



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

### **Sermon Series // Joshua; Judges; Ruth**

**Supports Session 9:** Called

**Sermon Title:** "Calling the Least" (1 Corinthians 15:9-11)

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#### **Connection to Session 9**

Gideon did not believe he was worthy of the calling God placed on his life, and Paul did not think that he was worthy either. Today's message is one in which we study the nature of God's calling upon His people.

#### **Introduction/Opening**

Gideon was an Old Testament warrior God used to deliver the children of Israel from the grasp of the Midianites. When God called him, he did not believe he was adequate for such a call. Paul was a New Testament apostle who had a less-than-ideal background. When God called him, he did not believe he was adequate either. Many of us here today may not believe we are adequate for a relationship with Jesus or even to be used by Jesus. We can learn from the Old and New Testaments that God calls the least of these and uses them in amazing ways.

#### **Outline**

- 1. The calling is bigger than our past** (v. 9)
  - a.** To fully understand this verse, we need to understand a broader context. Paul indicated he was not worthy to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church. Paul was not saying he had negative things to say about the church or that he stopped going because someone hurt his feelings. Paul (formerly Saul) had actively sought to destroy the church and harm those who professed to follow Jesus (Acts 8:1-3). Yet God still called him to be an apostle.
  - b.** Many today may be able to relate to Paul. Some may not believe they are worthy of a relationship with Jesus because of past actions, while others may not believe they are worthy of serving at church because of past transgressions. If anyone falls into this false belief, please be encouraged to know that God's calling to salvation and our service to him is bigger than our past.
- 2. The calling is based on grace** (v. 10)

- a. One of the reasons God's calling is bigger than our past is because His calling is based on grace. Paul distinctly articulated, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." The first word in this statement is vital. The word "but" transitions us from Paul's past sins of persecuting the church into the grace of God, which is sufficient to save us from our past. It is also important to point out the origin of this grace: it is God. An easy way to define grace is unconditional love, or God's unmerited favor. Many of us, if not all of us, long for unconditional love, and the one true God is the source of this love.
- b. As we continue to walk through this passage, we see how personal God's grace is. Paul stated that God's grace was toward him and was not in vain. While God's grace is available for all, it is also personal in that it is toward each of us individually. Paul desired grace for his past actions toward the church, and God provided it. We too may desire grace for our past sins and actions against God, and He is faithful to extend it to us.
- c. Finally, God's grace is not given in vain. Some of us may have purchased something online that was promised to be the best thing, and we absolutely had to have it. Then, when it arrived, we quickly determined that we purchased it in vain and experienced buyer's remorse. This is not true of God. When He shares His grace, it is never in vain.

### 3. **The calling involves work** (v. 10)

- a. The grace Paul spoke of was received and not earned. This is a vital theological truth that we must not miss. Paul further articulated this truth when he told the church at Ephesus, "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).
- b. While this grace is not earned, work is seen as a result. Paul told the church at Corinth that he had worked harder than others because of the grace received. He also told the church at Ephesus, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do" (Eph. 2:10). Scripture is clear in that we are not saved by good works, but it is also equally clear that we are saved for good works.

### 4. **The calling is to proclaim Jesus** (v. 11)

- a. The primary work for which we are saved is to proclaim the gospel. As soon as Paul stated that he worked harder than anyone else, he said this work was the proclamation of the gospel. It is important to point out that the word "proclaim" is a present-tense verb, which means the act of proclaiming Jesus is Lord is not a one-time event—it is an ongoing lifestyle.

- b. While this work may be difficult and wearisome at times, it is rewarding because it leads to others believing the message. Paul described something that is more than a mental assent to some greater knowledge. Proclaiming Christ shows a conviction and belief that yields impact beyond the moment. Paul's audience was changed by the message of grace.

## **Conclusion**

Many today may feel inadequate like Paul, yet God called him and used him greatly for His glory. If you know Jesus as Lord and Savior, He is calling you to serve. If you do not know Him personally, His calling is to salvation. Even though we are inadequate, let's say yes to His calling upon our lives today.

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