

An Undignified Calling

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We are living in a time of unprecedented turmoil. We see chaos at the border; unprecedented war and rumors of war; and havoc and unrest within our own lives and the lives of those precious to us. There has never been a time in my remembrance when the level of fear has risen to such a level as we see today due to the upheaval that we are witnessing throughout the world. Commentators and podcasters are providing their spins on what is taking place and what we should do to prepare for the inevitable doom that awaits us. Some are making a lot of money selling “prepper” supplies of guns, ammunition, vacuum-packed food supplies, satellite phones, and a thousand other things to prepare for every situation that the human mind can possibly imagine.

We must understand the times that we are living in from the perspective of God’s purposes and His time table. What we are witnessing is NOT the end of the world as many end-time preachers would have us believe. We are, in fact, experiencing the birth pangs of the dawning of a new age in the plan of God for the ages, that being ultimately to restore all of creation and reconcile it to Himself. The transition from one age to another always involves chaos from the perspective of the natural mind. We have become comfortable with the current order of things, and many of us have invested heavily in that order. This was also the case during and after the time of Jesus’ ministry here on earth, as God was bringing about a transition from the age of the law to what we now call the church age, or some call “the age of grace.” Jesus Himself brought it, and gave testimony to it when

He said that He is the very fulfillment of the law! He was crucified for it as the religious leaders wanted to stamp out anything that would challenge their authority in their world. Jesus' crucifixion only furthered the very plan of God to usher in this new age. Some 40 years later, Solomon's (rebuilt) temple was destroyed. We must understand that the temple was the very center of Jewish life in that time. Its' destruction signified the destruction of just about everything that gave meaning to the Jewish people. Fierce battles with the Roman army took place as zealous Jews desperately tried to preserve the way of life of the former age.

We find ourselves at a time in history very similar to those Jews in 70 AD. We are transitioning from the church age to what I (and others) characterize as the "kingdom age." Like the former transition, this is a chaotic time, as hostile forces are attempting to jettison long-held cherished values and institutions that have been a way of life from the very founding of our country. Zealots of various stripes in our day are calling for every response imaginable to defend and protect the old status quo, just as the Jewish zealots did at Masada when they attempted to wrest control of their homeland from the Roman army. As understandable as these motives are, we must not be taken in by these zealots. It is imperative for those whom God has called apart from the systems of Babylon, that we understand the times in which we live from GOD'S perspective, and that we respond in radical obedience to His call upon us as His sons whom He is even now bringing to maturity.

The specifics of this call will vary with each one, as God has a unique calling on each and every one of us. The way forward often is unclear as we are forerunning a reality in the Spirit to be brought to pass over the coming days, weeks, months and years. There are no detailed roadmaps. Indeed, we are constructing these roadmaps for others to follow, just as those faithful forerunners before us plotted out their portion of the roadmap for us. There are, however, some general features that the Lord has been revealing over the past years and decades that are instructive for us today. We have written about some of these in prior

articles, and I shall simply highlight them here briefly.¹ Those on this journey of maturing unto sonship must understand that we will be cooperating with God in the ushering in of this new age which is only now dawning upon our consciousness. We will ultimately be ruling and reigning with Him, not through political or military power, nor through charismatic persuasiveness of our natural abilities, but by His Spirit being manifest in and through us in self-denying love and service. The economic system by which we will accomplish this will not be one of buying or selling, but by giving and receiving. The administration of God's Kingdom will not be done primarily through church or parachurch organizations, but by individuals and groups of individuals connected in the Spirit, responding obediently to the call of God in their lives. It will not be paid pastors or evangelists overseeing His Kingdom, but servant-sons whom He will recruit from the most unlikely places. They will not be pedigreed with academic degrees or grooming by high-profile preachers and teachers. They will not ask for money or donations, but will be provided for through tent-making opportunities provided by God, by others being moved by the Spirit of God to give, or a thousand other ways that God will miraculously provide. The message proclaimed by these called out ones, this *ecclesia* of the Kingdom Age, will not sound much like the message we are hearing in the churches today. The Word spoken forth will be His Word, bringing life, restoration of relationships, healing and freedom at their very utterance. It will be a message proclaiming the plan of God for the redemption of all mankind and indeed, the reconciliation of ALL creation. Those who are called to herald this age of the unveiling of His Kingdom will, in short, be chartering an unfamiliar path, a path that will be rejected and despised by those who are committed to preserving the status quo.

A Clarion Call

God is calling forth His sons in this hour. This calling is not necessarily for those who are especially gifted in music, oratory, or fund-raising abilities. It is for those who have a heart for God, and who are willing to pay the price required to

¹ For more discussion see [Beyond the Sons of God](#), [An Alternative Pedagogy for Understanding Scripture](#), [The Bible, Honky Tonk Music and the Word of God](#), and [Bureaucrurchurch](#) among other articles on the Books and Articles page of www.wordforthebride.net.

respond obediently to that call. Period. I am confident that those who are reading this article have been enrolled in God's curriculum preparing you for the part that you will be playing—and are even now playing—in His plan for the age that we are now entering. The price will be great, as many of you have already learned. Sons of God are those who are being purged and stripped of all self-life, being brought to maturity and reflecting Christ within themselves as this disciplining process takes place. They are those who are willing to participate in the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death. The process of humiliation that He would take us through is the very means that will equip us for the awesome task that He has set before us.

This process will look anything but “spiritual” much of the time. It may involve physical suffering. It will probably involve emotional upheaval. It often involves rejection from family and friends, even and especially those who we have regarded as spiritual mentors. There will be times that it feels that we have gone astray because of the loneliness and sense of alienation that we are feeling, even alienation from God Himself. He is doing a deep work within us during these times.

We cannot possibly *prepare ourselves* for this calling through any rite or vain attempts at self-discipline. I vividly recall being in a prayer group as I was just beginning this journey of coming into a deeper spiritual walk—a walk that I would later come to understand as the journey of maturity unto sonship. A member of this group, who was much more mature spiritually than I, was calling for intercessors to share the heavy burden that she was experiencing for the heart of God for His church which has gone the way of a wayward bride. I remember so clearly responding, **“I am willing, but I don't know how.”** I thought at the time that intercession was praying in a certain way, maybe marching around the city to take it for God, etc. Of course, these were ideas that I had learned from the church, the very wayward bride that I was being called to intercede for! I didn't realize it then, but all that God needed from me was my *willingness*. The years that followed were tumultuous. I was called out of the church. I lost my marriage, and not long after, called out of my comfortable career. I found myself feeling more isolated from people and from God. I would become frustrated and

even angry. I was experiencing feelings that were anything but “spiritual” and uplifting. It felt like I was backsliding—to use a word that the preachers like to use. Yet I knew that my heart was more set on my love for the Lord than it had ever been during the early days when I “felt” so much more spiritual. It was then that I was reminded that the very person who was calling for intercessors in those early years of this new journey that I was experiencing in Christ, spoke over me that I would carry the very anger of God. I suddenly realized that this was HIS anger that I was carrying, and it was HIS frustration that I was experiencing. All this time He had been forming me and molding me to carry His heart. This was a lesson in what it means to intercede, a lesson that is only now coming into a clearer focus for me. I had nothing to do with it, except to be available and willing to be used by Him in whatever way that He would use me. This is seldom an elegant or desirable calling by any worldly or even spiritual standard. Indeed, it is not understood, and I know that I must look like an apostate, especially to those in the church world. But it is incredibly humbling to know that He can trust me with this calling, the purpose of which even I do not fully comprehend.

Each one of us is uniquely called to a distinct purpose. What we must expunge from our minds, however, is that our calling must somehow look “spiritual,” and especially that it will look like the stereotyped images that the contemporary church has presented of the pastor, evangelist, prophet, or any of the so-called five-fold ministries suggested in the book of Ephesians. The church today has used these descriptive callings as titles of offices that are to be held by elite individuals at the top of an organizational hierarchy. In Western Christianity, for example, the pastor is the CEO of an organization called the church, and that title carries with it a sense of honor and dignity, commanding the respect and admiration of a large category of people called the “laity.” The evangelist is understood to be one who travels across the country from church to church with impassioned messages so as to “bring revival” to spiritually anemic congregations. The “offices” of prophet and apostle have been especially distorted in our day, too often being occupied by self-appointed gurus with a lust for power and recognition.

The truth of the matter is that the “five-fold ministry” identified in Ephesians 4:11 is a beautiful description of the giftings of God given to His many-membered body enabling it to function effectively in the face of opposition from a hostile world. As we transition into a new age in the time line of God’s glorious plan, we must understand that this five-fold ministry will look very different than what it has looked like in the organized church world. Indeed, God will be calling individuals to tasks and purposes that might even appear to be unseemly. A poignant example of one acting as an “evangelist” took place some 20 years ago in a little church in the deep south. The church had become quite self-satisfied, even rather proud of their spiritual life and heritage. They had just (rather ignominiously) ousted a pastor who did not fit the stereotype of a good southern pastor and who had offended the sensibilities of some people in leadership in that church. A guest minister was delivering the message on this particular Sunday, tickling the ears of the parishioners with praises of what a spiritual church they were. There was a visitor in the church that day who was not familiar with the history of the church, nor was he too concerned about proper protocol. After listening to this ear tickling sermon for several minutes, he could take no more. He got up from his pew, walked to the back door and in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear, pronounced “This is a bunch of shit!” I do not know what the long term effect of the message of that rather rude evangelist was, but it was an unsettling word that the people (and the preacher) in that self-satisfied church needed to hear at that particular time. *That* is the role of an evangelist in this day. I use this illustration to emphasize the unconventional and even sometimes unsavory nature of those tasks that the ecclesia of God will be called upon to do in this time. Our calling in this appointed time will require a people who are willing to appear as the scum of the earth in our obedience to the call of God on our lives.

This time in which we find ourselves is indeed unique and unprecedented insofar as God is now bringing forth a new age and is using people and strategies that do not look like the familiar ways of the past. The clarion call is the same as it has always been: for a people who are simply willing for God to use them in whatever way He chooses. As you are so willing, He will take you there, regardless of how

unconventional or scandalous the path that He takes you may appear to be. There will, of course, be rabbit trails and futile efforts. These are all a part of His training program, and even our setbacks will be used to accomplish His ultimate purpose. What a freedom it was for me to discover that all that He is asking for is my willingness. I have learned and am still learning that He will do the rest. The ride will certainly be bumpy at times, and we will feel like we want to jump off. But like Peter we can only say, *“to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”* (John 6:68). There will almost certainly be more times of agony than times of triumph, but He is in it all. And the ultimate triumph is His—through us!