

## **Called, Beloved, Kept**

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Jesus constantly stated that He only did what He saw the Father doing – no more, no less (cf. John 5:17-19). What this means is that whatever the Father revealed to Jesus as being His will for Jesus that day is what Jesus did.

This is why there are many times when we wonder just exactly what Jesus was thinking during a particular situation. For instance, when He learned that His friend Lazarus was sick, He did not immediately run to him as we would do. Jesus instinctively knew that there was something special that would result from this situation and if He rushed on over there, the opportunity would be missed.

So by the time Jesus arrived to Lazarus' home, Lazarus had died and been dead and in the grave for four days. This caused Martha to say to Jesus, *"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You"* (John 11:21). Through disappointment, Martha reveals her faith in the Lord. She knew that Jesus would hear "yes" to anything He asked the Father if He chose to ask.

The result is that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, something no one expected in a million years. This explains why He waited. Had He gone running over, He would have been expected to heal Lazarus prior to his death and the impact and truth of Christ's deity would have been lost on the crowd. It would have simply been another healing.

Arriving four days after He died allowed Jesus to prove His deity to the crowd. Who but God can raise the dead from the grave? No one of whom I'm aware.

Of course, this does *not* mean that if someone in our family is sick, we should waste time getting to them. This was a specific situation in Jesus' life in which He knew the Father was telling Him to wait.

As God the Son, Jesus' thoughts were so in tune with those of the Father (not to mention the fact that they are two Persons of the Godhead) that Jesus could honestly say that He and the Father were one (cf. John 10:30) and before Abraham was, "I am" (cf. John 8:58; see also Exodus 3:14). When Jesus lived His life in the flesh, He became the Father's bond-servant, uniting with Him in purpose and will. This is exactly what we are to do, though we will *never* have the same type of relationship that Jesus has with the Father, simply because we have never been, nor ever will be, God.

*"To those who are the **called, beloved** in God the Father, and **kept** for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you."* Jude 1:1b-2

The book of Jude opens with a powerful thought. We are *called*. If you are in Christ, which means that you have salvation because you are authentically saved, you have been called.

Too many people argue about whether a person is called or whether a person is meant to never be called. The reality is that everyone who is truly an authentic Christian *is called*. We are called not only to receive salvation but to participate in anything that is connected to that salvation. The reality here is that Jude is saying that God has called us.

God is the One who precipitated the call that got our attention, that enabled us to see the truth, and that caused us to embrace that truth. It was because of this that we know we are called.

This calling is something that I'm not sure we focus on all that often. What does it mean to be called?

Think about when you were in grade school or high school. You and your friends stood there while two captains divided up teams by calling on people they wanted on their team. There you stood, hoping that someone would call you before you wound up being the last person. You also wanted to be called by the person you thought was the greater captain.

When you apply for a job that you really want, you often sit by the phone after the interview because you are so anxious to be called. You really want that job and hope it comes quickly.

With God, there is no sense that the last person to come into the fold is any less important than the first one to have received salvation. God calls the entire world to come to Him for salvation. Few will do so, for any number of reasons.

Being called by God is a very personal thing, and we must begin to realize it. We need to dwell on it. It is easy to simply run over these words written by Jude as if they do not hold any real truth or something of great consequence. But consider that God has called us!

So what have we been called *to*? Aside from the aforementioned salvation, we are called to *follow* Jesus. This means many things to many people, but ultimately, the Bible indicates that to faithfully follow Jesus we endeavor to do all that He would have us do in the *way* He would have us do it. Seems reasonable enough.

Let's go back to the example of being a slave. If I am a slave to Jesus, there is no thought of denying His commands. I don't exercise any right I think I might have to disregard Him because something may seem difficult or because it might not capture my interest.

All I have to do is compare His life to mine and note the difference. There was not a time when He did not do what the Father wanted Him to do. Probably one of the most (if not *the*

most) difficult times in Jesus' life was the time just prior to His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.

It was in that garden as He prayed that He fought hard to ignore the desires of SELF, and He was 100% successful. The tension was great, so much so that He wound up sweating drops of blood. In His humanity, He was tempted to do what most if not all of us would do: reject God's will and shrink from the coming pain and separation from His Father while He hung on the cross for your sins and mine.

Frankly, I cannot imagine the amount of physical pain, fatigue and exhaustion He dealt with, yet He did that so that we might live. I also cannot imagine how it must have felt to be separated spiritually from the Father for even a moment, something He had *never* experienced. As God, He, the Father, and the Holy Spirit were one, yet triune. As Man, Jesus dealt with the same things that you and I deal with, yet He did so without ever sinning. Because of this, His earthly life was one that was in constant, unbroken fellowship and communion with the Father.

Yet on the cross He would experience a time when the Father would have to pour out His wrath on Jesus as well as turn His back on Him. He had to do this because Jesus became sin for us, in spite of the fact that He Himself never knew sin, never experienced sin, and never followed the dictates of sin, though He was tempted just like we are today.

That is love, and it was this love that caused Jesus to volunteer to do what He did. He literally answered the Father's call to live a life of perfection so that the entire law would be fulfilled, and then He offered Himself as an atonement for us. He was called and was chosen. He answered the call because of His love for us.

When we are called, we are not merely called to receive salvation, though that is obviously a large part of it. We are called to take up our cross and follow Him on a daily basis, just as Jesus – daily – followed His Father's will for Him.

The question then becomes, how can we say that He is our Lord if we are not willing to pick up our cross and carry it as He carried His? Why do we believe, as some teach us to believe, that the Christian should expect to live high off the hog down here? Why should we be yearning for the best car, the nicest-looking home, the largest wardrobe, and to have not only our needs but all our wants met as well?

That's all the time we have for today. Thanks so much for joining me. We will continue with the book of Jude next time and until then, I pray that the Lord will open your eyes to show you how blessed you are in Him!