

# Called

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1 Corinthians 1, verse 2.

! As I was thinking over that verse this week, it reminded me of a dog that Danny and I used to own, and her name was Annabelle.

Annabelle, some of you have met Annabelle. She passed away last year. She was 15 years old when she finally kicked the bucket, and now she resides in our backyard.

She was a lab mix, and I bought her back when Danny and I were just dating. We hadn't been dating for a whole long time back in college, but we had been dating for a while, enough that we'd become serious about one another.

And so when Christmas time rolled around that year, as the good boyfriend that I was trying to be, I asked Danny, what would you want for Christmas?

[ 1 : 36 ] Without hesitation, she said, I want a puppy. But I did have hesitations. I had reservations, and I tried to explain to her, you know, hey, listen, do you have the time for a puppy?

You know, do you have the time to take care of it? And I like you right now, and you like me right now, but there may come a time where I'm an idiot, and I'll do something, and you might decide, I don't want this guy in my life anymore, and I wouldn't want you to take out your anger or frustration towards me on that dog.

And so, no, no, no. No matter my protests, she wouldn't listen to any of it. She wanted a dog, and so I went with my mom to the dog pound, and there were a few puppies available, and I chose Annabelle.

And so, about a week before Christmas, I put her in a Santa Claus hat, and I went to Danny's apartment, and I knocked on the door, and she opened the door, and there was her puppy. And, you know, and I was the greatest boyfriend in the world at that point in time.

She was happy, the dog was cute, and she just fell in love. And then she got older. And pressure, yeah, well, Danny did too, but yeah, the dog in this.

[ 2 : 55 ] This is who I'm referring to. Annabelle grew older, and there were times where a better name for Annabelle would have been Jezebel.

And you know how some dogs you get, some animals you get, they kind of, they almost seem to become more human as you have them. Never the case with Annabelle. There was never a doubt in our mind that she was an animal and nothing more.

However, she was a dirty dog. And I'll spare you the details just to let you know that she got a lot of bass. And we didn't like it when she licked us.

On one occasion, after Danny and I had been married, we lived in our first apartment together, a little one-bedroom apartment in North Kansas City while I was going to seminary.

And Annabelle was an escape artist. She'd always find a way, no matter how much we tried to play with her and get that energy out, she would always find a way to escape. And it got old because when you live in North Kansas City, it's a very populated area.

[ 4 : 02 ] And so there was a large field where she would run through into some neighborhoods, very busy streets. And so we were always concerned every time she got out that she would get ran over. And so, but still, it happened all the time.

And when it happened, I would grab the leash. I would take off after her. And I'd see her in the distance. And I'd kind of get down, crouch down, and try to sweet talk her.

Annabelle, hey, Annabelle, come on. It's time to go home. And she would be smelling the ground, and she'd look up at me. And as soon as I took that first step toward her, boom, she would bolt in the opposite direction.

The more I called her, the more she would run away. And the worst time was probably, it was late at night. It was close to midnight. She did this.

And of course, because she has black fur and it's black outside, she was almost impossible to see. And in frustration, I stomped back into our apartment, and I told Danny, she's gone. You know, we've been good to her.

[ 5 : 01 ] I chose that dog. I love that dog. I took care of that dog. She doesn't want to live here. Let her go live somewhere else. And about 30 minutes to an hour after making that decision, you know, I see Danny sniffing and crying.

And as mad as I was, I was sad too, because even though this dog was a pain, she was still our dog. And so we went back out together in the car, and we drove through all of these streets.

And lo and behold, after about 30 minutes of doing so, we pull down this dimly lit street, and off in the distance is this dark shadow making its way towards us.

And we drive closer to it, and sure enough, it's Annabelle. And we get out of the car, and she's covered in some kind of green slime. I kid you not. Don't know what she got into, but she stunk to high heaven.

We got her in the car. We took her back to our apartment complex where there was a carport with a hose kind of set up as a car wash. And so at about 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning, we're hosing this dog down and walking her back once again, our dog who was lost, but who now was found to our home.

[ 6 : 14 ] And I tell you this story because I think it illustrates in a humorous way the very real and very serious conflict that each of us experiences in this life between two opposing calls.

Two opposing calls that lead down two opposing paths, and ultimately to two opposing destinations. Outcomes.

Outcomes. And so the main idea for this morning's text is this, that God's call is rivaled by the invitations of the world. The invitations of the world, and in death, the invitation of God brings abundant and eternal life through Jesus Christ.

If you remember, when God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, he did not merely release them from their slavery under Pharaoh.

He rescued them from the corrupting influence of the Egyptians and their worship of pagan deities. The ancient Egyptians worshipped a vast number of gods, and they participated in many religious celebrations.

[ 7 : 31 ] And so for centuries, the Israelites lived within this system, and they had become very familiar with it.

And as the story continued, it wasn't very long after God had saved them, that after he had delivered them from Egypt, that while Moses had ascended the mountain, was still there receiving the Ten Commandments from God, that the Israelites, while he was away, if you remember, made gods for themselves, seeking to syncretize their faith in God with the pagan system of religion that they had witnessed for so long.

And so they made two golden calves that they fashioned in the image of God. And you remember, Moses comes down from the mountain, he sees it all, he throws the tablets down and they shatter into pieces.

He orders that they melt the golden calves down and he forces them to drink it. Then there's a purification among the people where thousands who worshipped the calf were slaughtered.

And then, in a way, God hits the reset button. And he brings Moses back to the mountain to do the whole thing all over again.

[ 8 : 58 ] And in order to establish his law and his pattern for acceptable worship and to do away with the lingering effects that Egypt's paganism had on his people, God gave them the book of Leviticus.

Now, you all know Leviticus. Leviticus is the book where many well-intentioned Bible reading plans go to die. You start reading in Genesis in January, you get to Leviticus in maybe February or March, and then you all of a sudden don't read the Bible so much.

I actually just read recently through the book of Leviticus, and it's a great book. All of God's scripture is wonderful, especially when you know all of it, and you can go back to the book of Leviticus and see how Christ is symbolized in the sacrifices that were made in the tabernacle and in its furnishings and the role that the priests played and how they served, all of these things served to

deal with the problem of sin and guarded also the purity of God's people and how ultimately it was Jesus Christ through his life, through his death, and through his resurrection.

He fulfilled all of that in total, what these things could only accomplish in part. But in Leviticus chapter 18 verses 1 through 5, that truly is the heart of the book.

And it's in these verses that God delivers his command for his people to reject practices of the pagan nations that surrounded them.

[10:32] They were called, if you remember, to be a light to the nations. And they couldn't be that light, God says, if they participated in the darkness of the nations. And so there he tells them, the Lord spoke to Moses and saying, speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the Lord your God.

You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes.

You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules. If a person does them, he shall live by them.

I am the Lord. So in these verses, God makes it clear that the Israelites are his. They belong to him. And that because of that, they can't continue on as they were, or just like the other pagan nations that surrounded them.

So in the rest of that chapter, God goes into detail about the types of sinful behaviors that these pagan nations participated in, that they should have no part in themselves, which included adultery, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, child sacrifices, just to name a few.

[11:54] And God says that characterizes them in no way should that ever characterize you. These were vile perversions that God's people were to have no association with.

Then in verses 24 and 30, he recaps his earlier commands. And he says to them in verse 24, Verse 30, So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourself unclean by them.

I am the Lord your God. And then his exhortation continues into Leviticus 19, where he says, Okay, that's pretty clear.

Isn't it? Pretty clear what God is calling them to and calling them away from. Pretty obvious. It doesn't take being a rocket scientist to figure this all out.

This is God's call for his people to be spiritually separated from the world that surrounded them. This was his call for them to be distinct from the world, to abstain from wickedness that the world participated in, to sustain from the systems of the world that promote sinful living and sinful lifestyles.

[13:49] The Lord demands pure worship and single-minded devotion to him. That's what he's calling them for and asking, commanding them. God commanded Israel to be separated from the corrupting influences of the world, and he desires that his church do the very same thing today.

As we saw last week and as we've seen throughout our study of Hosea, Israel failed to do this. They were chosen by God.

They were called by God. They were saved by God. But over and over and over again, they would rebel against God, and instead of obeying his call, they would go their own way, do their own thing, do what the world wanted them to do.

Why? Why did they continue to do this? Well, we see that God's call is rivaled by the invitation of the world, and that comes from verse 2. Again, the more they were called, God says, the more they went away.

They kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. This isn't just a conflict that ancient Israel had to endure.

[15:12] This is a conflict that Christians still face today. And the roots of this conflict are in Genesis chapter 3.

What happened there? Well, let's look. Now, the serpent was more crafty than any beast in the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

And the woman said to the serpent, Well, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden. Neither shall you touch it, lest you die. But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be open, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her dumb husband who was with her, and he ate two.

That's one of some things we don't understand, is Adam is not somewhere far off when this is happening. He's right there, watching it unfold. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together, and they made themselves loincloths.

[16:45] Now, you might be confused here, because my point was that God's call is rivaled by the invitation of the world, but we just read that it is Satan who is giving the opposing invitation to Adam and Eve.

So which is it? Well, they're the same. The world's call is Satan's call. The Bible identifies Satan as the prince of the power of the air in Ephesians 2.2.

This is in reference to the world system, the way in which the world operates, the ideas, the opinions, the values, the goals that the majority of the people hold in our world.

Jesus himself identified Satan as the ruler of this world. The apostle Paul calls him even the god of this world. So what we see happening in Genesis 3 is Satan contradicting God's command.

Adam and Eve are presented with two invitations. God which says, obedience equals blessing. And it's interesting, if we go back to Genesis 1, when God creates Adam and Eve, and he sets them up in the garden, right?

[17:59] He basically, he gives them this command to obey him, but he does it for their blessing. Hey, if you obey me, you will be like me. You will be blessed.

God says, obedience equals blessing. And Satan says something different. He says, no, disobedience equals blessing.

His tactics haven't changed today. His message is still the same. He pulled the same tactic on Israel, and he continues to do the same to the church.

So secondly, we see the world calls us to separation from God. What's interesting to me is the lack of resistance that Israel as a whole put up against the world's call to separate themselves from God. They didn't go into it kicking and screaming. They wanted to feel accepted. They wanted to feel relevant in their world. They wanted to feel like they fit in with everybody else.

[19:08] We need a king too, right? We need to worship their gods too. We want to be friends with the world. We don't want to be seen as that outcast, that weird nation, those weird people. We want to be cool.

And I think of like a middle school teenager, remember? As a parent of middle schoolers, all of a sudden you went from being cool when they were little to not cool at all. Drop me off over here. Don't drop me off in front of school, mom and dad, because I don't want my friends to see us together. Because that's not cool. And middle school is hard.

I know it was hard for me. That's a part of my life that I'd never want to repeat again. Because there's such a desperation to fit in. You will change everything about you physically, the way that you speak, the way that you look, in order to gain friends.

And especially for boys to do whatever you think is going to make the girls like you. And in my case growing up, it was being a skateboarder. I had nothing, I had no idea about skateboarding.

[20:10] I could not skateboard, but I pretended to because I wanted to fit in. And here's the thing. Middle schoolers are bad about hiding this. It's pretty obvious. All I had somebody do is hand me a skateboard and say, hey, let's see what you got.

And they would have known I was a complete phony. But as adults, we do the same thing. We're just a little bit better at hiding it, aren't we? You ever been a part of a conversation and the topic is something that you don't know much about?

Whether, guys, it's sports or cars or something else, and women, you know, there's all these different categories we don't know a whole lot about. But we see people we like and we're talking about them and all of a sudden, we're an expert too.

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think they're going to win the Super Bowl. Yeah, I agree. Or other things. We do that, don't we? Because we have this desperate desire as a result of our fallen, sinful human nature to fit in with everybody else in our world.

Fallen, sinful human nature desires to conform to the world. And there is a sense in which many in the church feel today that in order to attract the world to the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we must become more appealing to them.

[ 21 : 24 ] That as a church, we must become more like the world. Now, you've probably noticed today that many church services, many new church buildings, look a lot like, from the outside on the inside, like a concert venue.

You wouldn't know that it was a church driving by. You wouldn't know that it was a church sitting down in the chair until things started. They don't want to appear to churchy. You want to make people feel uncomfortable coming in here.

So whatever is trendy in popular culture, they seek to incorporate it somehow, oftentimes into their worship. Case in point, you remember when the new Star Wars movies began coming out, and there was a church who took that popular trend.

Everybody was talking about Star Wars. Everybody was excited about it. And so they had a Star Wars-themed worship service. And in that service, the pastor dressed as Han Solo, and he compared the Holy Spirit to the Force.

And on and on and on, he went making and drawing these comparisons. Now, I like Star Wars. I do. But not that much.

[ 22 : 50 ] And it's fun to have those conversations in private, like, hey, you see how there's some parallels there? You know, it's neat. It's written in our hearts to know, right? And we can draw those comparisons between good versus evil, right?

The redemption of Darth Vader in the end. And we could talk about all of these things, and it's interesting, but it's not fit for church. What good does it do? We are talking about sin and death. We are talking about salvation. We are talking about the fact that because of sin, people will die and eternally be separated from God in hell.

And that is not a comfortable subject to talk about, is it? And so oftentimes, we don't. I was back in Kansas City this week, as I told you, and I was talking with my dad.

We had a chance to talk in a while, and our conversations kind of go all over the map. We talk a lot about sports. We'll talk about professional wrestling, believe it or not.

[ 23 : 55 ] And then eventually, though, it'll get to theology. And so we were talking about, he's a Sunday school teacher in his class, about what he's teaching and what's going on here, and just talking about the Lord together.

And we came to the subject of hell and about how it is, it's an eternal place where eternal souls will spend their eternity.

And there's a moment with me and my dad where, you know, his eyes started to water and my eyes started to water too. I was thinking, why is that? Well, one, because we're amazed at the grace that God has given us because that's what we deserve, to save us from that place.

And also, tremendous sadness for those who that will be their eternity. And think of the fact that we know people, past and present, who likely are going to spend their eternity there.

And so, when we come into this place, yeah, there is a time and a place for humor as we've experienced, but we can't forget what we're here to do. We are to communicate this truth.

[ 25 : 09 ] And so, we cannot be distracted from it by lightsabers and Ewoks or what have you. The thought behind all of this type of thinking goes something like this.

Well, if it desires the, if it achieves, I should say, the desired effect, then what's so bad about it? People are coming.

People are having their ears tickled. The flashing lights are drawing them in. The smoke machines, the explosions, whatnot. But I'm telling you that all those things do is entertain.

They don't accomplish any great good. John MacArthur was reading a book, Christ's Call to Reform the Church, and this is a quote he has in there I wanted to share with you.

He says, as the world grows increasingly hostile to the gospel, the sinner-friendly church must compromise more and more and maintain its attractiveness. Refusing to be an offense to anyone, they emphasize physical emotion, not spiritual worship.

[ 26 : 12 ] Affirmation, not conviction. Sentimentality, not theology. Entertainment, not edification. And frivolity, not solemnity. These churches are terrified of being rejected by the world.

That sounds a lot like Israel to me. They're terrified of persecution. And so they will always do whatever they deem necessary to make sinners feel more comfortable, welcome, and validated at any cost.

But the truth is that a church that's just like the world has nothing to offer the world. It's merely one more form of disposable entertainment.

Another book I was reading, 21 Servants of Sovereign Joy, written by John Piper, and he was talking about John Bunyan. And there's another quote there that really convicted me. And he writes, there is a gulf between the Christianity that wrestles with whether to worship at the cost of imprisonment and death and the Christianity that wrestles with whether the kids should play soccer on Sunday morning.

[ 27 : 27 ] Man, I think that's true, especially of the church here in the West. Right now, what our society needs most is for the church to be the church.

not seeking to conform to them, not seeking to entertain them, but seeking to share the gospel with them, warning them about the reality of hell, being honest about sin and pointing them to Christ as the solution, to Christ as their hope, to Christ for their redemption, for their salvation.

And so we are to be a city on a hill just as the Lord called us to be. What good is a light if it's shrouded in darkness?

As Jesus said in Matthew 5, 13 through 14, speaking of us, to us, his church, you, you are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its taste, right, if it becomes like the world, if it doesn't achieve its purpose and what it's supposed to do, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

[ 28 : 56 ] In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. God's design for his redeemed people is complete separation from everything that characterizes the world.

We don't do what they do. We don't talk the way that they talk. We don't think the way that they think. We don't share their same values because our citizenship isn't here.

It's in heaven. We are different people because of the fact that we've been saved. We've been given the Holy Spirit of God. We can't help but be different because this world isn't truly our home. We're passing through on our way to the place where we truly belong. So what should we do with all of this? Well, thirdly, we see God calls us to separation from the world.

Now here's the question. How do we go about doing that? How do we be separate from the world? And the better way to answer that question is not how can we do it, but look at what Jesus has done for the answer.

[ 30 : 11 ] John 1, 9-13. The true light, speaking of Jesus, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jesus Christ is the life-giving light of mankind. He humbled himself by leaving heaven, coming down, adding flesh to his deity, and he succeeded in all the ways that Israel failed and all the ways that we fail today.

And so when he begins his earthly ministry, remember the Holy Spirit drives him out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for 40 days. Reminds you of something else, doesn't it? Israel 40 years in the wilderness. Jesus has fasted this entire time. And so you remember the devil comes and his first invitation to him is to command the stones to turn into loaves of bread to satisfy his hunger.

[ 31 : 43 ] Jesus refuses to do so saying, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Okay? Strike one.

Satan, he doesn't give up. Satan then invites him to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple and said to him that if he did so, God would command his angels to rescue him.

So, first of all, Satan's attempt, his appeal, was to Christ's flesh, fleshy need for hunger, and second here is to his pride or to our pride.

Hey, if you throw yourself down, everybody will acknowledge that you're somebody impressive, somebody who they should listen to. Why don't you just do that? It would be so much easier. Again, Jesus refuses to do so.

Quote in the scriptures, finally, Satan takes Jesus to a very high mountain. He shows him all the kingdoms of the world and offers to give them to him, all of them, if he would just fall down and

worship him.

[ 32 : 45 ] And here, Satan's invitation is, you know what? Forget about that whole cross mess. You don't have to do that. Don't do that. Spare your life. Lay hold of all these things, all these good things that the world could ever offer a person.

Health, wealth, prosperity. Sounds to me a lot like Satan tried to tempt Jesus with the prosperity gospel, doesn't it?

He also uses scripture and he twists them in a way, but obviously Jesus is the incarnate word of God and that was not going to be successful. He wouldn't be duped as Adam and Eve were, as Israel was, as we are.

What's also interesting about this is Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan's temptation in paradise, to Satan's call to disobey God. Israel was delivered from slavery.

They were delivered into the promised land, and yet they still too, as we see in Hosea 11, succumbed to the calls of the world and failed in their mission to be a light to the nations.

[ 33 : 54 ] Jesus, in the wilderness, paradise has been lost, but where Adam and Eve had failed, he succeeded.

He succeeded in being the light of the world. He succeeded in fulfilling all that the law required with his life. He succeeded in making the atoning sacrifice, being the atoning sacrifice for our sins by his death on the cross.

He succeeded over sin and death through his resurrection and his ascension to the right hand of God the Father. Christ's victory is our victory.

Where we've failed, Christ has not. Now here's the thing. Just as Israel was called to be a light to the nations but failed, the church has been called to be a light to the nations as well.

But, because of Christ's work in redeeming us, in giving us his spirit, in dwelling us, empowering us, we can, I believe, fulfill this mission.

[ 35 : 16 ] But again, how good are we at doing that right now? I'd say that we're not doing a very good job and I think you would probably agree with me.

And I think that's because we aren't quite sure what it means to be separate from the world. The New Testament letters refer to various kinds of separation but always with the recognition that we remain at the same time justified and sinners.

As a result, there is no perfect church so we really struggle with understanding what it means to obey our Lord's call to be separate from the world and yet also to obey his call to be a light unto the world.

So whenever I have these questions or dilemmas I like to go to guys who are much smarter than me and Sinclair Ferguson is much much smarter than me and he's Scottish so he sounds even smarter than he really is, right?

And so he gives the guidelines of separation and I wanted to read the first one for you because I think it really makes it clear. He said the church is called to be separate from the world within the world.

[ 36 : 40 ] Separate from the world within the world. That's where we mess up a lot of times when we say we'll be separate from the world and we'll pull ourselves completely out. Right? We are called to be separate from the world though within the world.

He says the principle by which we live is not how can I avoid contact with the world so as to be separate from it rather it is how can I live in the world yet be free from its influence and by my life actually expose its contagion.

He lists Ephesians 5.11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness but instead expose them. That is what we are to do. As lights of the world we shine in darkness as salt of the earth we preserve only if we are present within it.

So I want to close with one final example in Jesus eating with sinners and we know that when we're talking about worldliness this is one where a lot of people like to go well Jesus ate with sinners you're right he did but when they say that there's this insinuation behind what they have to say which is basically sin's not a big deal Jesus didn't think it was a big deal he went and ate with sinners my question is what do you think Jesus was doing when he went to eat with sinners yes you're exactly right he did he came to sinners we're all sinners he wasn't afraid to have that association to be seen by those who were self righteous the Pharisees!

[ 38 : 28 ] people who were known sinners in that community but he went to them and he dined with them for a purpose what was that purpose to speak the truth to them in love and we see that over and over again in Jesus earthly ministry that that's exactly what he did and that is exactly what we are to do as his church we are called to be separate from the world we don't have the same values we don't have the same morals or lack of them that they have we have a mission we go we share the good news of Jesus Christ that's our purpose right now I'm telling you that if people in your family the people who you work for if they don't know or can't tell that you're any different from them you are doing a great disservice to that person this isn't an undercover mission

Jesus mission wasn't an undercover mission and if you're upset about the direction and the way in which the world is heading or what it has become that I'm telling you it does the world no good for you to either complain about it here and do nothing about it when you're actually out in the world that's why we do things like engage where we incorporate our whole church to go out so that people can see our light shine before them and give glory to God all the ways I want to say one last thing there's always going to be these two calls in our life and if you have not responded to God's call to salvation you are of this world you are sinful like the rest of us you have fallen without Christ and his righteousness you will spend your eternity in hell there is a way that seems right to a man the Bible says but it ends in death God sent his son Jesus Christ to live the perfect sinless life that we could not live he died on the cross for our sins and he is calling you today to believe him to receive him as your Lord and savior to be rescued from sin and death and hell what do you got to do to do that there's nothing that you can do but you believe the Bible says in your heart Jesus Christ as Lord and savior that he died for you you confess with your mouth that he raised from the dead and the Bible says that you will be saved you  
Thank you.