

Episode 128

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

- Romans 11

For as long as I can remember, three verses in the bible have stuck with me. The first is John 3.16, which I was introduced to at a very young age. The second is anchored in a vivid memory I have of hearing a man pray Malachi 3 over the tithes and offerings, which says that we are to test God and see if he will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that we will not have room to contain it. I can still remember thinking to myself that there is no way the bible would say something like that. And the third verse that has never left me is this rather random verse in Romans 11.

When I heard it for the very first time, my pastor loved to preach from the King James Bible, and so the version I remember hearing is that the gifts of God are without repentance. In other words, what God has placed within you is there for you to express and enjoy, irrespective of whether you use your gifts for his glory or not. He will never take them from you no matter what you get up to. This means that the weighty aspect of this verse is a reminder that our gifts are no indication of our relationship with God. And this is why it has stuck with me all these years.

I honestly don't know if we are able to be objective when it comes to acknowledging God's presence in our lives. However, one thing I do know for sure is that most times we base our conclusion on how we compare to others. How am I doing in my relationship with God? I answer in comparison with what I see going on around me. Am I nailing it? Then my conclusion is that things with God couldn't be better. Did the deal get cancelled? Then my conclusion is that I must have made God angry.

We are so trapped in this cycle that Ecclesiastes points out that all work and all toil is a result of comparison. In other words, we are completely satisfied with our car, until we see the new one on the road; we love our iPad until we experience how quick the new one is; we finish our work early, but we don't go home because we want to make partner, and those in the running spend every waking moment at their desks. Perhaps this is why Jesus said it was so difficult for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God.

All too often, our performance masks the lack of God's presence in our lives, and the fact that the gifts of God are without repentance can easily leave us fooled into thinking we live under the favour of God, when in fact we are far from him.

A.W. Tozer once said "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

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