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SALVATION AND CALLING

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"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Tim. 1:9).

SALVATION AND CALLING! These two words distinguish two aspects of human redemption. Salvation has to do with the work of Christ for us on the cross, which is redemption by blood. Calling has respect to the work of the Holy Spirit in us, which is redemption by power. The salvation of our text is the objective work of Christ by which salvation is wrought for us; the calling relates to an inward work of the Holy Spirit by which we are enabled to appreciate and appropriate the benefits of Christ's work for us at Calvary. Apart from the calling of the Spirit, the work of Christ on the cross has no intelligent meaning to the lost man. Multitudes have heard the gospel with the physical ear who have never heard it spiritually and savingly. Salvation is of the Lord and the ability to understand it is also of the Lord.

This message is primarily for the good of the saints. Its purpose is to promote humility in the saved by showing that it was nothing in us that caused our conversion. We did nothing to get Christ to die for us, and we did nothing to get the Holy Spirit to call us. It was all of His grace. We did nothing in order to be saved and called, but we can, by His grace do much because we have been saved and called. He who thinks his salvation and calling were caused by anything he did is not giving God the glory, but is glorying in the flesh. And God has determined that no flesh shall glory in His sight.

Our text speaks of two divine blessings upon sinners and gives the source and cause of these blessings. Let us consider first:

THE BLESSING OF SALVATION

"Who hath saved us." The salvation spoken of here is the salvation wrought out for us at Calvary where Christ put

away sin, that is the guilt of it by the sacrifice of himself. "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). Salvation is here used objectively as in Hebrews 2:3, and I quote: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Salvation is a blessing provided by Christ and presented to the lost man in the gospel; and it must be accepted by the sinner if he is to escape judgment for his sins. It was on the cross that Christ bare our sins. It was on the cross that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. How true, that the way of the cross leads home.

Let us next consider the blessing of being called. The saved man has been called of God. What is meant by our being called? George Henry Trever, writing for the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says that calling is "the invitation given to men by God to accept salvation in His kingdom through Jesus Christ. This invitation is given outwardly by the preaching of the gospel, inwardly by the work of the Holy Spirit. Spurgeon says: "By the word calling in Scripture, we understand two things—one the general call, which in the preaching of the gospel is given to every creature under heaven; the second call is the special, which we call the effectual call, whereby God secretly calls out of mankind a certain number whom He Himself hath before elected, calling them from their sins to become righteous, from their death in trespasses and sins to become living spiritual men, and from their worldly pursuits to become lovers of Jesus Christ." Spurgeon says that this call is not to our ears but to our hearts. And so the calling of our text is the effectual call; that is, it accomplishes our conversion by leading us to accept the outward invitation to trust Christ as Lord and Saviour. The sinner cannot resist this call because he does not want to. This

call is a life-giving call, changing the disposition from one of rejection to a heart that understands and accepts the gospel of Christ. This call lets in the light of understanding so that salvation through a crucified and risen Saviour is seen to be the wisdom and power of God. Apart from this life-giving call, the gospel of a crucified Christ is a scandal to the Jew and foolishness to the Greek.

Let us consider some particular scriptures: I Cor. 1:23, 24: "But we preach Christ crucified, (this is the outward call of the gospel), "Unto the Jew a stumbling block, and unto the Greek foolishness; (this is the result of the outward call to the natural man); "But unto them which are called," (this is the inward call of the Holy Spirit), they see the wisdom and power of God in the plan of salvation. Rom 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." This cannot refer to the mere outward call of the gospel, because many have heard this call to whom all things do not work together for good. It can only refer to the life-giving call of the Holy Spirit by which the sinner is made a saint. Rom. 8:30: "And whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This says that the called are also justified and glorified, which is not true of all who have the gospel preached to them.

I Cor. 1:26: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." The outward call of the gospel was preached to the multitudes at Corinth, but the inward and effectual call of the Spirit came to only a few of the prominent and high-born of Corinth.

Now let us consider some illustrations of the effectual call:

1. The call of Lazarus from the dead. (John 11:41-44). Christ stood before the grave of Lazarus and cried, "Lazarus, come forth." There was no power in Lazarus to rise from the dead. It was the power of God that quickened him into life. Spurgeon notes that this was a particular call, and if our Lord had not

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"The Bible Doctrine Of Good Works"

C. D. COLE

The scriptures have much to say about good works. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." Titus 3:8. "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." I Timothy 6:18-19.

The scriptures also speak of works done to be seen of men and for self-glory. "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi." Matthew 23:5-7. "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." Matthew 6:2. Christ said to his unbelieving brethren in the flesh: "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." John 7:7.

We also read of dead works; works of the flesh, and works of the devil. All this goes to show that a good deal of discrimination is necessary in a sermon on the subject of good works.

So, we are to approach our theme in the spirit of inquiry. Three pertinent questions on the subject shall engage our attention: 1. What do we mean by good works? 2. Who is qualified to engage in good works? 3. What is a good work?

1. What do we mean when we talk about good works? Or rather what do the scriptures mean when they speak of a good work? A good work in the scriptural sense, the only true sense, is a work that pleases God—a work that receives His approval and blessing. What men call good works may not be good works in God's sight at all. In this, as in everything else, God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. What men may pronounce good, God may reject as evil.

2. Who can engage in good works? To this question the voice of scripture is clear. None but the people of God can do a good work. None but the saved are qualified for good works. We speak of men performing good works without any such discrimination, but the Bible puts salvation before good works. The Bible says: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:8. "But without faith it is impossible to please him:" Hebrews 11:6. Good

works are the fruit of the Spirit and none but the saved have the Spirit.

Good works are the fruit of salvation and not the root. The effect and not the cause. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10.

In every realm except mechanics there must be life before activity.

Man is related to God as a moral being, and since he is dead in trespasses and sins, he must be quickened into life before he can act right before God. The belief that a man may work towards salvation is a heresy that finds no support in the word of God. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" Titus 3:5. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," II Timothy 1:9. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9.

All the work that a lost man does to ingratiate himself into the favor of God is a dead work and must be repented of.

There is no approach to God except through Christ. We, who are far off, can only be made nigh by the blood of Christ.

3. The third point in our inquiry is this: What are good works? How may one know when he is engaging in good works? This is a most important question. Multitudes are in a whirl of so-called christian activity, nervously executing man-made programs, only to reap, in the end, a terrible awakening and a sore disappointment. There are many examples of people being mistaken about good works: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Matthew 7:22. Other examples are: David getting the ark to Jerusalem in I Chronicles 13, women preachers, and Moses striking the rock.

We cannot enumerate and catalogue all the good works a christian may engage in. We shall try to show the necessary elements in any work to make a good work in the sight of God. As individuals, particular deeds may vary, according to our relation to society and to our opportunities.

What is a good work?

A. A work of faith. To do that which is commanded of God, only because He commands it, is a good work. A work of faith is possible only to men of faith. Works of faith are often opposed to human reason. Example: Noah, Abraham, Moses. The

preacher who shuns not to declare all the counsel of God.

B. Another element in a good work is love. "If ye love me keep my commandments." John 14:15. The unregenerate, so far as the external act is concerned, may do a good work, but the inward motive, as well as the outward act, is essential to a good work. A cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple is a good work, while the giving of a million dollars may fall short of the divine requirement for a good deed. Here is the acid test to apply to our christian activity: Is it done out of respect to Christ?

If so, it will not be done for a show to be seen and rewarded of men. "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." I Corinthians 13:4.

It will not be done out of envy and strife. "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:" Philippians 1:15.

There are all sorts of means being resorted to today to keep church members active in some form of christian service, such as contests or prizes. It does not require much discernment to know that all such service is of the flesh and profiteth nothing.

There is a truth in my own mind and heart, and I want to share it, and yet I hardly know how to express it—how to get it over to you. I can only do my best and trust the Holy Spirit to help my infirmity in expression and your dullness of hearing.

The first consideration of the believer is not service to others, but communion and fellowship with Christ. Our first obligation is not that of being concerned for others, but of making our own calling and election sure. Our first great task is not to serve our fellow man, but to serve our God, by studying His Word, learning His will, and doing it. Our highest privilege is not that of being engaged in service for Christ, but in having a daily communion with Him. "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20. What I am doing is to urge you to have personal dealings with God. I am emphasizing the importance of private devotions. I am speaking now of the necessity of secret worship. If we have not learned to worship God in secret, we cannot properly worship Him in public. If Christ is not real to us, it is but mockery and pretense to speak of Him to others.

Paul said that christianity in the last days would be characterized by people having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. This is the sure result of too much public service without the cultivation of our own spiritual graces. "If ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth

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on the right hand of God." Colossians 3:1. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Jude 20, 21. The need of every one of us is a loftier level of christian living, and this will have to begin in secret fellowship with Christ. There are too many fleshly lusts that war against the soul. We spend too much time in the atmosphere of the radio and newspaper. We live too close to the ground where moral pests sap the vitality of the spirit. We need to get on higher ground where the purity of the air will suffocate these pests.

When Handley Page was touring the Orient in one of his best machines, he and his companions descended at Khobar, in Arabia. There a large rat, probably attracted by the smell of food, managed to get in the plane. When Mr. Page was in midair, he discovered its presence by the sickening sound of gnawing behind him. He thought with horror of the damage those pitiless teeth might cause to some vital part of the machine. What could he do? It suddenly occurred to him that a rat was not created for high altitudes; it is made to live on the surface or to burrow beneath it. So Mr. Page determined to soar. He pointed the nose of his plane upward and rose so high that he himself found it difficult to breathe. He listened and to his delight the gnawing ceased. When he reached his destination and alighted he found the rat lying dead beneath the engine.

So there are fleshly lusts that war against the soul. Theatre going, card playing, and lustful living in many forms. Our only safety is to soar. These things cannot stand heaven's air. They die in the presence of Christ who died for us.

WATCH YOUR THOUGHTS

The heart is just like a garden
With soil so fertile and deep;
It's nourished each day with our gladness
And sometimes the tears that we weep.

The heart can grow love in abundance
Or hate in an equal amount too,
So if roses or weeds are to grow there
Is completely and all up to you.

Only we can plant what's to grow there
And we must keep out the weeds
By guarding each day the thoughts we have
In our garden the thoughts are the seeds.

We may feel righteous resentment
And think revenge is ours to collect;
Our garden gets filled with weeds and thorns
If the roses die from neglect.

A thought of love is food for our garden
Enough love can crowd out the hate,
Our lives are shaped by the thoughts we have
And not be the thing we call Fate.

said "Lazarus." every man in the cemetery would have risen.

2. The dry bones to which Ezekiel prophesied. (Ezek. 37:1-10). God said to Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?" The prophet replied, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." God told him to preach to the dead, dry bones scattered over the valley. And as he preached, bones began to move, each bone finding its proper place, then sinews, flesh, and skin came upon them, breath came into them and they lived. Ezekiel had no power to give life to these dead bones; the power was in God who quickeneth the dead.

3. The conversion of Lydia. (Acts 16:14). "Whose heart the Lord opened that she attended (gave heed) unto the things which were spoken by Paul. Paul preached the gospel—he gave the outward call—the Lord by His Spirit gave the effectual call, and Lydia was converted to faith in Christ.

THE CHARACTER OF THE EFFECTUAL CALL

It is a holy calling. The word "holy" means separation. The call of the Holy Spirit separates the one called from those who remain dead in trespasses and sins. The effectual call of the Holy Spirit lifts the sinner out of the spiritual cemetery to walk in newness of life.

Let us consider in conclusion: The source and cause of these divine blessings. The text says that this is God's purpose and grace.

1. It was God who saved us and called us; we did not call ourselves. No Christian is self-made; he is God-made. "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psalm 100:3). "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Eph. 2:1-5).

2. The cause of our calling was not anything in us. It was not according to our works. This is a humbling truth and when understood, it will promote humility in us. And humility is a grace that is much needed by all saints.

3. The cause of our salvation and calling is something in God. The originating cause was His own eternal purpose; the moving cause was His grace; and the procuring cause was the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The grace that caused God to save us and call us was given in Christ Jesus before the world began. We had no being then, but Christ, the eternal One, was there

and this grace was deposited in Him to be given to us in His appointed time. In Gal. 1:15, Paul speaks of the time when it pleased God to call him by His grace, to reveal His Son to him.

It was grace that led Christ to die for us, and it was also grace that led the Holy Spirit to call us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Grace not only climbed Calvary's hill in the person of Christ to be punished for the guilt of our sins; but grace also entered our heart in the person of the Holy Spirit, to work on our corrupt nature that we might be conformed to the image of Christ. Our sinful nature could not and would not destroy its own corruption. Man has a free-will by nature and this free-will leads him to reject the gospel; it is when the will is renewed by grace that the sinner wills to believe the gospel and Christ becomes precious to him through faith. To will is from nature, to will well is from grace. Isaac Watts has memorialized the truth of this message in song:

"Eternal Spirit, we confess, And sing the glories of thy grace;
Thy power conveys our blessings down, From God the Father and the Son.

Enlightened by thine heavenly ray,
Our shades and darkness turn to day;
Thine inward teachings make us know,
Our danger and our refuge too.

Thy power and glory work within,
And break the chains of reigning sin;
Our wild, imperious lusts subdue,
And form our wretched hearts anew."
Isaac Watts, 1709.

O GREAT SALVATION

His mercy is so great
that it forgives great sins
to great sinners,
after great lengths of time,
and then gives great favours
and great privileges,
and raises us up to great
in the great Heaven
of the great God.

Romans 6: 23 "For the wages of sin is death."