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FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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WHAT DOES **KALEO** MEAN?

The Greek word *kaleo* might well be one of the most significant words in the New Testament. It is the basis or root of seventeen other very important words, among which are *klesis* (calling), *kletos* (called), *parakaleo* (entreat, exhort, comfort), *paraklesis* (entreaty, exhortation), *parakletos* (an advocate, intercessor), and most important of all, *ekklesia* (church, outcalled). If the verb *kaleo* is not honestly defined and objectively understood, then all the words of which it is the basis will probably also be misunderstood; and the passages in which they are found will fail to speak God's Truth to us. It is my conviction that *kaleo* has never been accurately defined and that its full meaning has been deliberately stultified in order to maintain a certain traditional meaning of *ekklesia*.

Many words have primary and secondary meanings, and this is true of *kaleo*. However, when the secondary or derived meaning of a word is exalted to the preeminent place and the primary meaning is ignored and stultified, great confusion will be the result. In most lexicons *kaleo* is said to mean "to call," that is, "to invite or to summon." One lexicon, which is before me as I write, gives as a complete definition of this word: "Call those within range of the voice for immediate action, invite those at a distance for a future occasion." Another lexicon says it means: "To call, summon; to call to one's house, to invite; to call, name, call by name."

Such definitions as these ignore the primary meaning of this word altogether. And while it is true that *kaleo* does mean in some occurrences "to call" in the sense of inviting, summoning, or bidding, it is also true that in at least ninety-five occurrences of this word in the New Testament, it simply cannot have this meaning.

This word is found 146 times in the New Testament. Thus, the facts in the case are that in about two-thirds of its occurrences, it cannot have the meaning of to call, to bid, to invite, or to summon, while in one-third it does have this meaning and should be so translated. These facts alone are sufficient to show that "to call" is not the primary meaning of this verb, and another meaning must be discovered and fully recognized if we are to faithfully interpret all passages where it is found.

A clear example of the twofold meaning of this word can be seen by consulting two separate chapters in Luke's Gospel. In Luke, chapter one, the word *kaleo* is found ten times; and in none of these occurrences, can it be given the meaning of to bid, to summon, or to invite. (See Luke 1: 13, 31, 35, 36, 59, 60, 61, 62, and 76.) In Luke, chapter fourteen, it is found eleven times; and in each occurrence it will be found to mean to bid, in the sense of inviting; and it is correctly translated in the KJV. (See Luke 14:7, 8, 8,9, 10, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, and 24.)

When all occurrences of this word are carefully considered in their context (and if this will not provide the true and full meaning, nothing else will), it will be found by the law of usage that this word primarily means to appoint, to place, to position, to designate or to name, and that to call, summon, invite or bid are derived and secondary meanings.

The first occurrence of this word is found in Matt. 1:21, where it says, "**And thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.**" (The italicized words are *kaleo*.) The word *Jehosua* (*Jesus*) meant Savior, and He was to bear this designation since this was the work He would do. His name described His position and work. And as the angel continued his message to Joseph, he declared: "**And they shall call (*kaleo*) His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us**" (Matt. 1: 23). This designation was a most proper one, for God had projected Himself and was present upon the earth in the person of Jesus Christ. God could do this without sacrificing one bit of His infinitude and universality.

These first two occurrences alone are enough to show that *kaleo* does not always mean to call, in the sense of inviting, bidding, or summoning. Of course, it would be quite simple to take other occurrences in Matthew and show that it does mean this, for example, Matt. 22:3,4, 8,9; but the fact remains that in two-thirds of its 146 occurrences, it cannot possibly have this meaning.

It should be carefully noted that while the word *kaleo* means to appoint, to place, to designate, to position, or to name (all these terms being synonymous), as well as to invite, bid, or summon, the Old English word "call" had both of these meanings. Our modern English word "call" does not now signify the ideas of appointing, designating, placing, positioning, or naming. Today, we would say, "The President has not yet named the Secretary of State." If we would say, "The President has not yet called the Secretary of State," it would mean something quite different. However, there was a time when the king's call or invitation to serve was equal to appointment to the position, since none dared refuse the call of his monarch. This is how *kaleo* got the secondary meaning of to call, in the sense of inviting or bidding.

Today, the word "call" as meaning to designate, to appoint, or to name to a certain position has become utterly obsolete. Yet, traces of this meaning still remain in our word "calling." When we say that a man's calling is law, medicine, or education, by this we mean the work that he does and the position he holds. In Ephesians 4:1 we would have a much clearer communication if we would translate it, "order your behavior in a manner worthy of the position (*klesis*) in which you have been placed" (*kaleo*). This would preserve and emphasize the very close relationship that exists between *klesis* and *kaleo*, and provide pertinent advice to all in Christian service or in government.

If the primary meaning of *kaleo* is seen to be to appoint, to designate, or to name, it will be of immeasurable help in gaining clear and correct interpretations of passages where words occur that are derived from this verb. For example, translators and commentators have often struggled with the three occurrences of *kletos* in 1 Cor. 1:1, 2, and 24. I believe it becomes quite simple when we translate 1:1 as saying, "Paul, a designated apostle of Jesus Christ," 1:2 as saying "designated as saints," and 1:24 as saying, "But to them that are designated, both Jews and Greeks." Some may prefer the word "named" or "positioned" here, but this is a minor matter.

Matthew 22:14, which reads, "For many are called, but few are chosen," has always been a difficult passage, part of which is due to the occurrence of the word *eklektos* (chosen) which means "elected." This should read "For many are designated, but few are elected." See Luke 6:13 for a clear example of this, where many were designated as disciples, but only twelve

were elected (chosen), and these were named apostles.

Jude 1:1 becomes much clearer if we read it "**Beloved by God the Father, preserved by Jesus Christ, and positioned.**"

Rev. 17:14 glows with a new light when we read it, "**They that are with Him are designated ones, chosen ones; and they are faithful.**"

The exhortation in 2 Peter 1: 10 is freed from all difficulties when we read it, "**Give diligence to confirm your designation and your choice.**"

Hebrews 3:1 speaks a new message when we read it, '**Wherefore, holy brethren, participants of a most exalted position.**'

The primary meaning of *kaleo* and of the two cognate words that come out of it *kletos* and *klesis* is of great help in understanding 2 Tim. 1:9 which will read as follows:

"Who saves us and places (*kaleo*) us in a holy position, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace."

Most important of all is the light that a true definition of *kaleo* and *kletos* sheds upon the difficult passage of Romans 8:28 - 30. I doubt if very many will want to accept my interpretation of this portion; but that matters very little, it being my duty to set forth my finding after having fully studied the passage. My reward will come from the proclamation and not from the number who accept it.

This portion begins with the familiar declaration: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." This passage is quoted by many who have "things" working in their behalf instead of God Himself. Some go on to quote the rest of the passage, but disregard altogether what it says. In the KJV this reads, "**To them who are called according to His purpose.**" But according to my understanding, it should read, "**To them who are positioned in harmony with His purpose.**"

Now, as to loving God. I believe I can qualify; but as to being positioned in harmony with God's purpose, I hesitate to make this claim.

I consider the positions of the Acts period believers and know that, "**God has set some in the outcalled, first apostles, secondarily prophets,**

thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28). And, yet, none of these things is true of me; and all that I can claim to be is a sinner saved by grace. I fully believe that God worked all things together for good for men such as these, but far too many "things" have worked to my harm for me to recklessly apply Rom. 8:28 to myself.

The passage then goes on to say that, **"Because whom He knew in advance, He also designates beforehand to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He (the Son) might be Sovereign among many brethren. Moreover, those whom He designated beforehand, them He also appointed; and whom He appointed, them He also declares righteous, and whom He declares righteous, He also glorifies"** (Rom. 8: 29-30, Resultant Version). This all has to do with the positions held and services performed by God's saints. It has nothing to do with the salvation of a sinner. Since God was for all such as this, resistance against them was useless.

I leave the rest to students of the Word and hope I have pointed the way to truth by a clearer understanding of *kaleo*.

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