

The Facets of the External Call

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[0 : 00] Well, for those of you who were here last time, you might remember we began looking at the call of God.

! And at the outset, we divided this call into two parts. There is an external call and there is an internal call.!

Now, the external call is the proclamation of the gospel. Things that many of us have done. Mike's done. Willard's done. Others have proclaimed the gospel.

Missionaries, lay people. The Lord Jesus Christ issued many external calls during His earthly ministry. Think of the rich young ruler.

Came to him and said, what must I do to inherit eternal life? That's like fishing in a barrel. The Lord preached to the 5,000. And a short time after that, He preached to 4,000.

[1 : 10] And that's just the men. We don't know how many women and children might have been there. But I'm wanting to do a little possible correction. I want to make sure I didn't leave the wrong impression with anyone concerning the external call.

That proclamation of the gospel is ordained by God. He wants that. He equips men for that.

And He uses it for His purposes. The external call awakens some sinners. Can bring illumination to some sinners.

And is often ignored by some sinners. Totally ignored. But the external call does not result in the salvation of a lost soul.

For that to happen, we must depend upon the internal call of the Spirit of God. And we're going to be looking at that beginning January 7th of next year.

[2 : 18] And we're going to spend a considerable amount of time in that internal call. And look at various facets of it. Now, there are a number of things that should happen during the external call.

The one proclaiming the gospel must explain certain facts concerning the good news. The first thing that the true preacher of God should proclaim, I think, is the absolute holiness of the triune God.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I think it's important to declare man's sinfulness and the work of Christ in accomplishing redemption.

Men and women need to understand they are absolutely accountable to the Creator. And that He is also judge. In the external call, men are told that God, who is perfect, does not have fellowship with darkness.

Anyone who falls short of moral perfection. There's a couple of passages which I think speak to that. 1 John 1.5 This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

[3 : 54] And then James 2.10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. And the Bible declares that every human has fallen short of the divine standard, which is perfection, and is therefore under the just and deserved condemnation of God.

Scriptures say there's no one righteous. Scriptures say all have sinned, fallen short of the glory of God. The Scriptures say the wages of sin is death. We know that sin is universal because death is universal.

Everybody dies. And most of the death we talk about is a spiritual death here, which is a separation from God, because He doesn't fellowship with darkness.

Well, what do we do? If we're not perfect, how are we going to have fellowship with Him? Well, January 7, 2019, we'll start that. During the external call, we are to explain that God has moved in sovereign grace and provided His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. The Lord Jesus came to this earth. He lived a perfect life. He died a substitutionary death in place of His people.

[5 : 33] The Bible uses the word propitiation. That means an appeasement or satisfaction. The Lord's death on the cross completely satisfied the wrath of God toward the sin that dwells in all those who would someday believe.

God is satisfied. We must also explain that Christ died a real death. He really died on the cross. And we have to explain that. He was buried. He rose from the grave on the third day. Life reentered Him. He didn't sleep.

That one atheist wrote a book about. The swoon theory. Yeah, one guy wrote, Well, you know, yeah, he was beaten and he was scourged and he was stabbed through and through with a spear and everything.

But the coolness of the tomb, He healed him. And then he pushed that two-ton rock out of the way and came out. I don't have that much faith.

[6 : 43] I'm sorry. I don't. By the way, you know why the rock moved? Not to let Jesus out, to let the world in. To see that tomb as empty.

In so doing, in being resurrected, He triumphed over sin and death. In due time, the Lord Jesus ascended back into heaven. He is presently seated at the right hand of God the Father where He ever lives to make intercession for His people.

If you ever wake up at three o'clock in the morning, first of all, call me. I'm probably up. But you ever wake up at three in the morning and lay there, you know, and the ceiling's dark and, you know, and you think, what's Jesus doing right now?

He's interceding for His people. He ever lives to intercede. Without these facts, and I left many out, the gospel really and truly has not been fully preached.

Now, all of this is essential for salvation. But this knowledge alone is insufficient to save.

[7 : 57] In fact, James declares that demons believe all of this and they tremble. One guy has coined the word, they have demon faith.

And they tremble at this knowledge. What is missing is another element of the gospel proclamation. We must tell people that to be saved, they must repent of their sins and believe in the finished work of Christ.

These were the words of Christ Jesus Himself in Mark's gospel. Chapter 1, verse 14, 15. Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. Doesn't get any clearer than that. Repent and believe. The apostles preached a message of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I might just say to you, John the Baptist came preaching repentance. He too preached repentance. But this was the message of the apostles. Repent and believe.

[9 : 17] Repent and believe. Repent and believe. And I think we could outline it sort of like this. First of all, we are to acknowledge our sin and guilt before God. And why wouldn't we?

He already knows. I mean, what are you hiding from God? What am I hiding from God? We are to acknowledge our sin and guilt before God.

We learn that from the prodigal son. I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. And the father and that prodigal son is God.

God the father. We are to abandon all hope of attaining forgiveness and right standing with God by good works.

There isn't enough good works for me to achieve that. They don't exist. Hebrews 6.1, Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ, go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.

[10 : 22] Works won't get us there. We are to forsake a life ruled by sin and self. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts.

Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. That's Isaiah 55.7.

Again, in Luke, and he said to all, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.

We are also to put all our trust in the righteousness of Christ alone for being accepted and reconciled to God. He reconciled us to the Father.

Philippians 3.49, Paul speaking, of course, Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also, if anyone thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

[11 : 31] Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, the chosen people, of the tribe of Benjamin, the chosen tribe, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless, but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, hear that? Where does it come from? From God that depends on faith. Very interesting. I've read that word a thousand times. I looked up rubbish in the Greek dictionary and it's rich in meaning like refuse and trash and whatever, even down to the excrement of animals.

It's dung. It's dung. Paul says, all of my life has been dung up to this point. When proclaiming the gospel, ministry should also explain the promise of forgiveness and eternal life.

There is a myriad of blessings that accrue to the new convert. Forgiveness and eternal life are two of them.

[13 : 28] We must also stress that the greatest gift of the gospel is Christ Himself. He gave Himself to us. That's by far the greatest gift to the repentant sinner.

He receives Christ. And we're going to speak more, a lot more about repentance when we get to the internal call. And we're going to be closing the external call tonight, not for a little while.

But I want to refer to what I would call the characteristics of the external call. What are the traits of the proper proclamation of the gospel?

And the first one I would mention is this. The external call is to be universal. It's a universal call. We send missionaries to the other most parts of the world.

We've gone. We've had guys in this room go. Part of the reason Latvia trip, part of the reason I've been to Cuba and China and the Arab world and other places.

[14 : 40] Wes, you've been, and Mike, China and trips. We go. Others of you have been too, I know. I left out some. But it's to be universal.

The good news is to be proclaimed to individuals regardless of who or what they are. It does not matter if a person is a Jew or a Gentile.

It doesn't matter if they're rich or poor. It doesn't matter if they're male or female. They're young or old. And you know, we can go on and on with those comparisons.

The external call is to be preached to all people everywhere. And let me say this, it is preached to the elect and to the non-elect indiscriminately.

Indiscriminately. Now there's no secret if you haven't been around maybe you don't know this, I embrace reformed theology. I came to it kicking and screaming like a lot of people. But I embrace it.

[15 : 45] Sometimes people refer to it as Calvinism. When they do that I say, what does that mean? I've never had anyone explain that properly. But we have to be careful because there is an ugly side to this belief system.

And we've got to be on guard against it. We have to be on guard. One of those ugly things is a theology that's out there and it's been out for a long time, several hundred years, that says we should only that since God intends to save only the elect then the preacher or teacher or witness should only proclaim the gospel to them.

Give the gospel to the elect only not to the non-elect. I had experience with that. I was in China and I met a young man and he just he worked for Phillips young guy and he just clung to me.

He was learning English and we became friends and I had the opportunity to share with him very lengthy time and gave him a Bible that had Chinese on one side and English on the other and we had a marvelous time.

When I left the next morning to come back to America he came running up and hugged me and he said I couldn't get him to call me Tom he said Mr. Holland he said I want you to know I got up very early this morning and I prayed for you.

[17 : 16] This is a guy that never prayed in his life. He said I prayed for you and that thrilled my heart. When I got back I was sharing with a good friend of mine how many of you Phillips guys ever run into Phillips guys on an airplane to Houston?

That's pretty average and I saw one of my buddies so we sit next to each other and he was a believer and I told him about that he's a reformed guy and I told him about my experience he said I

can't believe you shared the gospel with him.

I said well Bill what do you mean? He said you don't know if he's one of the elect and I laughed I thought he was making a joke and he says I'm serious I said you've got to be kidding me anyway I won't go into detail what else I said if it were not such a serious error it would be laughably foolish and it's also absolutely impossible it's impossible we don't know who the elect are God's hidden that we don't know who they are most of the elect don't know who they are it is absolutely impossible to distinguish them from the rest of humanity that's why Spurgeon when he was asked about this and this has been around a while he said you know if God had painted a stripe down the backs of his elect my ministry would be walking around

London lifting shirts I'd be looking at backs looking for that stripe he said God didn't do that so Spurgeon went on and said so I preached every creature and when one of them gets saved I say wow that's one of God's elect that happens after genuine salvation listen to some verses that describes how God talks about the lost Ezekiel chapter 18 verse 23 God speaking have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked declares the Lord God and not rather that he should turn from his way and live Ezekiel 18 32 for I have no pleasure in the death of anyone declares the Lord God so turn and live Ezekiel 33 11 say to them as I live declares the Lord

God I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked you get the impression God doesn't have pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live turn back turn back from your evil ways oh why will you die oh house of Israel pretty strong well let's bring it into the New Testament 2nd Corinthians 5:20 therefore we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us we implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God that's our message to the lost be reconciled those are great verses on the external proclamation of the gospel there's more listen to what Isaiah says and by the way Isaiah is often referred to as the fifth gospel in the Bible you have Matthew

[20 : 56] Mark Luke John and Isaiah because it's all Christ it's all about Jesus Isaiah 55 come everyone who thirsts come to the waters and he who has no money come buy and eat come by wine and milk without money and without price listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food incline your ear and come to me here that your soul may live that's a general call of the gospel found in Isaiah few verses later in verses 6 and 7 seek the Lord while he may be found call upon him while he is near let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon that's a great message to the lost we serve a

God who will partner Isaiah 45 22 turn to me and be saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is no other these are tremendous passages of scripture all of those passages are examples of divine compassion but we see the greatest example the greatest manifestation of divine compassion in the one who is the exact representation of God the Father's nature and that of course is the Lord Jesus Christ during the incarnation on earth the Lord Jesus proclaimed the gospel and he did not limit it to the elect only although he could have done so he knew who they were he could have done that the

Lord preached the gospel even to those who rejected him he told people if you are weary! you can find rest in me he gave the great commission to the church which is still with us today go and make disciples of every nation and to preach the gospel to every creature that's our call that's what we're called to do the apostle Paul modeled the preaching ministry of Christ he went even to Athens and preached to a gathering of Greek philosophers you know I thought about that and I thought that was not exactly the hotbed of evangelical thought neither is the philosophy department at Harvard but these were the Greek philosophers and Paul sat down with them yet Paul preached to them about repentance from sin and placing faith in

Christ Jesus now you know what most of those philosophers did they walked away they laughed at him they didn't want anything to do with that but if you read Acts chapter 17 right at the end you find out that some of them believed and were saved that's what happens when the gospel is proclaimed and the spirit of God moves on a heart so we learn that the proclamation of the gospel is a universal call we go to the other ends of the world and take that message the external call is also to be accurate sincere and bona fide it's a real call there are those who claim that since God intends to save only the elect any call to the non-elect cannot be genuine on the part of God because he knows they're not going to be saved

I tried to come up with a word that would describe that and the only thing I could think of is blasphemy that's blasphemy to say God is not giving them a sincere call that it's some charade God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked in Psalms God longed for people to listen to him and walk in his ways you can read about that in Psalm 81 13 in the book of Romans God says that he holds out his hand all day long to a disobedient and contrary people you ever meet anybody that's contrary that's Romans chapter 10 verse 21 one of the great theologians was a guy by the name of Dr.

[26 : 02] Louis Burkhoff he was born in Holland no relation in 1873 died in the 1950s when he was young about nine years old his family moved to Michigan he was an American Dutch reform theologian he wrote 22 books but the one most remembered and most studied and most quoted is a classic systematic theology I actually have a copy and I enjoy reading it until he breaks into German or Dutch as he sometimes does I mean I'm reading one day I read footnotes and I'm reading it it's got a footnote so I go down there and it's four paragraphs in German and at the end of it he goes back to English he says and who could argue with that and I thought well I can't I don't have any argument against that that sounds good to me but I love his systematic theology here's a quote from

Dr. Burkhoff on page 462 of his systematic theology the external calling is a calling in good faith it is a calling that is seriously meant it is not an invitation coupled with the hope that it will not be accepted God didn't give it hoping well I hope he doesn't accept because he's not one of mine when God calls the sinner to accept Christ by faith he earnestly desires this and when he promises those who repent and believe eternal life his promise is dependable I'm still quoting Dr.

Burkhoff this follows from the very nature from the veracity of God it is blasphemous to think that God would be guilty of equivocation and deception that he would say one thing and mean another that he would earnestly plead with the sinner to repent and believe unto salvation and at the same time not desired in any sense of the word and one thought does come to mind and I've been asked this before well then why didn't God save everyone well the more accurate question is why did he save anyone why did he save me that's the most perplexing of all to meet the conditions for salvation the lost man must repent and believe same word for have faith or trust trust in the finished work of

Christ death burial resurrection if he does God will forgive him and welcome him into the family but here's the rub in our depravity in our inherited sin nature go right all the way back to Genesis 3 we cannot repent and believe on our own can't do it remember my message a few weeks ago on total inability we're incapable on our own on our own of repenting and believing God has to do a work in our heart for this condition to be met God has to do a work to overcome that depraved condition that sin nature and he can do that and he has done that many times many times but

I'm getting way ahead of myself because that's going to be the focus starting in January of next year the deficiency of the gospel call lies in man's depravity and not in God's supply of grace please hold on to that thought as we get to January 7th because of our condition as fallen finite creatures this leads to a third and final characteristic of the external call the external call in and of itself is not efficacious and we use that word before Mike's almost got it memorized but not effective it's not effective we use efficacious to show that we've been to graduate school but it's not effective we might as well use that it's the best word the effective call which we will study in a few weeks is ultimately irresistible and let me add

[31 : 25] I came kicking and screaming but I came because it was an irresistible pull by the spirit of God the external call can be and is resisted in our natural state which is to say our unsafe state we are characterized by spiritual death Jesus himself said many are called but few are chosen Matthew 22 14 many are invited and they reject the invitation remember when the Lord said go out on the highways and byways and drag them in that's the literal just grab hold drag them in here the chosen end up at a banquet and they sit down with the Lord Jesus Christ it's going to be a lot like we did tonight this was good tonight any instance where the external call of the gospel is given and rejected is evidence that it was not effective it did not lead to that person's salvation may have illuminated them convicted them of sin it can do all kinds of things but is for this reason the external call is insufficient for salvation it is also the reason that the internal call is sufficient for salvation so no reason to panic

God is still in the business of saving souls there were people saved today there are going to be people saved tomorrow there are going to be people saved right up to the rapture and after the

rapture during the tribulation a whole gaggle of people are going to be saved gaggle is a Greek word for a whole bunch bunch of people God is still in the salvation and we're going to be looking at that intercall for a number of weeks a number of lessons and it's going to be exciting that's where we're headed