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The Calling of the Lord

By Jared Williams

There are various ideas given as to how one is called to be a child of God. The extravagant idea, of the irresistible call and the direct spiritual illumination with dreams and fanciful experiences to the neglect of Bible study is quite popular. There is the view that through a study of God's word one obtains knowledge and thereby is saved of past sins becoming a Christian.

Really, it matters not what men think or feel, for we know God's word teaches, "... the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Paul said "... let God be found true, but every man a liar . . ." (Romans 3:4). Jesus said, "and ye shall know the TRUTH and the TRUTH shall make you free," (John 8:32).

God calling people to salvation is very much a part of New Testament teaching. Peter spoke of those who were Christians saying, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him WHO HATH CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT" (emphasis mine J.L.W.) (I Peter 2:9). Paul said of the chosen at Rome "... beloved of God, CALLED to be saints..." (Romans 1:7). Space will not permit that we site all passages in the New Testament which show people are called to be Christians. These are sufficient to prove the matter before us.

Perhaps it is not so much a task of proving that we are called to be

Christians as it is to persuade people HOW we are called. The ideas, opinions and declarations of men vary and are wide spread on this matter. But what does the Bible have to say of this greatly misunderstood subject. Let's consider some questions and give them a Biblical answer.

1. Since we are called to be Christians, how are we called? Remember, Peter said, "according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3). Here we have the assurance that God in his word reveals his will, that we may obtain knowledge to save our souls. Since such knowledge is obtained in the Bible, is it not reasonable to assume that the gospel of Christ is the means by which one is called? In fact, this is HOW HE CALLS US. Paul, an inspired man, said, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he CALLED YOU BY OUR GOSPEL, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thessalonians 2:13, 14).

Perhaps you have been led to believe otherwise. That one is called in a mysterious way, that is, by some strange feeling you can't explain; by a still voice; or some unusual happening. I ask, who are you going to believe and trust to save you? Surely, we can see the difference between what Lord has

said, and what we are told by men. If God had intended for us to save ourselves, he would not have given us His word and charged "seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read . . ." (Isaiah 34:16). "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein..." (Revelation 1:3).

We are called by the gospel of Christ, which is also seen in the promise Jesus made to the apostles. He promised they would be guided into all truth (John 16:13). As a result of this promise and their great work we have the message by which all men are called to salvation.

Today, those who preach, teach and support the gospel of Christ assist in his calling. The church of Christ is referred to as the "pillar and ground of truth" (I Timothy 3:15); and might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10). The church is the manifold wisdom of God, and through it's God ordained work it presents the only message to people for them to be called of God.

2. Who calls men from a world of sin? The greatest and most precious invitation is given by Christ. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). Christ extends an invitation to every tongue, tribe and race. He promises rest from the guilt of sin for weary souls.

Since Christ has been given all authority (Matthew 28:18), He also

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THE CALLING OF THE LORD

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has the right to lay down the terms by which men are called from sin. He said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). To become a citizen in the kingdom of God one must do the will of God. Jesus and the inspired apostles made clear the will of the Father, of what to do to become a Christian. He commissioned, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Did you notice the process involved in becoming a Christian? First, "teach", yes, one must be taught the will of God, "It is written in the prophets, that they shall be ALL TAUGHT OF GOD. Every man therefore that hath HEARD, and hath LEARNED of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). This process is seen in every conversion to Christ in the book of Acts. Study carefully Acts 2. When great persecution came to the church in Jerusalem and the disciples were scattered abroad, Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them (Acts 8). Now to preach Jesus is to preach things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12).

This is exactly what Peter and the other apostles did on Pentecost, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized... and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41, 47). Those who, gladly received the word, had been convinced that Jesus was the Christ, the Savior of man whom had been crucified. Receiving the word also included repenting of sin, for Peter told them to repent (Acts 2:38). Jesus taught that repentance is necessary (Luke 13:3). Paul taught repentance of sins (Acts 17:30). Receiving the word includes being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Jesus taught that baptism is necessary to enter the kingdom (Mark 16:15, 16). Paul was baptized to wash away sins (Acts 22:16); he taught that baptism also puts one in Christ (Romans 6:3, 4). Christ calls all men to obedience to the gospel.

3. Obeying the call of the gospel, also involves service in the kingdom. Peter says, "... ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9). We are to be labourers in the kingdom, letting our light shine to the lost world (John 15:1-6; Matthew 5:13-16).

There is a call which goes forth from the gospel, calling all men to repent and obey. Will you heed the gospel call and enjoy the Lord's blessing in this life and the world to come?

"Easter" and Resurrection!

By Dillard Thurman

Our mail box is flooded with queries asking, "Why do you not observe Easter and the resurrection of Jesus Christ?" We recognize the religious world looks on "Easter" as one of the most significant holy days to be observed and honored. So, many will celebrate in an "Easter bonnet" purchased for the "Easter parade" as they make their habitual "Easter" appearance at an

"Easter service," thus honoring the resurrection of Jesus Christ! But beyond all the pomp and circumstance, we should know something about this religious observance. Should we, or should we not observe "Easter"?

From Whence Is Our Information?

Faith in any religious matter must come from one source! "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). But here we come to a halt! Surprisingly, there is not one scripture that speaks of such a religious observance! Though almost every church in the land is making much ado about it, "Easter" as we know it, is not found in Holy Writ! The early church did not observe "Easter," inspired writers did not write of it, and the Lord did not authorize its observance! I have done research on the subject, and written other articles, but all my information had to come from secular sources. Divinely inspired men afforded me not one tiny bit on observing of "Easter"!

Acts 12:4 and "Easter Observance"

Almost certainly someone will challenge me with, "What of Acts 12:4?" So we must turn our attention to this passage in the KJV: "intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people." But the American Standard Version gives the true rendition of the original: "And when he had taken him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to guard him; intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people." It is unfortunate that the King James Version employed a word that in no way suggests the original (Greek). This is made plain by Thayer's Greek Lexicon, which renders the word "Passover," and not "Easter." I have before me a book having parallel readings from eight translations; and the KJV is the only one that has the word "Easter" in this text: the others all rendering it "Passover." I can find no translation using the word "Easter" other than the KJV.

Concerning the word "Easter" in the KJV, Barnes notes this: "The word 'Easter' now denotes the

festival observed by many Christian churches in honor of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that; nor is there the slightest evidence that such a festival was observed when the book was written. The translation is not only unhappy, as it does not convey at all the meaning of the original, but because it may contribute to foster an opinion that such a festival was observed at the time of the apostles." Too, the fact that Herod planned to kill Peter after "Easter" would not sanction its observance any more than it would sanction Herod's plot to murder!

Has Christ Authorized "Easter"?

Our spiritual instruction comes from three sources: (1) Inspired Command; (2) Apostolic Example; (3) Necessary Inference. Under which of these can the observance of "Easter" be placed? We must realize that it is not authorized by Christ, nor by His apostles! At no time did they command us to foster this practice! To be sure, we are to remember His resurrection, but not by any "Easter Observance." There is no authority in God's word for setting aside one Sunday out of the year as "Easter." Nor can the observance of "Easter" be claimed by Apostolic Example. In all of record of the apostles' work and worship, you cannot find an example for it. The current practice of its observance can not be brought in by 'Necessary inference,' for the Scriptures do not allow us to infer such! Is this practice from God, or of men? Take heed to John's warning: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (II John 9-11). Friend, "Easter" is not of heaven, but is man's doctrine!

The Resurrection Is Not Minimized!

The fact that Paul did not observe "Easter" did not prevent his extolling the resurrection of Jesus Christ! To saints at Rome he

said concerning Jesus Christ, that He was "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:4). In defending the gospel he preached at Corinth, he said: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures." (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Paul left no doubt that he remembered the resurrection of Christ, and he stressed it as one part of the gospel he preached! The gospel had three salient points: (1) Jesus Christ died for our sins; (2) He was buried; (3) He was raised from the dead, all according to scriptures. One might as well minimize His death as His resurrection! Paul wrote again, "We believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised for our justification." (Romans 4:24-25). We can't be justified without His resurrection!

The Terrible, Tragic IF'S in I Corinthians 15.

There are many IF'S in the Bible, but none is more hopeless than those presented in the 15th chapter of first Corinthians! Study the consequences the following present. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain." (verses 13-14). This would put Christ back into the grave, dead, and having no power of life. It would also mean the preaching of the apostles was vain, empty, useless! Too, their faith in Christ would be vain also! All this would be 'scrubbed' if Christ had not been raised from the dead! "Yea, and we are found false witness of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." (verses 15-17). They were false, because they testified that God had raised up Christ. Their faith was vain, empty, worthless - for it all hinged on a living

Savior! More than all, this left them still in their sins, for a dead Savior could not save them!

The gloom of the picture darkens as he says, "Then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (verses 18-19). If there is no resurrection, the grave will forever claim our loved ones, and there will never be a reunion, neither with family nor God! They are perished forever as they return to dust! Nothing awaits beyond death, and we are of all men most miserable, indeed! That which we have known and loved goes back to mingle with the insensible clod, and there is nothing more!

All this IF Christ be not raised!

A Light Breaks Through the Gloom!

After presenting the dark side, Paul draws the curtain on a brighter scene! "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept . . . For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (verses 21-22). Not only can we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but accept it as the earnest of our own! "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which are asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (I Thessalonians 4:14). No, we cannot minimize the raising of Jesus Christ, for it is tied in inseparably with our own resurrection! The words of the angel announcing to the women, "He is not here: for he is risen" (Matthew 28:6), held promise for all in the grave, and all who would go there!

How Do We Remember His Resurrection

Paul's writing discloses how they exalted Christ's resurrection with regularity! "For I received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he

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had supped, saying, This is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (I Corinthians 10:23-26). They did not meet to memorialize a dead Savior, but one who had died and rose again! It was by the resurrection that He was declared to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4), and they showed this risen Lord to the world by this memorial supper!

But WHEN did they have this memorial; on one Sunday out of the year? Not this "Easter" idea at all! "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." (Acts 20:7). Here we find an Apostolic Example as we noted before. Upon this day, the first day of each week, they came together for a stated purpose: "to break bread." Have you tied this in with the early church activities in Acts 2:42? "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Though some contend that breaking bread relates to a common meal notice in what setting it is placed! It is connected to doctrine, fellowship and prayers! No, friend, early saints came together to "break bread" at the Lord's table, and thus pay homage and remember a risen Lord! And it had nothing to do with the Passover (which the KJV translates "Easter" in Acts 20:7). This was for memorializing Christ's death, burial and His resurrection!

* * * * *

May We Always Have

Enough happiness to keep us sweet;
Enough sorrow to keep us human;

Enough faith in ourselves to give us courage;
Enough wealth to meet our needs;

Enough trials to keep us strong;
Enough failure to keep us humble.

Enough friends to give us comfort;
Enough determination to make each day
a good day. —Selected.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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