

Getting to Work on Time

We all know the importance of having a job and fulfilling the expectations of our employer to arrive to work at our scheduled time. If you doubt being on time is important, be habitually late and see how long your job will last. In being tardy, you will establish a pattern of unreliability and your character may come into question. Bad habits breed bad behaviors. We can say with respect to employment, being on time is quite important.

With the importance of time in mind, what about where we are in life when we get the calling from God to know Him? Have you ever wondered why it took decades to bring you to the knowledge and gift of His Truth and understanding it? Even more so, getting baptized and living by His Word? The title will definitely be a play on words this week, so bear with me.

Matthew 20:1-16- “The kingdom of heaven shall be compared to a man, a master of a house, who went out early in *the* morning to hire workmen for his vineyard. And after agreeing with the workmen on a silver coin *for* the day’s *wage*, he sent them into his vineyard. And when he went out about the third hour, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; And he said to them, ‘Go also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ And they went. Again, after going out about

the sixth hour and *the* ninth hour, he did likewise. And about the eleventh hour, he went out *and* found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all the day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘Go also into my vineyard, and whatever is right you shall receive.’ And when evening came, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the workmen and pay them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.’ And when those who *were hired* about the eleventh hour came, they each received a silver coin. But when the first ones came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a silver coin. And after receiving *it*, they complained against the master of the house, Saying, ‘These *who came* last have worked one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have carried the burden and the heat of the day.’ But he answered *and* said to them, ‘Friend, I am not doing you wrong. Did you not agree with me on a silver coin *for the day*? Take *what* is yours and go, for I also desire to give to the last *ones* exactly as I gave to you. And is it not lawful for me to do what I will with that which *is* my own? Is your eye evil because I am good?’ So, the last shall be first, and the first *shall be* last; for many are called, but few are chosen.”

(A Faithful Version)

Most of us are fairly new to God's Family in keeping His Sabbaths and Holy Days. When I say new, I mean 10 years or less. Most of us have come from various religious backgrounds. I suppose I'm a "religious mutt" more than most, having started out as a Methodist, on to Presbyterian, Catholic in my first marriage, then Pentecostal with a few visits to the Baptists once in a while. This round about journey took over 50 years. We should all be grateful God doesn't wear a wrist watch. Being the Alpha and the Omega He doesn't need one (**Rev. 1:8, 11, 21:6, 22:13**). It took me 10 years longer of wandering in the wilderness than the Nation of Israel after leaving Egypt (**Joshua 14:10**).

What transpired over the fifty years was God's preparation of *me*. He was heating the metal to forge what was His design for me all along. Some of us needed more heating than others, some had a longer wait but none the less, were still called.

Jesus clarifies this in the above scripture in verse 16, "So the last shall be first, and the first *shall be* last; for many are *called*, but few are *chosen*." This means that we all receive the same salvation no matter when we are called, early or late, teens or retirees.

Twenty years ago, how many of us would have really been ready to receive God's Truth in the manner in which we now live it? Maybe none of us? This is all part of

God's eternal plan for each and every one of us. We come from all walks of life, all religious backgrounds and experience and when it is His time, we start asking questions. Something is missing and we begin to search for truth, The Real Truth.

Matthew 7:7-8- "Ask, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and you shall find.

Knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it shall be opened." A Truth that is missing in so many false and man-made religions. We water down God's Word to fit our desires rather than live to fulfill His!

We must realize that we didn't receive this honor of being called or chosen by chance. We were chosen before birth. **Ephesians 1:5-** "Having predestined us to sonship to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will." Predestination is a type of assurance, a type of guarantee. **Romans 8:28-30-** "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Because those whom He did foreknow, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His own Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Now whom He predestinated, these He also called, and whom He called, these He justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." While God may have set us aside at birth, we may not wake up to the calling until we are well on in years. In this instance, better

late than never! We also need to keep in mind while predestination may be a type of a guarantee, this guarantee can be cancelled!

Ensuring We Are Chosen

So often, it is easy to become lax in our thinking, assessing that, because we believe we are members of the end-time church, we can relax in our conduct and spiritual growth. Perhaps we regard ourselves as automatically chosen, that we “have it made.” That is dangerous thinking! Our emphasis, especially now as the times worsen, had better be on working to make sure we are chosen.

Being a Christian is not merely an entitlement as so many people think. Being in the Family of God isn't something that comes by saying a “sinner's prayer” or going to Church on Christmas and Easter, keeping the traditions of men. So much more than that, we must do our part in being obedient to God's laws and Commandments.

The Apostle Paul makes this point about the Israelites and Gentiles who have become Christians (in Eph. 2:19), and he says, “You are members of the household of God.” All other divisions you remember have gone, they have all been set aside, and they have all been abolished. This is a new thing God has brought into being

amongst Israelites and Gentiles. Jesus died for all mankind. The further great fact is that we are in the position of children. Again, we are in the process of legal adoption. It is important that we understand this in the doctrine that Paul teaches, in Ephesians 2. We can all become one in the family of God.

John 1:12-13- “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. Who were not begotten by bloodlines, nor the will of the flesh, not by the will of man, but by the will of God.”

Deuteronomy 7:6-9 “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has *chosen* you to be a special people to Himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God Who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.”

That is why Paul says in I Corinthians 1:27-28 that God has chosen the weak and the poor and the foolish of the earth to confound those so-called intellectuals with the understanding and discerning minds. In our calling we have been given knowledge and understanding of such an incredible value that its worth is impossible to calculate. So few have been given this gift it is overwhelming to think of being chosen from all the billions of people on the earth!

Without our keeping of God's Sabbaths and Holy Days, we would otherwise be clueless to the Plan of God. Through the gift of God's Holy Spirit, we are given understanding. Understanding is totally different from knowledge. Some people with ample knowledge are incredibly stupid when discerning the plan of God. We know from a previous essay we can't fix stupid, but ignorance can be cured. **Hosea 4:6-** "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being as a priest to Me. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children." People profess so many things in their "religion" they miss the Word of God, His Truth and His Way of life. This is where the "cut and paste" Christianity really come in to play. "But in vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrine the commandments of men."- **Mark 7:8.**

Without God's Spirit the Bible makes no sense whatsoever. Discarding the Old Testament because it is “Jewish” or it has “been done away with” sets up the failure for all who subscribe to this thinking. God does not change (**Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8**). The mystery of God's plan can only be discerned through special revelation through God's Holy Spirit. Prayer, Bible Study and fellowship can guide us to understanding. Understanding God’s Word and His way of life can only be achieved through our belief, faith, obedience and commitment to it. We will be led by God’s Holy spirit and follow the example set by our Savior Jesus Christ.

God did the choosing (choosing the weak and base of the world); we did not (**John 6:44, 6:65**). God is totally in control. Our lives must be in total submission to His will, completely devoted in our preparation for what God has in store for our lives as a member of His Family.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”- **Matt. 5:5**. As a member in God’s family, we will have our place in a new earth and His Kingdom. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”- **Matt. 5:8**. We have a duty and responsibility in being a part of God’s family and to be present with Him when these events come to pass. We must produce good fruit, the Fruits of the Spirit, the fruit of righteousness. We have to do the works and have the faith, that we may

grow in the image of His Son. We may then proclaim the family to which we belong. Never forget, we are no longer strangers or foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Matthew 13:18-23 both warns and advises us on the course of our lives once we hear “the word of the kingdom” Beginning in verse **18**; “Therefore, hear the parable of the Sower: When anyone hears the Word of the kingdom and does not understand *it*, the wicked one comes and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is the one who was sown by the way. Now the one who was sown upon the rocky places is the one who hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy; But *because* he has no root in himself, *he* does not endure; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, he is quickly offended. And the one who was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the Word, but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. **23. But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the Word and understands, who indeed brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold and another thirtyfold.**” Verse 23 describes the work required of us to be in the chosen group. The ones God chooses are those that bear good fruit. We do this by overcoming our flesh and old sinful nature and being obedient to God’s Commandments producing fruits of the spirit (**Galatians 5:19-24**).

Jesus makes this quite clear in **John 15:1-8**- “I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. He takes away every branch in Me that does not bear fruit; but He cleanses each one that bears fruit, in order that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean through the word that I have spoken to you. Dwell in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you are dwelling in Me. I am the vine, and you are the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not dwell in Me, he is cast out as a branch, and is dried up; and men gather them and cast them into a fire, and they are burned. If you dwell in Me, and My words dwell in you, you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples. The consequences are listed in verse 6 of failing to bear good fruit.

Being predestinated and the timing of our calling is not as important as the fact we have been called. Are we fulfilling our roles in growing in the image of Jesus Christ? **Ephesians 4:13**- “Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ;” (**Romans 12:2**). If we do these things, we will indeed be

among God's faithful, obedient and chosen and glorified with our Savior Jesus Christ.

Yesterday, I had lunch with someone I hold in high esteem and consider to be a brother and close friend. He too is a retired law enforcement officer of 30 plus years and the personification of integrity. Our conversation was varied but we ended up talking about God and the Bible. I know that God is calling him (**John 6:44**) simply based on the questions asked and discussed. If I may, let me turn the clock back to 1986 for just a few minutes.

My first recollection of my friend was when I was a rookie fresh out of the academy. I volunteered one afternoon, to go out in the Everglades to help cut down a marijuana field that had been seized by the Narcotics Unit. There were quite a few deputies out there physically involved in the eradication operation. It was rainy season, hot, sticky and with a light rain, it was miserable and thick with mosquitos. In the middle of all the physical effort of loading two U-Haul trucks with the seized pot was this deputy who I knew by name only, and he was a Deputy Chief! I was quite impressed that someone of rank would be out in these lousy conditions but nonetheless, there he was, soaked like the rest of us loading dope in the trucks. Quite a first impression. This impression has always stuck with me.

We may not be called or understand God's plan when we are young or even through our adult life. We may not grasp the importance of meeting certain people along life's journey but they help shape and direct our destiny. We certainly may not understand all of the trials and storms we've encountered. But God in His infinite wisdom knew who and what it would take and just how long it would be before the metal was hot enough for Him to forge us into His purpose.

Our coming together as a small fellowship group is not by chance either. This location is not coincidental. Consider our small group and from the many locations and religious backgrounds we came from. California, South Africa, Slovakia, all over. What brought us all together at this place and time? It was the mind of an Infinite and loving Creator to purpose and gather His children at His appointed times. For times such as these, we are getting to work right on time.

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