



3. Deeper in Prayer

Text: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 & Psalm 34:8

Points to discuss:

1. ETERNAL VALUE #1

That we may be worthy of God's calling

God calls/invites us to himself, and then he asks us to live up to that calling. Many of us have wrongly believed that God's "call" was something specific and unique, that we had to DO for God, which in turn would make our lives feel more meaningful. Some of us have even felt a sense of panic, wondering if we have somehow, missed God's call. Some of us have interpreted God's call to mean some sort of full-time, paid ministry job. These beliefs have generated unnecessary stress, and even guilt, to many well-meaning Christians over the years.

Others have misinterpreted the idea of calling as something obligatory, where we are to give up everything fun and enjoyable, so that we can follow God. Yet, the scriptures tell us, that when we come to God, we will "*taste and see that the Lord is GOOD*". Since we are born into, and shaped by, our sinful nature and its poor taste for sub-par, worldly pleasures, we spend our lives chasing after and 'connoisseuring', the wrong tastes.

Knowing this about us, God graciously calls us to come to him, knowing that what he offers is far greater than anything this world has to offer. Most of us are suspicious and don't really believe that this could be true, and so we straddle between both worlds, trying to get the best value out of both, while actually missing out on the purity and splendour of God himself. God calls us to leave behind the pleasures that we have built for ourselves, in order to enjoy him.

Once we have answered God's call, we should live as people who have been called. We cannot taste of God's goodness, through Christ, and then live as though we are not saved. We all struggle to live up to this calling, because the world continues to call us back into its version of pleasure. We find our hearts moving back and forth, while knowing that our lives should reflect God's glory, and yet they often don't. We should all have the desire for greater faithfulness, and we should be praying, like Paul did for the Thessalonians, that we would live the life worthy of the calling.

Some of us may not even feel that much desire or affection for Christ, but we too can pray for more. God wants us to WANT him, and he can work in our hearts to grow our affection, if we will only ask him.



PRAYER
DEEPER | WIDER



2. ETERNAL VALUE #2

That we may be fruitful and pleasing in every work

We perform most of our daily tasks without a vague thought of God or what he might want. We rarely operate from a place of faith. We please God when we make decisions from a heart of faith. It is only when we continue to operate from this posture that we can continue to do good, over the long-haul. Decisions made from a heart of faith, are made with God's glory in mind, which has eternal value, and we should be praying about these things.

God wants us to live lives that have eternal value – which means we should continue to grow in our ability to do good. We do not do this alone though, God will empower us as we continue to grow in our faith-filled action.

- GOD will fulfil this – God will empower us to do good, and to act according to our faith. He wants us to flourish in this and will equip us to do so, even when circumstances are difficult. Pray for strength and wisdom in these times.
- GOD will fulfil this through US – God will be at work in us throughout our lives. Sometimes we will flourish in this area, while other times we will veer off and back into 'autopilot'. We need to keep returning to God in prayer, asking him to bring us back to the posture of faith where we consciously act in faith. God honours our prayers, when we long to do what pleases him. When we ask him to work in us, and to draw us back to having a heart for him, he will do so. He is committed to our flourishing in him, and living the life that Christ died to give us – a life of faith.

Discussion Questions:

1. Prior to this sermon, what did you think the “call of God” meant, and why was it always such an elusive thing to grasp?
2. What does God call us to “taste and see”, and why is this so wonderful?
3. Why is it important to acknowledge that our hearts do long for worldly pleasures, and that we need to make a conscious decision to leave them behind in order to follow the call of Christ?
4. ♥ Personal Reflection: *(Suggestion – discuss this question in same gender groups.)* What worldly pleasure have you built your affection on, that you know God wants you to leave behind, to follow his call?
5. Why is it important to remember that God will give us the power we need to step out in faith and obey him, even when circumstances are difficult?
6. Why is it helpful for us to know that God is committed to our good works that come from a heart of faith, and that he really wants us to flourish in them?
7. What should we do if our hearts are cold towards God at the moment, and yet we realise that we *should* be more loving and faithful to him?
8. Why is Christian community so key to us maintaining a genuine posture of faith?