

The Heavenly Calling - Part 16

by T. Austin-Sparks

The heavenly calling is to be companions of Christ and to be part of the glorious church that He presents to Himself.

Duration: 52:56

Scripture: Isaiah 54:5, Isaiah 62:5, Malachi 2:11, Revelation 19:7, Revelation 21:2, Revelation 21:9

Topics: "Heavenly Calling"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the purpose of the Christian life, which is to reveal Christ and bring pleasure to Him. The speaker acknowledges that believers often struggle in this task, facing difficulties and challenges that test their faith. The sermon also highlights the importance of the church's mission to preach the gospel to all nations, as God desires all people to be saved. The speaker concludes by urging Christians to strive for their heavenly calling and not to settle for anything less than God's best.

Transcript

I want to turn you to several passages of scripture. In the Old Testament, in the prophecies of Isaiah, chapter 54, verse 5, For thine maker is thine husband. The Lord of hosts is his name.

The Holy One of Israel is thy redeemer. Chapter 62, and verse 5, For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee. And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

In the prophecies of Jeremiah, chapter 3, verse 14, O backsliding children, set the Lord, for I am a husband unto you. Chapter 31, and verse 31, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they bring. Although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord.

The prophecies of Malachi, chapter 2, verse 11, Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord, which he loveth, and hath married the daughter of a strange God. That is how we finish the Old Testament.

Now we will see how we finish the New Testament. The book of the Revelation, chapter 19, verse 7, Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come,

and his wife hath made herself ready. In the book of Exodus, chapter 21, verse 2, And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband, about nine.

And there came one of the seven angels, who had the seven birds, who were laden with the seven last plagues. And he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. He carried me away in the spirit to a mountain, great and high, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

Her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear and crystal, having a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels. I think we can leave the reading there, and resume the matter with which we have been occupied. We have been seeing what God is doing, particularly in the dispensation in which we live, is constituting a new, heavenly, spiritual Israel.

We have seen the failure of the old Israel, and God's necessity for setting that Israel aside. But at the time of the setting aside, the bringing in of His new, heavenly Israel, this is what is called the heavenly calling. And we are told that we are called to be companions of the heavenly calling, and companions of Christ in the heavenly calling.

We have seen how the New Testament takes over the ideas of the Old Testament, and translates them into spiritual meaning. The titles of the old Israel are redeemed, and brought over to the new. Because although God may have to give up an instrument that He raises up, He never gives up His thought.

He will never give up His intention. And if He cannot realize His purpose in one instrument, He will realize it in another. We have seen that the old Israel was called God's family.

We have seen that the old Israel was called the Lord's house. The old Israel was called God's heir for His inheritance. The old Israel was called God's flock.

Israel were God's sheep. We have seen that the old Israel was called God's vine. And all these titles are taken up and brought into the New Testament church.

The new heavenly Israel is His family, children of God. It is His house. Whose house are we? We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

We are His flock. I am the good shepherd. We are His vine.

I am the vine and ye are the branches. Well now we have to come to the last one that we are able to look at at this time. And from the readings that we have taken, you have come to the conclusion as to what it is.

The bride of the Lord. Israel as we have seen from those various scriptures was called God's bride. He said that He became a husband.

You notice that although Israel was a man literally, Israel is usually spoken of in the feminine. It is not He, it is She. And it is She who failed Him as a wife.

He purchased Israel to be His bride with precious blood. Last week we saw that the Passover was a marriage covenant. Jeremiah 31, 31 says that when He brought them out of Egypt He took them by the hand and became a husband unto them.

The blood of the Passover lamb was the blood of a covenant of marriage between the Lord and Israel. He betrothed Israel unto Himself that night. And thus She was purchased with His blood.

Very little needs to be said to those who know the Old Testament about God's love for Israel. The most amazing thing in history when you think what Israel was, when you read the history of Israel from Israel's own side, it is the most wonderful thing to hear the Lord saying I have loved thee with an everlasting love. God has never given up that love.

It's still an everlasting love. But there is a sob in the heart of God. It's a disappointed love.

However, the Old Testament is a wonderful revelation of God's love for Israel, the love of the whole heart of God for a bride. How that love was expressed for Israel. See the wonderful protection that the Lord provided for Israel.

He protected Israel all the way along. He provided food and raiment. It says that He led her safely.

What was God's thought and intention in betrothing Israel to Himself? That she might be to His pleasure. The Lord took pleasure in Israel. But the Lord had brought Israel into being for His own pleasure.

To bring satisfaction to His own heart. God, this is a deep mystery. Why the all-sufficient God should want something for His pleasure.

He who possessed all things and really had need of nothing revealed as one who created a people for His pleasure. You see, He created all things for His. He created the world for His pleasure.

He created all that is in the world for His pleasure. And it all went away from Him. He was disappointed in it all.

So He said, I'll begin again. And He raised up Israel where everything else had been. The bride was for the bridegroom's pleasure.

Then again, Israel was raised up to be the self-revelation. God intended to reveal Himself through Israel. To show what kind of... Because we can't bring this down to everyday life now.

Sometimes you are able to see by herself. As you look at her, see how she is provided for and cared for. You're able to say, she must have a wonderful husband.

Well, that's what the wives thought. I'm afraid many of us husbands. But the divine thought is just the opposite.

God wanted to reveal that Israel had been raised up in New Testament language to show for the... That Israel was brought into this relationship of the wife to the Lord for the purpose of His increase. So to speak, many others are born unto the Lord through Israel. His family was to expand.

The Gentiles shall come to the bright. And nations were to be born unto the Lord. These are the things that the prophets said.

Bride was to be for the Lord's own expansion. Mystery of mystery. None of us can understand.

It is possible to be a wife and not... She's a lot of things. But just that one thing is lacking. Real companionship.

But companionship is... The Lord raised up Israel to be His companions. Now it is easy to see how... When Israel no longer... When Israel cut off the Gentiles and... Refused to fulfill the world mission for which he had been brought into union with God. And all this resulted in God losing His companions.

The Old Testament closes on that... She has left the Lord her husband and gone after another. So to the Lord as a nation she is dead. Dead while she lives.

The Lord could never marry another so He can take another wife. You remember Paul's own words about when this former wife died He brought in a new bride. The New Testament has a... You will remember the parable of the virgin when the cry went forth behold the bridegroom cometh.

And we have read these passages in Revelation all about the bride the Lamb's wife. Some of you are recalling Paul's words in... Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her that He might present the church to Himself a glorious church And that follows this Well the fact I think is established that we have to bring back all those features of this relationship. Why are we joined to the Lord? Why are we what are called Christians? For if we are New Testament Christians we are joined to the Lord in a covenant of marriage.

It is the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. How many of you go to the Lord's table at any time? It goes by different names the Lord's table the Lord's supper the Holy Communion and so on. Doesn't matter so much what you call it it is what you mean by it.

Do you know dear friend that every time you go to the Lord's table His meaning in that table is that you are putting your hand to the covenant again saying I stand by my marriage relationship to the Lord. This loaf means that I am one flesh with Christ. We are one body in Him.

A part of His very body is represented by that loaf. And the marriage ordinance of God at the beginning is they too shall become one flesh. Jesus said this loaf is my body.

When we take it we are meant to be saying I am one body with Christ. They too become one flesh and it is the marriage relationship. And when we take the cup symbolic of His blood we say two things I share one life with Him His life is my life and that was made by a covenant in His blood.

That is the deep meaning of the table of the Lord. Is that what we mean every time we come to the Lord's table? It is the bride saying I stand by the covenant I am one with my Lord. We sang this afternoon Jesus my husband we sang this afternoon Jesus He has made us for His pleasure the apostle says working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight.

That we may be unto the praise of His glory and to the glory of His grace to show forth the excellences of Him. Dear friends this encompasses the Christian life this is why He has drawn us with the bands of love this is the reason for our union with Christ that we should be unto His pleasure that He may take pleasure in us.

Time is coming when He will look at His bride then He will say she is a glorious bride He has brought us to Himself for that very purpose to reveal Himself by means of us perhaps our heads and our hearts are going down now what a poor revelation of our Lord we are we are making a terrible mess of this business of revealing Christ but He is taking great pains with us truly it is not easy and He does not make it easy it seems so often that He puts us into difficult positions in order that we may show forth His glory Paul was given a thorn in the flesh a messenger of Satan to buffet Him you know what it is to have a thorn in the

flesh and a messenger of Satan always buffeting you Paul said that he went to the Lord three times about this I don't know whether he meant literally three times I

think he meant I went to the Lord again and again and again I asked the Lord to remove this thorn and to destroy this messenger of Satan but He said unto me my grace is sufficient for thee and my strength is made perfect in weakness that strange sovereignty of God that strange providence of God seems that He sometimes puts difficulties into our lives and makes it hard for us and then in the grace that He shows we magnify Him no one knows what Paul's thorn was a lot of people have had a guess at it and some people think they've got it they know what it was I don't think anybody really does know but it was evidently something that people could see and they could say my word Paul had a hard time with that I'm very glad that the Lord hasn't called me to go that way that poor man does know

what suffering means but how marvellous is the grace of God in that man look at his victorious spirit see how he does not go down under his suffering my the grace of God in that man is a wonderful thing and Paul said and they glorified God in me yes for the self revelation of the Lord the church is a suffering church this wife of the Lord is a suffering wife but the revelation of his grace is a wonderful thing then what about his increase through the church we have already said much about this the Lord through his church wants to bring many many into the kingdom said he preached the gospel in every nation in the whole creation the Lord will it not that any should perish but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth let that stand right over all your ultra-Calvinism don't let any

Calvinism take one iota away from that the Lord would have all men saved and he has never told his church to go and pick out one here and one there and say you are the elect leave the others now preach the gospel to the whole creation leave the rest with me well that is the world mission of the new Israel but do not just view it in a general way get down to it tomorrow morning make this your personal business if by any means you may be able to bring souls into the kingdom when we have said all that we come to this supreme thing he has joined us to himself to be his companions that has been our note right through this conference we are become companions of Christ wherefore holy brethren companions of a heavenly calling to be his companions I confess that I don't understand that that the

Lord should find me his friend not just officially related to him but related to him as a friend to be the friends I can only say to you let us take that word continually ask ourselves how would a friend act how would a friend decide I am the Lord's friend I must not fail him in friendship I must not let him down he counts upon me to be his friend the highest and most sacred part of the whole relationship I despair of ever getting over to you what I see in this matter you see after all this time I haven't touched the new Jerusalem yet it is a very significant thing that the new Jerusalem is called the bride said the angel to John come hither I will show you the bride the lamb's wife and John might have said now let's go and see this wonderful woman and he showed me the holy city new

Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven the bride is the city and the city is the bride and then you have to read the whole description of the city in Revelation 21 and 22 in order to know what the bride is going to be like see all the precious stones this is the preciousness of the Lord Jesus in manifold expression Peter said unto you that believe is the preciousness all manner of precious stones it is what Jesus is in his real character revealed in the bride the city well I can't stay with that that wants hours but you look at it stop thinking about a literal city this is all a symbolic representation of Christ's bride all these glories of the city are only the glories of Christ expressed at last in his bride he showed me the holy city the new Jerusalem having the glory of God her

light light unto a light most precious shining through all these gems I'm afraid my interpreter might have a bad time if I started giving you the list of gems but it really doesn't matter we need not do it all this is what was meant by the apostle when he said he will present the church to himself a glorious church a glorious church the city is a revelation of his manifold glories and the city is the bride now dear friends I have only to close with this final word these are all very beautiful and wonderful ideas they are glorious thoughts but it is just unto this that the Lord has called us this is the heavenly calling it is unto this that he wants us to be companions companions of a heavenly calling because companions of Christ I have a note that sound might sound a bit depressing but I

do remind you that this great letter to the Hebrews has many ifs in it whose house are we if we hold fast we are become companions of Christ if we hold fast this letter to the Hebrews is just full of warnings full of strong exhortations and I do not believe that it was written to non-Christians all the evidences in the letter are that it was written to true Christians therefore it was written to Christians do not miss your inheritance do not fail of your heavenly calling do not fail to be true companions of Christ do not accept anything less than God's best and God's highest you can be Christians having much less than God intended and you notice when the description of the city bride has been given it says blessed is he that has the right to enter in has the authority to enter in there

are nations that will not get in they will walk in the light thereof but they will not be this make sure that you are of this bride do not fail the Lord as Israel failed him let us go on to full grace word of prayer

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