

17 CALL-CONSCIOUS OR CHRIST-CONSCIOUS

Jeremiah 45:5 And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began

The common notions of life work and calling are too externally oriented. There is a great gap between the natural and spiritual approaches to the meaning of calling. If we go by the natural line of reasoning, we would be drawn to do what is most meaningful, profitable, visible, and rewarding. But the spiritual line of reckoning does not look for meaning, motivation, reward, or fulfilment in the externals. Outward circumstances are only the backdrop to something deeper - our relationship to Jesus Christ expressed in love and service. What matters most is not where we serve or what we do, but whom we serve. The nature and type of the work is of secondary importance.

If we think of the call along natural lines, we will end up wanting only to do what we fancy is worthwhile, preferable or practicable. The test comes when the external scene changes. Will it affect my relationship with Jesus Christ, and my sense of worth or usefulness? Think of what might happen if you had to cease from active outward service through some traumatic event, such as a crippling illness that made you bedridden, or persecution that kept you in prison. The natural mind would pine away thinking "I am of no more use. What can I do? There is nothing to live for anymore." But it is vital to see that meaning and fulfilment are not found primarily in doing this or that, or being here or there. Our true calling is found in Christ, and is worked out by loving and serving Him wherever He has chosen to station us. If we do not get this right, we shall always be chasing an elusive dream, but never feel that we have arrived. We become more pre-occupied with seeking God for the right outward choices than with being right with Him inwardly. If we are constantly seeking an outward call, we may never hear the real, inner call of God when it comes through a still, small voice. It is always the inward rest of being in the will of God that gives meaning and motivation to all our outward occupations, never the other way round.

If our calling is task-oriented, we will be task-driven. But if it is Christ-centred, we will serve Him and not be slaves to the task. Am I truly free and willing to serve Him in any place or capacity? Or do I cling dearly to my convictions of the call? The snare of being call-conscious is that I begin to think of myself as some glamorous specialist instead of an unworthy servant. Pride and presumption begin to seep subtly into the work and contaminate it. Christ-consciousness is the hallmark of one who is truly called and is working out that calling without fuss or fanfare. Whenever the temptation comes to define your calling in more explicit terms, resist it, put it aside, and get on with the work at hand with quietness and confidence. *"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24)*. Never allow your calling to outgrow Him who has called you.