

## INTRODUCTION

Christ had sent his people into the world. He sent the apostles who were eyewitnesses of his resurrection. They had a comprehensive responsibility. So does the church as a whole. A specific calling is to tell the gospel to others, but Christian calling is much broader than that.

God calls his people to share with Christ and to partner in his work.

An important principle of Christian life is that his gifts are given to his people "for the common good" - 1 Corinthians 12:7).

## GOD CALLS US TO DO A NUMBER OF THINGS

First and foremost he calls us to share in the grace of Christ. There are benefits for this life and the next, and we can access them by prayer. God never calls anyone to serve him without showing his love first and giving the resources needed. The family relationship comes before service. Every believer shares in God's pardon and adoption, and is given his Word, Day, and Spirit.

He calls us to serve him. That includes honouring him in worship and keeping his commands in daily life. It also includes treating other people the way he treats us.

Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." That reflects God's conduct so it involves forgiving and building up.

On one level that is including all believers in the social life of the church (beware of cliques, Galatians 2:11-14; James 2:1-9), and showing kindness to those in need (Acts 6:1-6). It also involves providing for spiritual need by prayer, encouragement in the truth (Hebrews 10:24-25), and godly advice (Titus 2:3-5). Caring for spiritual includes teaching the Word of God (1 Timothy 5:17).

God also calls his people be his witnesses. That was Israel's calling in Old Testament times. Jesus called his disciples "salt" and "light". The Epistle to the Romans asks, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

## GOD CALLS ALL TO CERTAIN THINGS AND SOME TO DO OTHER THINGS AS WELL

All the church's tasks fell on the apostles, but some specialisation became necessary. There are core tasks of Christian care and witness, but God gives a variety of gifts (Romans 12:3-9; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

Christ makes gifts of people to his church (Ephesians 4:7-12).

The apostles had a unique place as eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection, and holding their commission directly from him. Whenever he sends someone to declare his Word we should respect that - "He who receives you receives me."

In Acts 6 we find seven men appointed to relieve the apostles of some of their tasks. The Spirit fitted them for it. The church appointed them thus allowing prayer and teaching and destructive cliques forming.

Thus some have special responsibilities, reflecting the spirit of the Good Shepherd who took responsibility for us.

That may be responsibility for spiritual welfare ("They watch for your souls" - Hebrews 13:17).

Some are sent as evangelists (Acts 13:1-3). Others are called to oversee churches (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-9). Taken together their duties include teaching gospel truth, silencing opponents, and keeping the people safe.

It may be responsibility for welfare of other kinds. The poor need care (Acts 6). There may be overseas aid (2 Corinthians 8:1-7). Individuals may be called to serve the church (Romans 16:1). There is a difference between pursuing a calling as a private individual and being appointed to an office because the church recognises Christ's call on a person's life. The office may be to "shepherd the flock of God", or provide for material need including the worship of God's people.

## WE SHOULD REFLECT ON HOW HE MAY BE CALLING US

"You are not your own, you are bought with a price." Our lives should be guided by awareness of God's grace and of our obligation to him.

Decisions on calling should be based on needs around us and on the gifts God has given us. That is so for individuals and the church at large.

So we should pray God to lead us individually and collectively. Then we will know what Christ has sent us to do.