

## Title: High Call of God

Grant Hill, Garden Gathering, 11/03/24

A couple weeks ago, Brandy brought a message on “Raise the Standard High,” with the standard being Jesus the King. His ways and His excellencies being the standard of His call in our lives. I want to build off of that.

But, first I want to talk about something on my heart right now. With raising a standard high, the standard is a banner. God's banners were never placed on buildings. The reason why is because in the liberty of the Spirit, it would go wherever He went. “His banner over me is love,” and “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” So, God's banner can always be raised higher than the tallest building. God's banner is more of a banner for an army that will go wherever He goes. It moves forward on a battlefield. There is such liberty and freedom in the banner of the Lord and His standard.

Our nation has had multiple banners over it *through* the years. We have our Star Spangled Banner, with stars and stripes. You can lower standards to make them easier, but our nation has raised our banner high since inception. It is a standard for all mankind to come into liberty and justice for all. That standard has been mocked. It has been persecuted. It has been modeled. It has been emulated, but the standard of the United States of America is a very high and hard standard to maintain.

One of the first banners over America was the banner over the Continental Army of George Washington. It was a symbol of a timber rattlesnake, and it said, “Don't tread on me.” This symbol actually came from Benjamin Franklin. He thought it was a perfect emblem for the colonists who felt like they were being tread upon unjustly by the British Empire. The greatest empire the world had seen up to that point was the British Empire, which had oppressed and taken advantage of the colonists. He thought that the timber rattlesnake, found in the Appalachian Mountains and on the eastern coast of America, was a perfect example, because it was tame and would not strike unless provoked. Similarly to the citizens of the colonies of the Americas who wanted their own freedoms. The *colonists* wanted to manage their own lives with very little provocation or oppression. As that freedom was being squeezed from them, they wrote on the American army's flag, “Don't tread on me.” We will strike.

He also thought it was a very good emblem, because a rattlesnake is very much smaller than the person coming against it. In the same way, the colonies of America were very small compared to the empire they were going against saying, “To this cause, we will give up our lives, our welfare and our fortunes.” The revolution of America was different in that it was not a class warfare of the least of these fighting against the greater of these. It was actually the educated, wealthy and the elites of America coming against the elites of Britain. It is not a class warfare that we have now in our time. It was about all the entire top most of society, saying we are not going to do this anymore. That was one of the first banners and standards that we raised.

The second standard was one over the Navy. It has come under scrutiny over the last year, because it has been tied to fanatical nationalism. Until a few months ago, it was flown for years over the courthouse of San Francisco, California, one of the bastions of liberality. That standard was the “Appeal to Heaven,” flag flown over the Navy. It is a white flag with a pine tree on it. George Washington commissioned it over our Navy signifying we know we have no right to win in provoking and causing a revolution against the British Empire. So, our plea is not in our own strength, our own might, or our own ways, but our appeal is to God in Heaven. That He see our

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just cause and would support our “right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” That He would bless this revolution in this cause. The favor and the providence of God allowed these colonies to become the United States of America. They built another standard. They raised another flag, of stars and stripes. There is much symbolism in that flag. It is not like any other flag in the world. It is similar in the colors to Great Britain, but that is because we have similar roots.

This week our nation is going to decide another standard. Every time we go vote for a president, we raise or we lower our standard. Are we going to choose what is hard, but the standard that God called us to, or will we choose the standard that is easy, but can give away our freedom. We have to choose.

The Church is called to raise a standard above ours. The Church is called to walk in a strength and a peace that nothing can unsettle. If you raise the standard of Jesus higher, the nation will follow. This is what we are under. So, my call for you is to get involved, to vote, and to raise the standard of Jesus higher. Not to have your peace lost no matter what. I believe that we have a high calling from God as a nation. That might just be my belief, but I believe that. It gives an identity to people when they believe that all of a sudden they were made for something more than just the day by day. We see that, not just in our country, but in every country that has laid hold of the Bible. They all of a sudden are empowered to believe that they are not just here to “make it.” They are here to thrive, because this Bible has brought such a revolutionary gospel to the soul of mankind. That no matter how you were born, no matter where you were raised, no matter what you grew up, you were called to be a king and a priest unto a Kingdom of God. You are not born into royalty. You were bought into it. That has changed the *way you think*. Not just in this country, but in so many other countries. Those are the ones with a vision. Those are the ones that have lifted themselves up out of poverty and into a glorious thing. But, there is another call, there is more, and there is another standard. I believe this country can step into it, but the standard of Jesus must be raised higher. That is what the Holy Spirit has been bringing to us right now.

I believe that there is some prophetic in those early standards that were raised over this land. I really do. I think that the founding fathers were more prophetic than we give them credit for. I think that their words, as truly the fathers over our country, bring a blessing to those that lay hold of them. The general assigned over his navy an appeal to heaven, and chose to look up and not down, that means something. If Benjamin Franklin, one of the wisest men that has ever walked the Earth, says that there is a similarity to who we are *as citizens* to the rattlesnake found only in America, then there is something prophetic in it. “Don't tread on me,” because when it is time to strike, we have to strike.

#### Matthew 22:1-14

There is a high call of God, and many are called, but few are chosen. When we expound upon this in the first part, Jesus says, “The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.” This is the Father and the Son, and He is preparing a wedding feast for His Bride to be married to His Son. The first to be called to it were the Jews. Through the Jews, the salvation of our God came. It was to Israel first. He came, and He brought this good news. He came and He asked them for their hearts. He came and He asked them to be involved, take part, be in My family. Come into My house and be Mine. Be My sons and be a part of the house. Some would rather take care of their own things and their own business. The Israelites were blessed, and they walked in a blessing in the Promised Land for many, many, many generations. They were raising up wealthy families and tending to wealthy businesses.

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They did not take care to follow the ways of the Lord. Some of those that did care hated the prophets and the servants that told them the truth. They killed them. They murdered them. We see that all of the prophets that we read about were persecuted and killed. Some were sawn in two, burned, stoned, killed at the altar, or chased down like Elijah and Elisha. They hated the truth. This is His own people.

Then one day, God said, "Fine." He sent Assyria to capture the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He sent the Babylonians to capture the Southern Kingdom of Judah and burn down Jerusalem. Then He said, "I am going to make a way that not only the Jews, but all can come into the house of God. Say, "That is me. That is me."

#### Matthew 22:8b-10

Say, "That is me." The Gentiles, those that had no right. Yet, because of this gospel in the Bible, we are called into royalty and the feast of the King by the blood of the Lamb. We have paid the ticket to come in, but not by our own strength, not by our own ways, not by what we accumulated. Somebody gave us the money. Jesus paid it with His own blood.

#### Matthew 22:10b

So, the wedding hall was filled with guests. Now, we look at the world and His great salvation. How many have come into the flock? How many have come into the fold of the Kingdom of God? Because, the invitation now went out to all the world. This was how it was supposed to be. Those that were invited were supposed to invite their friends. The Jews were supposed to invite all the world to come into the house of God. In Isaiah it says that they were too self centered and too self righteous. They were too clouded and blinded in their own religion that they couldn't see past the log in their eyes. But, now the hall is filled, and what do we find?

#### Matthew 22:11-12

This should bring the fear of the Lord on us. God can invite you to the wedding. You can know about God. But, if you have not prepared yourself, then God will look at you and say, "I don't even know you." You received the invitation you say. You know Jesus. But, you haven't prepared yourself in the call of God to eat with My Son. So, it is not just knowing Jesus, at His invitation. It's actually knowing the Son. If that makes sense, there is a Greek word "ginosko" that means "knowing someone without words," that has to happen. When a newborn baby sees their mama look over the crib, their eyes light up, because they know their mom. That is the depth of *knowing* that God needs in you.

#### Matthew 22:12

"How did you get in here without a wedding garment?" How did you know Me. I have to know God without words. I cannot just know Him by the book. This is what God is after. He wants the heart. "Many are called" But, few actually go through the process of getting a wedding garment and be chosen.

#### Revelation 17:14

Many come against the King, right? The armies of the enemy come against Jesus, who is Lord of lords and King of kings. But, those who are with Him are called, chosen and faithful. Not just called. There is a high calling of God, and there is an initiative that must take place in the people of God to be sanctified. To change the way that you think, to change the way that you walk, to change the way that you talk, and to change what you are doing to be purified and cleansed, in a way holiness. Now you say, "Grant, you are getting into works." I am not. I really am not getting into works. There is a call and there is a choosing. Those who choose to go through the process of death to get chosen by God. Those who choose on the Earth to go through the process of death daily and be chosen by God. You can hear the call, but you have to choose to die to be chosen by God. Isn't that interesting?

Revelation 17:14

The enemies of God are coming against Jesus, and that is not going to work out well. They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them. He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those who are with Him and those who are accompanying Him, are called and chosen and faithful. There is a process. Do you see it? "For He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful. Many are called, and few are chosen." So, there is this process where I was called into God's kingdom, I was called into God's army, I was called into God's priesthood, and then faithfulness produces being chosen. Isn't that interesting? Somebody has said this, that tribulation brings endurance, which produces character, which produces holiness. "Tech," is the acronym for, "tribulation produces endurance, endurance produces character, which produces holiness."

"Those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful." There is this interesting thing in the Bible with the "called of God." You and I are called into the high character, or the high calling of Christ Jesus. To get that high character takes suffering.

I Thessalonians 5:23-24

Say it with me, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body may be kept blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." Here is the good news. "He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it." Now you say, "Oh, phew, okay. This is on God. Thank you, Jesus. It is your problem." No, actually, that's too easy.

Yes, it will be God's work in us. It will be God's ministering in us. Yes, He will be faithful to us. But, it is way easier to fall on the Rock, than to have the Rock fall on you. So, there is a high call in God to pursue and to sacrifice and to take up a cross and suffer and die on the Earth till you are sanctified and blameless. What does sanctifying mean? That means that as Jesus is, you become. As you think Jesus is right now, in a glorified body, in fullness of power, in majesty and might, as you become like that. You say, "That is blasphemous. How can I become like Him?" Because, that is what He said He's doing. "Now may the God of peace Himself, sanctify you completely." So if you're "completely sanctified," who do you expect to look like? The standard that has been raised high is Jesus. That is the standard that you will try to become. But if you say, "Well, I can't do that exactly." That is why, "He who calls you is faithful, and He will surely do it." Now there is a way, and it's called surrendering. There is a path and it is narrow. There is a walk and it is hard, but you can choose to do it.

Philippians 3:14 KJV

"I press towards the mark." That is the standard. *"I press towards the standard for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Let me tell you something. God doesn't leave things alone. He doesn't just leave things alone. He doesn't. His Kingdom is always increasing. It's always growing. He doesn't leave things alone. He will not. Since Adam and Eve sinned, dirt has wanted to decay, *but* God won't leave it alone. He lets it come back. He even told Noah, "From this time forward, there will always be springtime and winter and harvest." It might look like it is going dormant. It might look like it is going to sleep. But, guess what? In the spring, He is going to make a comeback. God doesn't leave things alone to die and decay. He does not leave things alone. He said, "You are going to go from glory to glory." You cannot just stay in one place.

To this day, scientists have no idea how a seed that is dead gets put in dirt *with* some water, then somehow comes to life. They cannot define how a seed comes alive to this day. You can look into it and they have. Why is a seed, in scientific terms, different than a rock. Why do you think if a seed of corn is put in the ground a corn stalk should come up. How do you know? Is that faith or just science? I don't know? Scientists themselves cannot describe what is happening. God won't leave things alone. He will not let something decay and die.

He says that is not who I am. I will not leave it alone. If you feel like you are just stuck in a place, or if you feel that you are in a stagnant place, saying, "God, just leave me alone." He will not. He is faithful. He will always call you onward. He will always call you upward. He will always call you to the "high mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Some of you say, "This is exhausting." Why does He keep calling our country up higher? Why does He keep calling this Church up higher? Why does He keep calling us this way? It's because He looks at His Son and He says, "My Son, can do it with me. You can do it with me." It is because you were created for glorious, excellence, and beauty beyond measure. You were created for it. You were created for that standard. You were actually born for it.

We are deceived to think we were not. We were created for the glorious Body of Christ Jesus. We often write it off in our minds when we read the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, that we were created for that. He did it because He is the Son of God. But, if you read the heart of it, Jesus constantly tells us that, "I am choosing to submit my divinity in a way that doesn't make sense, so that my flesh is submitting to the spirit, and what is happening is that the Holy Spirit is working through Me." Why is that important? Because, if you think that Jesus walked on the Earth as God, there is no hope for you. It is easy to write off sin thinking, "I am always going to be stuck in this, because I am not God. I cannot get out of this. I am always going to be like this. I am always going to struggle with this. This is always going to come back and haunt me." But, Jesus says, "No, no, no, I submitted to live by the Spirit even to the point of death on a cross. I still rose and lived."

The obedience of Jesus to the Spirit is the standard that He has raised for the House of God. When God says, "I want you to walk like My Son, you have no excuse. His Son, has walked like you, in your shoes, in your place, and still chose to yield Himself to the Holy Spirit. He was crushed, suffered and obeyed God through it all. If Jesus can do it, then He is in you to teach you how to do it. He won't leave it alone until you are blameless and sanctified in body, soul and spirit before God. That is what First Thessalonians is saying, "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely and make you blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, in body, soul and spirit." He who calls you to this call, He who calls you to this standard, He who calls you to this perfection and excellence, is faithful. He will surely do it." Wow. There is this working out. There is this choosing. There is this walk for the standard of God. The high calling of God is the high character of Jesus."

#### Philippians 3:12-14

Paul himself says, what I am telling you, "because Christ Jesus made me His own." There was a brother here in the house that once told me that, "I gave Jesus, my "Yes." That goes so far. That makes your heart realize, oh, wait, wait, wait, when I received Jesus into my heart, what did I say "Yes," to? If we receive Jesus in our heart for anything for ourselves, that is going to fail. But, if you receive Jesus in your heart, "for only His sake," then it is only for His sake. That is what He is saying. "I am doing this, because Jesus Christ has made me His own." I owe my life, my breath, my thoughts, and my ways to Him. I am no longer my own, but I was bought at a price. He won't let me alone. I am not to decay, stay stagnant, or compromise, be apathetic and stay where I am. I am on the upward call of Christ Jesus. I am no longer my own. He has my life.

#### Philippians 3:13-14 ESV

*"Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

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Philippians 3:13 KJV

*"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*

Philippians 3:15 ESV

*"Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you."*

That is what we are talking about right here. *"Those who are mature think this way."* We are pressing on. We are maturing. We are not saying that we have already obtained this. We are not saying that we are already perfect, but we want the sanctification completely. God won't let us be. "I gave Him my, "Yes." It is not my life to live, but it is now my life in Christ Jesus who lives in me. *"But if in anything in my heart, I think otherwise, God will reveal that to me also."* That is the sanctifying work where He says, "You are doing great at how to pray. But, this little section right here in your heart..." In that little section where most of us say, "God, just leave it alone." God says, "Nope."

If in any way you think otherwise. If in any way you think immaturely. If in any way you have a complacency. If in any way you have an apathy. If in any way you would rather lower the standard of Jesus in your life, God will reveal this to you. He says, "No, no, raise the standard back to Jesus. Gird up your loins and follow Him. You, follow Him."

Philippians 3:16 ESV

*"Only let us hold true to what we have attained."* In what you have gained authority, hold on to that. Hold on where you have gained in prophecy, where you have gained in excellence of ministry, where you have gained in evangelism, where you have gained in health, or where you have gained in serving. Hold on to what is Christlike, and allow what you wrestle with in Christ to be revealed to you.

Philippians 3:17 ESV

*"Brothers join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us."*

What? So, the high call of God is actually high character. Do you notice how he takes it? He is like, look, this is a way that you can do this. If you don't know how to pray, imitate those who pray well. If you don't know how to love, imitate those who have loved you well. Do what they do. This is becoming increasingly hard in our society, because we have less and less high character in America. The high call of Christ Jesus's standard can be lowered, because the standard is lower all around us. It doesn't take much to have a higher standard. *Some say, Don't make that the standard there*, or you are going to offend some people, and we have. But, Christians are actually called to be those in the society that have the highest character.

I took a *history of religion class* in college. It was an interesting class. There is a group of people in India who have a sect of religion called the "Janes." They do not believe in Jesus. But, the nation of India knows that in their religion it is wrong for them to tell a lie. They will not do it. They are so religiously bound to that belief that they are elected to be their judges. In India they are known as having impeccable character in telling the truth and are chosen to be their judges. That saddens me, because my own nation does not think that about Christians in that they have such impeccable character that they will judge righteously and tell the truth based on their high character. High character is the high call of God in Christ Jesus, that He is calling us to. He won't leave it alone. That is why you will find Houses in the Church, that have a high standard of measure which is hard to walk in. Their standard of measure is too high, and if you don't want that standard. You will go to the house and the family of God where the

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standard is what you want to be able to accomplish. But, when Jesus tells that House to “raise the standard,” All of a sudden people start leaving.

Bill Johnson once said that his standard was going to be the Holy Spirit, and thousands of people left their church. I don't even have a thousand to lose over just saying a simple thing like that. He was in the Assemblies of God. When the standard changed to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, thousands of people left. When Jesus tells us you are going to “raise the standard high,” I hope that we are not shaken. But, He is not going to leave us alone. He says, “How did you get into this wedding without a wedding garment? How did you get in here? How did you sanctify yourself? How did you walk through the suffering in this life? How did you fall in love with My Son and not know Him, and get the invitation? How did you know me? There is always something deeper in God that He wants out of us.

#### Philippians 2:12

*“Therefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed so now, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”*

The high call of God is a high character of God. Paul says, “When I am gone, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” You say there are no works in the Kingdom. Actually, you submit yourself to the cross and learn how to obey. As you do that, God then works in you.

#### Philippians 2:13

*“For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”*

All of sudden, those things that He is calling your character into, He says, “This doesn't line up with my character. Take profanity out of your mouth.” Look at how the person plows. Look at how the soldier does not get entangled with civilian affairs. Look at how the farmer is patient. He deals with that character. He says, “You work it out.” Work out that salvation with fear and trembling, not with pride and haughtiness, not with self righteousness, not with false humility, but with true fear of the Lord and true trembling. Then you will see that God works in you to will, and it becomes easier and easier to obey, to willfully obey. Then go labor for those that are unseen for His good pleasure. Isn't that amazing? Oh, but here is a caveat.

#### Philippians 2:14

*“Do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world.”*

Amen, Christians are called to be high character individuals. Our character is supposed to be the standard that Jesus has already raised. Jesus will perfect us if we seek to be perfected. One of the things that I often think is interesting in the Bible is He never calls us to a fun vocation, right?

In the Bible, He says, “I need watchmen,” right? “I need watchmen. Nobody volunteers for that. I need athletes who will run a race with endurance.” You don't just volunteer for that. The runner who always runs for the prize. The soldier who doesn't get entangled in worldly affairs. The farmer who knows how to wait patiently for his harvest. Those are not vocations that we want to be associated with, because those are hard standards of living. Being fathers and mothers requires a high standard. I heard a quote just yesterday, and it cracked me up. “Parenting is the constant struggle of making your kids lives better and destroying your own.” I thought, that is exactly right. Fathers and mothers would choose to do it again. But, when you

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get into it in the beginning, you think, "Why did I choose this in the first place, right?" My father in law told me when I had Zion, that having kids teaches you how to die. It's true. God uses anything in our lives to teach us how to die like Jesus. He was obedient to the point of death, and that is the standard that we are raising high. How do I live my life in obedience to the point of death that Jesus did? In the House of God, He asks us to be athletes who never stop running, soldiers who do not get entangled with civilian affairs, farmers who are steadfast, patiently waiting and casting into the harvest. Watchmen, fathers, mothers, apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors, deacons, helps, all faithfully working with patience, endurance and suffering. The things that are associated with these vocations are faithful work, patience, endurance and suffering.

I want you to hear that God doesn't leave it alone. He actually loves you, and in the same way that for their good a father and a mother don't leave alone an imperfect character trait in their children. God doesn't leave us alone. He doesn't leave those things that are not like Him alone, because it's actually better for you. Your life will actually be better when you are more like My Son, Jesus. It's not because I am prideful. It is not because I think my ways are better. It is actually better for you. No different than He told Adam and Eve, I want what is best for you. Don't go do that because it is not what is best for you. But, He is not afraid. I don't think that God was afraid of them sinning. I don't think that He is afraid of us failing. I don't believe that God was afraid of Adam and Eve failing in the garden. I believe He knew He would be able to figure out a way to work it out. He already knew what it would take. He already knew the severity of the price. Yet, He was not afraid to let them be free and go and roam in the garden alone. That is so interesting to me. He is not afraid of our failures. He is not afraid to show it to us. He is not afraid of us kicking and screaming and throwing a fit at Him, because He showed it to us. He is not afraid of us crying and weeping in front of Him. He is not afraid of us getting mad at ourselves. He wants us to look at Him. He wants us to be perfected like His Son for our benefit.

James 1:3-4

*"For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."*

Do you know this? The mature in Christ know this. Sometimes I doubt myself in this. I know that this is for my benefit. I really do know. There is such maturity in that, *"For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect."* Some of versions probably say patience. In many of your Bibles it will say, *"Let patience have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."* *"Let steadfastness or patience have its full effect."* It is often the hardest part of that verse is that we can know that the testing is going to produce patience. It is going to produce steadfastness. It is going to produce a tenacity. It is going to produce something. I know it. I am getting through the endurance for character. I know it, but having its full effect is very hard. Letting it have its full effect is very hard.

Matthew 23:11

*"The greatest among you shall be your servant."*

What does that mean? That means that if you want to excel in the Kingdom of God, you actually have to learn to be the slave of all. If you want to be exalted and the greatest in the Kingdom of God, you have to be the servant of all. That is why those that are invisible in helps, God exalts. Those that are always serving, God sees and exalts their heart. Amen. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Raise the standard high.



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Let's stand and pray. If you have need of anything, we will be up here to pray for you. Thank you for being here. Pray for Brandy and the Harmons as they drive home.

Holy Spirit, thank you for the standard that you have raised in Christ Jesus, and that you won't let us stay stagnant. You call us upward to the high mark and the high calling of God, and that we would choose to press onward to the upward call in Christ Jesus. Not that we have already attained, but we seek to obtain that which Christ has already held for us. It is there. It is there for us now, today, not just when we die and not just when we go to see you. But for today, that we would know the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. That we would not live for ourselves today, but we would live for your glorious inheritance in us right now. I thank you, Father for this. I honor your word, and I honor your testimony in Jesus's name, I pray, amen.