your life feeding the front rows or whether you are going to give your life for the back rows, those who are in dire need, those for whom nothing has been prepared. Dr. Alexander Duff, that great veteran missionary to India, returned to Scotland to die and as he stood before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church he made his appeal. But there was no response.

In the midst of his appeal he fainted and was carried off the platform. The doctor bent over him and examined his heart. Presently he opened his eyes.

Where am I? he cried. Where am I? Lie still, said the physician. Your heart is very weak.

What? exclaimed the old warrior. I must finish my appeal. Take me back, take me back.

I haven't finished my appeal. Lie still, said the doctor again. You are too weak to go back.

You will go back at the peril of your life. But in spite of the protest of the physician, the old white-haired warrior struggled to his feet. And with the doctor on one side and the moderator on the other side, he again mounted the steps of the Pope's platform.

And as he did so, the entire assembly rose to do him honor. Then he continued his appeal. And this is what he said.

When Queen Victoria calls for volunteers for India, hundreds of young men spring to the colors. But when King Jesus calls, no one responds. He paused.

There was silence. Again he spoke. Is it true, he said, that the fathers and mothers of Scotland have no more sons to give for India? Again he paused.

Still there was silence. Very well, he concluded. If Scotland has no more young men to send to India, then age it though I am, I'll go back to India.

I can lie down on the banks of the Ganges and I can die. Thereby I can let the peoples of India know that there's one man in Scotland who loves them enough to give his life for them. In a moment, young men all over the assembly sprang to their feet, crying out, I'll go, I'll go, I'll go.

And after the old white-haired warrior had been laid to rest, those young men, having graduated, having been ordained to the ministry, became his substitute in dark, benighted India. My friend, had you been crying out while I'd been speaking, I'll go, I'll go, what are you going to do with that life that God has given you? There are only one of two things that you can do. You can either waste it, or you can invest it.

You can do what millions of other young people are doing. You can grow up, get your education, get married, have children, go to work, live your life, die. That'll be all there'll be to it.

Or, you can invest that life of yours. You can invest it for the Lord Jesus Christ. You can make it count for God.

You know that there are 2,000 tribes that have never yet heard the gospel of Jesus Christ? In New Guinea alone, there are some 521 tribes. In the South Pacific Islands, there are some 500 tribes. In Africa, there are 350.

In South America, there are 300. There are 2,000 tribes throughout this world of ours still waiting for the messengers of God's salvation. You can have a whole tribe to yourself.

And you say, but Dr. Smith, I'm heading toward a great position here in America. Yes, my friend, and there are hundreds of others who would be glad to get that same position. But out there in the darkness of heathenism, you can have the position all to yourself.

You can have all the room you want. No one will be cutting on your toes. You can labor there for the Lord Jesus Christ, and then the reward that God has promised will be awaiting you.

There will be those who will rise up to call you blessed. You will have invested your life, and your life will count for God. But you must make the decision.

What are you going to do with your life? The master tells his servants that he is leaving, but that he will be returning. While he is gone, they are to bring the entire state under cultivation. They begin working around the house.

They beautify the gardens and flower beds. Next year, the weeds grow, and again they go to work, keeping the lawns in perfect condition. Presently, one of them remembers his master's orders.

I must go, he explains. Our master told us to bring the entire estate under cultivation, and he prepares to leave. But they cry, we cannot spare you.

See how fast the weeds grow. We need you here. In spite of their protests, however, he leaves and begins working in a far corner of the estate.

Later on, two others remember their lord's orders, and in spite of objections, they too go and cultivate another part of the estate. At last, their master returns. He is pleased as he looks at the flower beds and gardens and the lawns around his house.

But before rewarding his servants, he decides to explore the rest of the estate, and as he does so, his heart sinks, for he sees nothing but wilderness and marsh, and he realizes that there has not even been an attempt made to cultivate it. Finally, he comes to the one man working all by himself in a distant part of the estate, and he rewards him richly. He discovers the two in still another part, and again rewards them.

Then he returns to headquarters where his servants are waiting, expecting a reward, but his face indicates displeasure. Have we not been faithful, they explain. Look at these flower beds and gardens.

Look at these lawns. Are they not beautiful? And have we not worked hard? Yes, he replies. You have done your best.

You have been faithful. You have labored diligently. Well, then, they cry.

Why are you disappointed? Are we not entitled to a reward? There is one thing you have forgotten, he replies. You have forgotten my orders. I did not tell you to work the same gardens and lawns again and again, year after year.

I told you to bring the entire estate under cultivation, to cultivate it at least once. That you did not do. In fact, you did not even attempt to cultivate it.

And when your companions insisted upon going and doing their part, you objected. No, there is no reward. Many a one, I am afraid, is going to be disappointed.

You may be that one. You may have won many souls in your town. You may have been most faithful to your church.

But what have you done for those in heathen darkness? Did you ever think of going yourself? Have you ever given your money that someone else might go? Have you prayed? What part have you had in the evangelization of the world? Have you obeyed orders? Have you done what you could to bring the entire estate under cultivation? Or have you been satisfied to work in your own community and let the rest of the world perish? If you want to hear him say, Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. And if you want to receive the promised reward, the diadem or the crown, you had better get busy and do what you can to publish his gospel among all nations.

Or you will be a missing Christian in the day of reward. If this missionary message has challenged you to dedicate your life to full-time service for God on the mission fields of the world, may I invite you to discuss this very important matter with the one who has invited you to listen to this lecture. For additional information and literature on foreign missions and on living the Christian life, write Campus Crusade for Christ.

A study plan in booklet form entitled Ten Basic Steps to Christian Maturity is available to you. The address is on the record jacket. ...quota. 125 believers showed up.

On another occasion, each man was asked to contribute one pesa toward a new typewriter for the local municipal office. When this was announced during the service, those who had money with them filed up to the front and deposited their pesa with the church treasurer, who duly noted each name after which the service continued as usual. When inquiry was made as to why they did this during the church service, the reply was simply, God has ordered us to obey our local officials.

We do this as part of our worship and obedience to God. Such scriptural conduct could not help but have a terrific impact on that entire community, including non-Christians and tribal authorities. So it has always been where the word of God has been translated into the language, then translated into life.

It has made Christians worthy, progressive citizens of their own country, gaining favor both with God and with men. An educator sent by his government to direct the school for the training of teachers chosen from the jungle tribes of Amazonia was greatly impressed by the eagerness of the Indians to learn. Having worked with other tribespeople elsewhere in similar government programs, but with quite a different response, he was outspoken in his amazement.

These Indians of the jungle are simply made of different human stuff than those I've worked with before, he said. When someone tried gently to point out that it was the fruit of the gospel and their faith in Jesus Christ which had brought about the change, he brushed the idea aside. He didn't believe a word of it.

He'd worked with Indians all his life. He could tell that these were simply different by nature. Not long after, his own wife, a high society lady, put her trust in Jesus Christ and began to study the Bible.

Several months later, the educator apologized to the missionary for poohooing his suggestion that the gospel had made the difference in the Indians in the school. I didn't believe a word of it then, he said, but when I saw what a difference faith in Christ made in my wife and in our home, now I see what you mean.

You were right.

This does account for the difference in outlook. Thereafter, he requested that as many as possible of the government-trained teachers should be Christian. For, said he, they stimulate the others to learn and to live better.

Convincing demonstrable evidence such as this has opened government doors in many areas to a combined scientific research and Bible translation program to reach Bible-less tribes with the word of God. The word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, converting the soul, directing men into lives of righteousness, is God's own provision to dispel ignorance and darkness, undermine the rule of vice and superstition, and bring men out into the glorious light and liberty of the gospel and godly living. It is possible for young men and women today to serve governments and their peoples in practical ways obvious to them by carrying on a most effective missionary work with the written word of God, translated and placed in the hands of literate tribesmen.

Granted the importance of translating the scriptures, what training is necessary for those whom God would use in this task? A good working knowledge of the scriptures themselves is a must, and, if possible, a knowledge of the original languages. Those not trained in Hebrew and Greek are not eliminated, however, from making a very worthwhile contribution to getting a translation done. Many excellent commentaries and versions, prepared by highly competent men, are available for those who do not know the original languages and, incidentally, constantly used by those who do.

Experienced translation consultants who know the original language are available to aid the translator and check the quality of his translation while still in process on the field. Many translations are the production of teams of workers reflecting, when completed, therefore, the total background of all. A translation involves two languages.

There must be adequate control of the language into which the translation is being made. Courses in linguistics are important. They are designed not only to help the missionary learn to speak well, but also to train him to analyze the sound system, prepare an alphabet, describe the grammar, including the finer nuances of meaning so important in translation of the scriptures, and use with discrimination the vocabulary.

Such courses are now offered at several universities and colleges and at the three annual eleven-week Summer Institutes of Linguistics sponsored by the Wycliffe Bible Translators. The task of giving the Bible to the remaining tribes involves many other tasks besides that of actually translating. Many of these tribes live in remote areas.

Qualified pilots, mechanics, and radio men are needed to make possible surveys to find the tribes, as well as service in emergency flights to keep the translator working efficiently at his post. Bases central to the tribal areas and beyond all civilized commercial services require doctors, nurses, printers, agriculturalists, builders, maintenance men, administrators, shippers, stenographers, and teachers for children whose parents are translating the scriptures and teaching the tribe's people. The fact that your field of special studies has not been planned with this in mind need not deter you.

A university training is not merely the accumulation of facts in one particular discipline. It should also be the disciplining of your mind to grapple with new problems in other fields. This is precisely what is needed for pioneer missionary Bible translation.

Present yourself, the product of your training, unreservedly to God for his service. Let him decide your best usefulness. Let him say whether he plans to use you in the field of your training or in some other, which for his purposes he considers more important for you.

Any analysis of what graduates do will show that a considerable number, and often those who make a real mark in life, not just the failures, switch fields of endeavor after graduation. Given interest and vision, graduates can and have made the transfer from mathematics, physics, medicine, modern languages, history, Greek, agriculture, and many other fields with equal and surprising ease to pioneer translation of the scriptures. All Wycliffe Bible translator personnel receive three months training in jungle living and survival before proceeding to their assigned field.

If God is challenging you to do something positive with your life, the tribes may have his word. The facilities, both at home and on the field, are available to train you for the task. Three months linguistic training, working with actual languages, and three months living under jungle conditions will be far more convincing proof that God can use you to give his word to a tribe than years of armchair appraisal of your own abilities to do the job.

To date, 1,151 languages have received some portion of the word of God. Of these, only 219 have the whole Bible. Bible translation activity has steadily increased through the centuries.

Recently, some portion of the scriptures was being published in a new language on an average of every three weeks. At this rate, it would take over 150 years for the 2,000 tribes to receive their first portion. But it need not take that long.

A task force of 8,000 young men and women is needed. Using present facilities, this many can be trained in linguistics in the next 15 years. A trained worker in a program giving priority to the translation of the Bible, 15 years after beginning the study of an unwritten language can have the New Testament, or a sizable part of it, translated and printed.

Usually by the time it is ready, there is a growing constituency of readers and believers. The fruit of the translator's personal evangelism and discipling, waiting for the book. This means that this minimum job can be done in the next 30 years.

This generation, those of you in the sound of my voice at this very moment, can do it. If it can be done, it ought to be done. If it is not completed, it will be our failure, and we will answer to God for it.

What does God want you to do for the next 20 or 30 years of your life? I can't tell you what He wants you to do. He can, and He will. As a responsible Christian, you must ask yourself the question, what part has God planned for me in the proclamation of the gospel to every creature? If He wants you to translate, or do any one of the many other tasks involved, He will provide the training and the ability as you need it.

Go to Him in all sincerity of heart with the words of David's mighty man upon your lips. Thy servant is ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint. Your Lord, the Lord of the harvest, will tell you what He wants you to do, where He wants you to do it, and when.

He has good works, which He has before ordained that you should walk in them. God bless you as you seek His faith and do His will. If this missionary message has challenged you to dedicate your life to full-time service for God on the mission fields of the world, may I invite you to discuss this very important matter with the one who has invited you to listen to this lecture.

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