

A Majestic Calling

1 Peter 2:9, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, 1 Peter 5:8-10, 2 Peter 1:3-10

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We're currently in a series about the majestic life we have in Christ, focusing on the calling, the commitment, the consecration, and the completeness, of the life God has brought us into through the New Birth.

As I mentioned last week, this series is based on 1 Peter 2:9, *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

This week we are going to examine our majestic calling, in other words our calling to salvation.

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So, the question I'd like to pose to you here at the start is, *“What is ‘salvation’?”*

Now, I'm not looking for you to answer, I just want you to think about it for a moment. *“What is salvation?”* If someone were to ask you that question, what would you say?

Answers that spring to mind, may be like, “Salvation is a gift” or “Salvation is a life transforming experience.”

Maybe you thought about salvation being the way you go to heaven when you die and avoid hell. Maybe you thought about salvation being the way you get raptured.

While all those answers are true, none of them get to the root of what salvation really is. To understand what salvation is, I want you to engage your imagination with me for a few moments.

Imagine that you're living in a country that's under the oppressive rule of a foreign power.

At one time in the distant past, this dark power conquered your people and for generations it has worked to crush your native language, culture, and religion; everything that identified you as a people.

Through oppression, insinuation, and corruption, this foreign power wrought its havoc.

Everything good about your people, everything that was lovely, everything that was wonderful became virtually unrecognizable

Every holiday, observance, and custom; everything that brought joy has been either torn to pieces or corrupted to the point of being unnatural. Complete and utter subjugation.

It has tried to make you forget who you were. It has tried to destroy your identity, and it has largely worked.

Your language is filled with the oppressors' words, thoughts, and spoken with the oppressors' accent.

You live like the oppressors. You observe their holidays and what ancient customs of your people that you retain are but shreds, mingled with the customs of the oppressors.

Yet, even after all the generations of being under the heel of this dark power there's still the faintest spark of who you really are, of who you're really supposed to be.

From time to time that spark flares up and reaches out in hope that one day you'll be free, even if you're not sure what freedom would mean.

Now imagine that, after generations of this oppression, you hear that the land has been invaded. Another power has risen, and this power claims to be one of you.

As he leads his army through the land, taking town after town, village after village, he restores the ancient ways of your people.

He restores it all! The language, the culture, the religion, the customs, all of it! Town after town raises his flag and goes out to meet him, and the oppressors' forces flee before him.

Finally, he comes to your town, and it's as if the sun is shining for the first time in a thousand years! People lined the streets, waving his banner, throwing flowers in front of him!

They dance and sing the good and joyful songs of your people! They shout themselves hoarse!

They feast, they celebrate and rejoice. Because after generations of foreign oppression, of darkness, and corruption, your people are finally free.

You're going to be ruled in justice by one of your own now, by one who understands you, who knows your value, by one who loves you. You are his people, and he is of your people. You've been delivered.

At its root, and its very core, that's what "salvation" is; it's deliverance.

It's when you're delivered from your bondage to the darkness of sin and are brought to live in the light under the loving, just, transforming rule of your rightful King, Jesus.

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But how does this salvation begin? You might think that it starts with faith, but it doesn't. Faith is something that God has built into the human heart.

We can place that faith in anything. We can invest it wisely, or we can squander it and use it up until we have no faith left. No, salvation doesn't start with faith.

It starts with a calling, with God calling your heart to a different life, to a different way of being. It's not really an invitation, at least, not as we think of an invitation. It's more of a summons.

It's as if the King from our story sends his herald to your home, and the herald calls aloud for you to come out and meet the King.

Salvation starts with a calling, but conditions must be right in order for you to be aware of this calling.

If your life is too noisy, too busy or too preoccupied with all the things that take up your time, you may not hear it. It usually takes an interruption of some sort, something that forces the life you're living to pause.

It could be a tragedy. It could be the loss of a job. It could be relationship issues. It could be sickness.

It could be anything that interrupts your life and grants a moment of stillness where you become aware of God's call for you to draw near.

That interruption, that stillness could come when you lay your head on your pillow at night or it could happen in a Sunday Worship service.

It could be anything or anytime that interrupts the hectic busyness of your life.

Something that turns your heart from the fullness of its own desires, and grants you a moment of spiritual stillness where you become aware of the voice of God calling you to His salvation.

Of course, once you become aware of the call, you must answer and the answer is simple; it's either yes or no. You can't ignore God's calling or pretend you didn't hear.

Ignoring or pretending you didn't hear are both the same as answering "no."

You can't put it off by saying, "*Call me again later, when it's a more convenient time.*" That's also a "no." When God calls you, you must answer "yes" or "no".

A "yes" answer requires something of you, and this is where faith comes in. Answering "yes" to the call to salvation requires you to place your faith in Jesus.

God knows you've placed enough of your faith in other people and other things.

You've placed faith in family, in friends, in educators, in coaches, and leaders. You've placed faith in companies, in political systems, and medical treatments.

But now, when you've heard God calling, you need to take whatever faith you have left and place it in Jesus.

You've got to believe that He can do better with your life than you've done with it, than anyone else has done with it.

Then you've got to step out of that old life and begin walking toward Jesus.

That's called repentance. Repentance is when you turn away from life as you know it and turn toward Jesus.

It's when you turn away from sin, wickedness, and misery, and turn toward God's righteousness, peace, and joy. Answering God's call requires faith, and true faith brings repentance.

Then repentance will lead you to the waters of baptism. In water baptism, you take on the name of Jesus.

You identify publicly with Jesus, with His Kingdom, with His ways, and pledge your loyalty and faithfulness to Him.

You've answered God's call, and now you rise from the waters of baptism to a brand-new life, a brand-new start and God promises that He'll fill you with His own Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God's gift promised to you, to empower you to live in your new life, and to do His work in the world.

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Now that you understand a bit about what God's call to salvation is, you need to understand something about the nature of that call.

First, God's call is enlightening. That's what Peter means when he said in his letter that God has "*called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*"

Before you answered "yes" to God's call to salvation, you were living in the dark.

You were trying to see in the dark, you were trying to make your way in the dark, you were trying to understand life from a place of darkness.

But after you answered “yes,” the light began to dawn and you began to live in the light. You start to understand what you didn’t understand before.

You start to see the path of your life more clearly than you did before. You begin to see everything differently because now there’s light.

Walking in God’s light will affect how you understand everything. It’ll change your understanding of the power systems of this world. It’ll change the way you view your relationships and the way you engage them.

It’ll change your motivations. It’ll change the way you work, and your sense of for whom you’re working.

It’ll change the way you approach education and learning. God’s call is enlightening; it’ll change the way you see everything.

Then, God’s call to salvation is confounding which means it dishonors and puts to shame the values and priorities of this unredeemed world.

How does that happen? Paul said in 1st Corinthians that God does this by calling those the world considers foolish, and weak, and low, and despised.

God calls them, those the world rejects, those the world devalues and transforms them, and uses them for His glory.

In 1st Corinthians Paul said it plainly; there aren't many wise, powerful, or blue-bloods who are called. Most of them already think they're something special.

No. God calls the ordinary, and the less-than ordinary and then He makes them into something special. He does this so that no human can boast in His presence.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29, *"Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."*

So, if you're here and you don't think very much of yourself; if you're here and you don't feel like you're something special.

If you're here and you feel yourself to have little value then understand this; God's call is for you, and He's a creative, transforming God!

He's ready, willing, and able to take the low, despised and devalued of this world and transform them through His salvation.

Finally, God's call to salvation is sanctifying. That means God takes sinners and makes them saints.

God takes the vile and makes them pure. God takes the unholy and makes them holy. God takes the unrighteous and makes them righteous. God takes the wicked and makes them good.

When I say that God's call is sanctifying, I mean that it separates. It separates you from your darkened past to a brighter future.

It separates you from a life dominated by sorrow to a life filled with joy. It separates you from a heart disturbed by trouble to a heart ruled by His peace.

All this enlightenment, this transforming, this sanctifying, all this is about contrast. It shows that through salvation there's a contrast between the unredeemed mind and the mind of the saved.

It shows that there's a contrast between those great in the world's eyes and those great in God's eyes.

It shows that there's a contrast between the sinner and the saint. These things are not the same, and its salvation that makes them different.

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God's call to salvation requires something else of those who say "yes", of those who step forward, who turn toward Jesus, who open the door of their heart when He calls.

It requires discipline. I don't mean "discipline" as typically thought to mean today, with connotations of harsh structure, conformity, and punishment.

I mean "discipline" in its most basic meaning: discipline as a course of learning.

God's call to salvation requires that you invest yourself in learning, in learning all you can about Jesus, in learning all you can about the Scriptures and from the Scriptures.

It requires learning new values, new vocabulary, new practices, new priorities, habits, and customs.

Some of that learning will come almost instinctively, and other aspects of it may require you to crack your brain, but you'll find it worth it. And you know what? Those who are saved love it!

God's call to salvation requires diligence. The life of the saved can't be lived haphazardly; one must exert conscious, thoughtful effort toward being the kind of person that brings glory to God.

In 2 Peter, the Bible teaches that there are things you have to prayerfully add to your life, things like virtue, knowledge, and self-control.

You must develop endurance, godliness, and the ability to show kindness to your brothers and sisters in Christ. You've got to work at becoming the kind of person who loves people as God loves them.

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Conclusion

2 Peter 1:3-10, *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.*

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

God’s call to salvation requires a decision. You must decide to answer “yes” to His call. You’ve got to decide that He offers something better than the life you’re living.

You must decide to answer “yes” to step forward, to step out, and start walking in His direction.

You’ve got to decide that the difference Jesus makes, the way of Jesus, that the transformation of everything, the total transformation He promises is what you want.

God’s call to salvation is the beginning of a life that makes you one of the chosen, the royal, the holy, and the precious in His sight.

It’s a life of eternal consequence that has eternal value. It’s a majestic life, and it all starts when you say, “Yes.”