

10 Sept 2023

Title: A holy calling

Introduction:

Allow me to share one of my favourite memories of my childhood. Now, I don't know about you but I loved playing with my friends outside in our neighborhood's streets. Life was simple and it was safe.

We didn't have much homework after school those days and we had plenty of free time in the afternoons. We played all sorts of games, we even invented our own games.

We didn't have cellphones or watches to look at the time, but our queue to go back inside the house was normally the streetlights that was switched on or the distinctive voice of our mothers calling us to come home.

And I, unlike others who continued playing, I actually responded to that call and ran home as fast as I could because I was afraid of discipline.

Maybe you're wondering why I'm sharing this story with you.

Let's have a closer look at the meaning of this word calling:

A calling is a strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action especially when accompanied by conviction

The title of today's message from the Lord is: A Holy Calling

Now; the word holy or the idea of a holy calling might not be very familiar in this day and age we live in. We even find that in the body of Christ that it almost becoming a foreign word.

And so holy in it's most focused usage is a word uniquely associated with God such as in the Bible verse in Isaiah 6:3; "holy, holy holy is the Lord Almighty."

God is supremely and exclusive God. He has no rivals, He is uniquely excellent, He is in His own category.

1 Samuel 2:2 says: "There is no one holy like the Lord, there is no one beside beside you."

What is holiness?

Holiness is commonly defined as being separate or set apart. Holiness according to this definition is separateness that entails moral purity. And while only God is holy there is also a sense in which others can be holy.

Why is it important for us to be aware or to pay attention to the Holy calling of the Lord.

First of all: It is a command from the Lord. And because we are His children, He is saying be like me.

Any good parent want his child to act the same or be the same as him. 1 Peter 1:16 "So just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written: Be holy, for I am holy".

Secondly: 1 Peter 2:9 "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people"

Thirdly: 2 Timothy 1:9 says "He has saved us and called us to a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

An Interesting fact I want to share about the phrase holy calling is that although the word holy is written all over the pages of the Bible, the phrase holy calling is found only once in the Bible and that is in 2 Timothy 1:9.

I want us to pause at this scripture for a while.

We see that God 1st saved us, meaning you said yes to the initial call of salvation and a relationship with the Father, hallelujah!! but it doesn't end there. Thereafter; He calls us into a holy calling or a holy life.

The difference between between salvation & holiness is the following:

Salvation is an event that occurs once in the life of the believer while holiness is the process through sanctification and purification in the life of the believer. It occurs gradually as we allow God to refine our faith and as we come before Him daily in repentance.

The day I received the Lord as Saviour in my life, was at the age of 21. At that time I just completed my studies in Cape Town and. I remember so vividly how I battled with life and looking for direction at that time and seeking for answers in all in the wrong places as I didn't know the Lord as yet. But on a specific afternoon while living in the Northern suburbs in Cape Town, my friend and I was busy preparing to go out for the night, we bumped into an old school friend from my hometown and he invited us to church.

At first we declined the invitation but after a while decided to go anyway. And guess what....

After the 2nd or 3rd visit to the church, I felt the distinct call from the Lord when the pastor extended an invitation to pray for those who want to surrender their life to the Lord. I responded with great urgency to the invitation, because I was experiencing an immense presence and love of my Heavenly Father. It is the most powerful and important decision taken.

From that moment I knew my life can never be the same again.

And so the day you say yes to the call of salvation is also the day you become aware of the greatness of this Holy God we serve. The more time you spent in His presence, the more you become aware of just how holy He is.

Someone once described it like this. When we look at the great function of the sun in the solar system and the life and light it provides we will know that anything that gets closer to the will feel the intensity of it. The same is true when we move closer to God's presence, the more we become aware of the intensity of His holiness and the more we would long for it.

As a young believer at that time, I was radical for Christ.

I looked for opportunities to pray, I spent time in God's word at any given time and moment, I asked questions, I shared the gospel with any person I felt needed the Lord and I wanted to do more and more in His Kingdom, And believe me, the enemy wasn't happy at all about my new life in the Lord and my pursue for holiness in God.

I became so aware of who God is and what He's done for me.

Transformation took place because I asked the Lord to renew my mind through His word.

It didn't just stay at salvation but I knew that there was a purpose why He called me and that I needed to offer my life unto Him as a living sacrifice. I wanted everyone else to experience what I was experiencing, I was so hungry for His presence and I knew I had to give certain things up in order to have more of Him.

For example, Instead of dancing to worldly songs, He began to anoint me to dance in His kingdom and for His glory.

I had to give certain friends up for a couple of years in order to grow spiritually. God placed me in a healthy Christian environment.

I want to remind you today that there's absolutely nothing the Lord can do in our lives without us having a desire for it. Without us praying for it or having faith in Him to do a work in our lives.

His word says we are His workmanship and I believe that He is faithful to complete the work He has started within you.

What is the difference between salvation and holiness?

Salvation occurs instantaneous while holiness is a process that occurs through sanctification and purification.

What exactly is a holy calling?

Let's take a closer look at the word "holy":

In Greek the word holy is hagio and it's a combining form of holy and

sacred.

And in Hebrew the word "holy" is kodesh..

which leads us to one of the Names of God which is Jehovah M'kaddesh - the Lord Who sanctifies you.

So when we go back to the 2nd halve of the scripture in 2 Timothy 1:9, we learn that this holy calling was given to us in Christ Jesus, and not through our own works but according to His own purpose and grace.

There is no way that any person on earth can pursue or follow a holy calling without the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus paid the price for us to live a life holy, consecrated, devoted and set apart for His glory.

The mark or DNA of God in the life of a Christian, is holiness, because it is the nature of God.

Holiness gives a Christian an advantage over a luke warm and ordinary Christian.

Why, because we read in the 2nd half of Hebrews 12:4 , without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

In Matthew 5:8 we also read something very similar. And it's actually the 1st thing we learn from the beatitudes, that Jesus is concern about our heart.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see the Lord."

So, you might be saying, well I'm not sure if this word is for me. I'm too young or too old or to this or that to live a life holy and consecrated unto the Lord, I still have so many fun things to do and I don't think this holy calling is meant for me.

Maybe it's only for a selected few in the church or in the body of Christ.

Yes, I agree with you to a certain degree, our leaders should be leading by

example. They are the ones that should walk the walk and talk the talk because there's an even greater responsibility on them. There's a reason why they've been appointed right? And they are the ones who will be giving much account unto the Lord one day.

With that said, let's read Jeremiah 1:5 , and remind you that you too are included.

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

God is sovereign over how he created us, how he wired us, over our personalities, our gifts, our talents and our attributes.

God has placed a holy purpose on your life even before you were born. He knew you then and He is acquainted with you now. He knew that you will be born in a sinful world, that you will make wrong choices in life, that you will derail from the purpose and plan He has for your life, yet He said He sanctified you, He chose you, ordained you and He appointed you. Yes, maybe not to be a prophet like Jeremiah, but He has called you most certainly into a Holy Kingdom.

When we read Exodus 33:18 where Moses asked the Lord "Please show me your glory".

the Lord's response was "So be ready in the morning and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me on the top of the mountain. " - Exodus 34:2

You see, Moses had a desire for more of the Lord, but even he had to make certain sacrifices. Not only once but on many occasions.

And the Lord said to Moses, "present" yourself.

I was reminded of the same word present in Romans 12:1 where apostle Paul wrote "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that

you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service/worship."

And I took a closer look at this word "present"

In the Greek language, the word present is paristimi, which is a compound of the words para and istimi.

The prefix para means alongside and the word istimi means to place. When these 2 words are being compounded together, the new word means to place beside.

While I continued to seek revelation from the Lord, I began to see my heart or the human heart being placed opposite the Lord's heart. Placing beside....

And this word placing also speaking of positioning.

And the Lord immediately reminded me of Abraham who had to bring an offer unto God which we read about in Genesis 22. Abraham had to build an altar unto God and lay down his son Isaac as a sacrifice.

The sacrifice that Abraham brought before the Lord is symbolic to our hearts that we ever so often have to present unto God, our hearts that the Lord wants us to place on the altar so He can search us and remove what doesn't belong.

Those things that became such a norm and a part of our hearts and identity that we don't see anything wrong with it. While the word says the heart is deceiving above all things, we also read how king David prayed unto God to search his heart and to create in him a clean and steadfast heart.

This is a daily practice for the believer.

How do I attain this:

It simply means placing your heart beside His heart.

Present your heart unto Him. Come with everything go the Lord, no hidden agendas.

Getting closer to Him and abiding in Him.

The day you received Christ in your life is not really the day you give all of your heart, it's only the start. We will always be tempted, we will always live in this sinful world. Therefore it is pivotal for a Christian to separate himself/herself and be set apart from worldly patterns and beliefs and desires.

Holiness is cultivated or produced in the secret place and works its way outwardly. The secret place is a life of continual fellowship with ABBA Father.

Holiness means placing every detail of your life under the scrutiny of God Himself.

You no longer have a desire to please man but to please God.

James 1:21-21

So get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct. Submit to God and accept the word that He plants in your heart which is able to save you. Do not deceive yourself by just listening to the word, instead, put it into practice. "

The call to action as we draw this message to a close is the following:

Those spaces in your heart and mind that you never gave God entrance to, now is the time to allow God the entrance pass, in order for you to know His heart and see your own.

God is so gentle. He knows all about boundaries and although He's our Creator, He will never exceed where we don't allow Him, instead He will wait patiently.

The most appropriate posture as a child are that of obedience, yielding, surrender, humility.

What is your posture and heart attitude before the Lord lately, are you still yielding, surrendering, in order to pursue the holy calling of the Lord.



