

Calling Sinners to Repentance

Introduction — *a quick review of the past month*

Bock: “When one looks back at 4:31-5:32, one sees a variety of people who have received the benefits of Jesus' labor: The demon-possessed are exorcised; the sick are restored; the fishermen find a great catch, only to be invited to cast a new kind of net; the leper is cleansed; the paralyzed rise; the tax collector is called; the sinners are invited...”

They are invited to fellowship with Jesus at a meal. And Jesus explains the theological significance of this fellowship to some grumbling Pharisees and Scribes. In doing so, he makes a plain statement about the meaning of this passage: Jesus came to call sinners to repentance.

Calvin notes the following in regards to this passage: “He came to quicken the dead, to justify the guilty and condemned, to wash those who were polluted and full of uncleanness, to rescue the lost from hell, to clothe with his glory those who were covered with shame, to renew to a blessed immortality those who were debased by disgusting vices. If we consider that this was his office and the end of his coming, — if we remember that this was the reason why he took upon him our flesh, why he shed his blood, why he offered the sacrifice of his death, why he descended even to hell, we will never think it strange that he should gather to salvation those who have been the worst of men, and who have been covered with a mass of crimes.

Luke 5:27-32 ESV

²⁷ After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." ²⁸ And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

²⁹ And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. ³⁰ And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" ³¹ And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

The account of the calling of Levi presents us with, first, an example of what the calling of a sinner looks like and second, the theological ramifications of this truth. To examine the representative call of a sinner in this passage we will look at Levi's Call and Levi's Response. Then we will consider the theological commentary that Luke presents as it pertains to the calling of sinners to repentance.

Levi's Call

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me."

Calling:

- This "Levi" is very likely the "Matthew" who becomes one of the 12 disciples
- However, this is a call to be a small "d" disciple since the 12 have yet to be appointed
- What is the "call" to be a disciple? What does it look like? How does it work?

To answer these questions, I believe we have to differentiate between 2 different kinds of calls the Bible makes mention of:

- ① the gospel call
- ② the effective call

Gospel Call - a call to all people to repent and believe

1 Peter 3:15 ESV but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Mark 16:15 ESV And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

Matthew 22:14 ESV For many are called, but few are chosen.

Effective Call

Romans 8:30 ESV And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The **gospel call** is an act of humans whereby they preach the good news of Jesus Christ others. The gospel call—that is, sharing the gospel with others—is the means that God uses to effectively call someone.

Effective calling is an act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which he summons people to himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith.

Grudem:

In distinction from effective calling, which is entirely an act of God, we may talk about the gospel call in general which comes through human speech. This gospel call is offered to all people, even those who do not accept it. Sometimes this gospel call is referred to as external calling or general calling. By contrast, the effective calling of God that actually brings about a willing response from the person who hears it is sometimes called internal calling.

The gospel call ^{is} made by humans and is general and external and often rejected

- In human preaching of the gospel, or the gospel call, three important elements must be included. (1) Explanation of the Facts Concerning Salvation. (2) Invitation to Respond to Christ Personally in Repentance and Faith. (3) A Promise of Forgiveness and Eternal Life.

↳ Matthew 22:14

The effective call is made by God and is particular, internal, and always effective.

- God calls specific people; those whom he has predestined and chosen. This call is an internal call, and it is always effective.

↳ Romans 8:30 ESV

This story of Levi demonstrates both the gospel call and the effective call. Jesus's call to Levi was particular; Levi was chosen specifically for this calling. It had an internal quality to it as we will see in his response. Finally, it was effective.

However, Jesus uses this example of Levi to communicate that from the human perspective, ~~the gospel call is general~~; ^{there is a gospel call that is general} it goes out to sinners. It is external; we humans proclaim the gospel having no ability to change a person's heart. Sometimes it is effective, sometimes it is not.

Levi's response is an example of God's effective calling in someone's life.

Levi's Response

And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.

Repentance

It seems that this passage indicates that Levi's response was one of repentance -

Repentance in Luke is particularly a change of mind and a shifting of view; a reorienting oneself to God on his terms.

Levi leaves everything and follows Jesus

Jesus, and Luke, will connect Levi's action with the repentance of sinners

Repentance looks like leaving everything; leaving all loyalties that compete with loyalty to Christ

- keep in mind that Jesus via Luke confirms this is about it

Inviting Sinners to Meet Jesus

Levi receives grace; Jesus chose him though as a tax collector he clearly didn't merit this favourable treatment by Jesus.

We see the change that the call of Jesus made not only in Levi's leaving of everything but also in his extending the message of Jesus to other sinners.

Having experienced the effective call of God through Jesus, Levi participates in the gospel call by setting up an opportunity for other sinners to meet the one he had left all to follow.

This response by Levi is in line with Jesus's declared purpose; to call sinners to repentance. The remainder of the passage theologically unpacks that purpose.

Theological Commentary

And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Jesus's and Luke's theological commentary also provide our application points:

1. All are sinners therefore all need to repent
2. We need to engage sinners who have not heard the good news
3. We need particularly to engage with those who would be deemed outcasts.

1. Since Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, and we are all sinners, we all need to repent.


- Jesus was not verifying the righteousness of the Pharisees. Rather, he was exposing their blindness to their own sin and their inappropriate judgement of other people's sin.
- Jesus knew that all people were sinners. His message to people was to repent.
- **Luke 13:1-5 ESV** There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."
- **Romans 3:23 ESV** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- **1 Timothy 1:15 ESV** The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.
- Repent – turn from sin and turn to God
- Dad's repent first.



2. Since Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, and we are his disciples, we need to engage sinners in order to call them to repentance. *~ we are responsible for the gospel call*

- Levi's example of engaging sinners who had not met Jesus is a demonstration—to those of us who call ourselves disciples—of how we ought to respond to our own salvation.
- **Luke 24:44-48 ESV** ⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be

fulfilled.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

- **2 Corinthians 5:16-21 ESV**¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.  **GOSPEL !!**

Two Important Safeguards

- A. Know your limits and temptations as you go into the world. If you are easily tempted with alcohol, you do not need to go with colleagues to the bar after work. You should avoid that setting. Give no room to the devil or make provision for the flesh. That means being honest about our temptations and the sins that so easily beset us.
- B. Keep a redemptive purpose or goal in mind as you go into the world. We are not going into the world simply to hang out with the world. Sometimes Christians boast of their worldliness. That is immaturity and a bad example. We go not to boast of how liberal we are with the world but to seek their spiritual benefit and salvation.

3. Since Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, we ought to particularly engage sinners who have been marginalized in order to call them to repentance.

- **Luke 7:36-50 ESV** ³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. ³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment." ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."
- Jesus was particularly attracted to those who were deemed outcasts; the sick, the demonized, the sinners. He was far less enamoured with those who thought highly of themselves. He was drawn to the weak, the needy, the helpless, and the one's the culture frowned upon. We need to engage these people as well.
- And not ONLY to preach the gospel, but to love them.

Why do we not do this?

Why do we avoid these people?