



Introduction to the Doctrine of Vocation

**CPC Adult Sunday School
Week 5 - The Groans of Vocation**

February 16, 2025

Trials in Vocation



Two parents bring a child into the world, care for him, raise him up, nourish him on God's Word. And yet when he grows up, he rejects everything he has been taught, everything the parents have stood for. They have had a calling to form and love this child, but he goes astray from it all. They torment themselves with questions: Did we fail as parents? What should we have done differently? What can we possibly do to get through to our son?

A businessman builds a company, providing goods and services to the public, employing scores of workers. This is his calling, and he is good at what he does. But then the economy turns. He has to lay people off. He tries, but he cannot save his business. He goes bankrupt. He thinks, 'What about my calling now?'



A pastor has been called by a congregation. He has served them faithfully, teaching them God's Word, proclaiming the Gospel, baptizing them, feeding them with the Lord's Supper, pouring himself out for their spiritual growth. And then they turn against him. Maybe for some trivial reason—they want a different kind of music; or a family has its feelings hurt and is now trying to drive him out of their church—or maybe for something more serious, such as rejecting the message he has been called to convey. 'Didn't God call me here?' he wonders. 'Why didn't my ministry do any good?'

Gene Edward Veith

The Struggle is Real



⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Hebrews 11:35-40

Groaning Under the Curse

¹⁶ To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, and he shall rule over you.” ¹⁷ And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3:16-19



WLC Question 23

Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Ecclesiastes 2:17-25

Romans 8:18-25

The Call to Cross-bearing



⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him...

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 5:7-9; 12:1-2

²³ And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

Luke 9:23-25

For Scripture praises the saints for their forbearance when, so afflicted with harsh misfortune, they do not break or fall; so stabbed with bitterness, they are at the same time flooded with spiritual joy; so pressed by apprehension, they recover their breath, revived by God’s consolation. In the meantime, their hearts still harbor a contradiction between their natural sense, which flees and dreads what it feels adverse to itself, and their disposition to godliness, which even through these difficulties presses toward obedience to the divine will.

John Calvin, Institutes 3.3.10



Fear and Anxiety in Vocation

Reminder: our work (labor) includes cultivation and protection.

Fear and Anxiety are gifts of God that become disordered sources of groaning due to sin, corruption and the curse of the mankind's fall.

³⁹ I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. ⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good...

⁷ I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. ⁸ I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. ⁹ And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

Jeremiah 32:39-41a; 33:7-9

Isaiah 11:1-3

Fear and Anxiety in Vocation



¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:16-19

²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:28-31

Our vocations reveal our idols - God's love and care is the only thing we can't live without.

The fear of the Lord properly orders our fears.

Fear and Anxiety in Vocation



⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰ For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

Philippians 2:19-20

²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

2 Corinthians 11:28

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:6-7

Matthew 6:25-34

Romans 8:26-30

God Provides for our Groaning

³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” ³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

Matthew 26:38-39



⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Luke 22:41-44

Romans 8:31-39

Digging Deeper

1. In what areas of your life do you find the most anxiety and fear?
2. How can the means of grace help you in cross-bearing?
3. Choose one of the scenarios from Gene Edward Veith. How would you counsel those involved?

