

# The Heavenly Calling - Part 8

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The heavenly calling is a spiritual calling to be part of the new heavenly Israel, a group of people chosen by God to be part of his kingdom.*

**Duration:** 59:40

**Scripture:** Numbers 21:9, John 3:3-4

**Topics:** "Heavenly Calling"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the significance of our past and how it can discourage us. He uses the example of Paul, who never forgot the tragedy of his past life. The speaker also connects various biblical stories to illustrate the theme of moving from death to life. He references the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well, the incident of the serpent lifted up in Numbers 21, and the story of the nobleman and his dying son in John 4. The speaker highlights the power of Jesus' words and how they bring life and healing.

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## Transcript

Once again, we return to this great matter which the Lord is bringing before us in these days. The great thing which God is doing in this dispensation, that is the period between the ascension of the Lord Jesus and his coming again. God is doing a secret thing in this dispensation.

The real nature of the thing that God is doing is not seen on the surface. Men are always trying to make it seen. But what God is really doing is deeper down than can be seen.

It lies behind everything that is seen. God is constituting a new heavenly spiritual Israel. The members of that new spiritual Israel are not known to this world and many of them are not known to other Christians.

It is not until you come right into close touch with them that you discover that they are fellow citizens of the heavenly kingdom. And very often you are quite surprised as to where you find them. However right we may be in abhorring the Roman Catholic system, we are sometimes very surprised to discover that there are fellow citizens of the kingdom of heaven inside the system and that you can have a large measure of spiritual fellowship with them.

And so it is in other connections. You do not know where they are until you come into touch with them in a spiritual way. This is a spiritual Israel, it is not a great public political movement.

That is the difference between the old Israel and the new. Now we have been saying a great deal in these meetings about the setting aside of the old Israel and while that is true there is something that we must recognize. Although we are saying so much about the rejection of the former Israel we have to remember that the twelve apostles and the apostle Paul were Jews and they represent what God meant it meant all the Jews to be.

These men, the twelve apostles and the apostle Paul were involved in the rejection of the Lord Jesus. Peter their leader was the one who denied him and it says that they all forsook him and fled. The fear of their nation came upon them and they broke down in that fear and they fulfilled the word of the Lord Jesus.

When he said all ye shall be offended because of me this night they were all involved in that thing. And as for the apostle Paul there is no doubt about him he was very much involved persecuting all those that were of that way. And yet here they are the first men of the new Israel.

I think this is a very wonderful thing from more than one standpoint. I don't think Peter ever forgot that denial of the Lord Jesus. No doubt from time to time it came up before him like a black specter.

I have no doubt that the devil often played upon that. Said to him it's all very well for you to preach but remember your black past. Remember how you denied and forsook your master.

I think Peter often had to make a real battle over his past. Well we know that Paul did. Not once did Paul refer to that past of his.

He repeatedly reminded people of it. He said I am not meet to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church. One time he said to the Lord, Lord, Lord they know, they know how I persecuted you and how I gave my consent to the martyrdom of your servant Stephen.

Paul never forgot the tragedy of his past life. And yet these men are the men which are the foundation of the new Israel. Now why have I said that? Because you're waiting for me to go on with the 16 points in John.

But today the Lord told me that I was to say this. Our past can always be a very great discouragement to us. And it can be the ground upon which the enemy plays to take the heart out of us.

And he will tell us you see what kind of a person you are. You have proved to be yourself a worthless person. What do you expect seeing what you have been like in the past? And so he would destroy all hope.

Take away all our assurance by saying you're a bad lot and you know it and you ought to expect nothing good for the future. Well if ever there were men who could have talked like that it was Peter and Paul. And the rest of those men on the night when Jesus was delivered up.

I put it over on the other side and I say if ever there were people who seemed to be hopeless these were such people. But these hopeless people became the very beginning of the heavenly Jerusalem. I say there's hope for anybody.

And if the Apostle Paul was standing where I am standing tonight he would say to us my friends anybody could be saved if I could be saved. Anybody could be a part of this heavenly Israel if I could be. So take heart.

You see the material of which the Lord builds his new Jerusalem. In the light of this it is a great dishonor to the Lord for anybody to say I am hopeless. My past is such a bad one that there is no possibility for me.

That dishonors the Lord. And F.W.H. Myers has said God shall forgive thee all but by despair. God cannot forgive despair.

Elijah discovered that. The Lord said what doest thou hear Elijah? You get up out of this and go yonder. And that is where I will meet you.

Not here under the juniper tree. God shall forgive all but despair. Because despair limits the Almighty.

And it says God is not capable of solving my case. So when we speak about the rejection of the old Israel let us remember that it was material from the old Israel with which God began the new. Well now having said that we can go on with John.

Because what we are seeing in the gospel by John is the old Jewish background upon which the Lord is building. That is behind this gospel of John in every part there is something of the old Jewish order. And the Lord is taking the principle of that and bringing it over to the new heavenly order.

Last night we began with the Lamb of God. Behold God's Lamb. We saw what a large Jewish background there was to the Lamb.

Then we went on to Nathanael and saw the heaven which had been closed opened in Jesus Christ. And then to the marriage in Cana of Galilee. Behind which we saw the marriage relationship between the old Israel and Jehovah.

And the breakdown of that relationship because one party to the covenant had failed to keep it. And the marriage saved in Jesus Christ in a new Israel. Further into chapter 2 we came to the temple.

We heard the Lord saying destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again. They the Jews thought that he spake of the temple in Jerusalem. But this he said concerning the temple of his body.

So that the old temple was set aside and in Jesus Christ a new temple was brought in. Into chapter 3 we came to Nicodemus. This representative son of Abraham after the flesh.

And how impossible it is for the sons of Abraham after the flesh to enter the heavenly kingdom. The sons of Abraham must be born again to become sons of God. As such is the kingdom of God.

Now tonight we come to number 6. In chapter 3 at verse 14. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Even so must the son of man be lifted up.

That whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. Here is an Old Testament background. We have it in the 21st chapter of the book of Numbers.

And the incident begins in this way. Then the children of Israel spake against God and against Moses. And they said we hate this vile bread.

Very strong words they used about the manna. We hate this vile bread, the food from heaven. They spake against God, against Moses.

And we said we hate the thing that God has provided. Do remember dear friends that God in all that he did always had his son in view. And then God gave them manna from heaven.

As we are going to see when we come to John chapter 6. He had his son in view. The manna was a type of Christ. Who said I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

And they said we hate this vile bread. And you can hear the Jews in Christ's day speaking like that. We hate this man.

They would almost say we will not have him even if God sent him. That was their spirit against God. God saw the spirit of these people in the wilderness.

How antagonistic it was to him and to what he gave. Therefore God sent serpents among them. Which did bite them and a great multitude died.

Then came in the serpent. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the water. Oh there are deep and terrible things here.

The serpent is ever and always from beginning to end of the bible. The symbol of a curse. The symbol of the judgment of God.

You know that from the very first mention of the serpent. This serpent lifted up in the wilderness is the symbol of the judgment of God. The judgment and curse of God which rested upon the rebellious people is transferred to that serpent.

And that serpent is transfixed to the cross. Carrying the curse and the judgment of God upon itself for the people. And whosoever looked to the serpent was saved.

In using that bit of the old testament. The Lord Jesus was only saying I am going to be made a curse for you. When I am lifted up I shall bear your judgment upon myself.

I shall carry your sins in my body on the tree. There is deliverance in Christ crucified from the curse and from the judgment. And whosoever will look shall live.

Oh and here comes in the greatest scripture that we know. Oh I like the conjunction. Conjunctions are always very significant things in the new testament.

When you get a for or a where for or a therefore always look all round. The serpent lifted up and the son of man lifted up. Bearing the curse and judgment of a rebellious people.

For God so loved the world. We quote that John 3.16 without the context. Oh what a tremendous thing this is.

God is pouring upon his only begotten son the judgment of us all. Allowing his only begotten well beloved son to be made a curse for us. Why? For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

Whosoever believeth on him but have eternal life. You have to lift out John 3.16 and put it right into Numbers 21. Or take Numbers 21 and put it right into John 3.16. Here is the background and here is the foreground.

Transition from the old to the new. The new heavenly Israel is built upon whosoever believeth have eternal life. Oh what a lot more we could say about this.

We must pass on. And here is the unfortunate thing in the dividing of chapters. For spiritual purposes it is a great pity that John 3 and John 4 are divided in chapters.

You know what is in John 4. It is the woman of Samaria at Syca's well. You recall the conversation between the master and that woman. And the heart of the whole talk was this.

He that believeth on me I will put a well of water into him. A well springing up unto life eternal. He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst again.

I say there ought to be no division of chapters there. Because the 21st chapter of the book of Numbers is not divided. And immediately after the incident of the serpent lifted up you have the incident of the springing well.

Then sang Israel spring up a well. When the cross has done its work. When Christ has borne our judgment and the curse resting upon us.

Then the Holy Spirit is released. And springs up as the well of eternal life. There then in chapter 4 is the background of Numbers 21.

The springing well. Following immediately upon the serpent lifted up. In John 3 and John 4 you have these two things.

The serpent lifted up. Jesus lifted up. Made a curse for us.

Because it is written. Cursed is everyone that hangeth upon a tree. Made a curse for us.

Bearing the judgment of our rebellious hearts. And when he has done that he has made a way for the springing well. The well of eternal life.

Wonderful connection the Holy Spirit makes doesn't he in the Bible. How he brings things together. Well we would perhaps never have thought we would find the 3rd and 4th chapters of John in the 21st chapter of Numbers.

But there it is. That was number 7. In case you are losing count. Number 8. Chapter 4 of John.

At verse 46 we have the incident of the nobleman and his dying son. He has come all the way from Capernaum to find Jesus. And to persuade Jesus to go home with him and heal his son.

Jesus tested his faith. And then finding that his faith was quite genuine. He said you can go home.

Your son is alive. Your son liveth. The man went home.

Believed him and went home. And discovered that it was just at the very moment when Jesus said thy son liveth that his son began to get better. Now I expect there are people here who were here last year who are saying we heard all about that last year.

But you didn't hear all about it last year. And you will see that in a moment. You remember last year I took the 8 signs of the gospel by John.

They developed them to 16 this year. So you didn't hear all about it. And not only concerning this nobleman's son.

And what is at the heart of this incident. Why did not Jesus go with that man to Capernaum? Because at another time he did go to Capernaum and healed a lot of people. Why did he not say well I've got to go to Capernaum at some time and do a lot of works there.

I may as well go now. Here's the opportunity. This is an invitation and I suppose I ought to take all invitations.

Jesus did not do that. He stayed where he was. And sent the man home all the time.

As we saw last year it took from 12 o'clock noon until the close of the day and then on into the next day for the man to get home. Why was it that Jesus adopted this method on this particular occasion? We have a Jewish background. And what is the Jewish background? It is the background of the law.

That letter of the law which killeth. Jesus said in this gospel the letter killeth. But the words that I speak they are spirit and they are life.

And it does not matter how far away the case may be if he speaks his word is spirit and life. The old testament speaking of the law brought death. The letter killeth.

That is the letter of the law. The spirit killeth life. And the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life.

And the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life. He only had to speak and he reversed the effect of the law. The law could never have done this.

You may bring all the scribes and Pharisees down from Jerusalem for this boy. And they can recite all the law of Moses. And nothing will happen to the boy.

He will die right enough. And probably die all the quicker because of their reading of the law. Jesus only has to open his mouth.

And speak a word. And the boy many miles away begins to be wet better from that moment. Yes Jesus is showing that the law of his mouth is life.

The transition is so clear isn't it? From death unto life in the word. Number nine. Chapter five of John.

Here we have to repeat largely what we have said before. The story of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. Verse five is the heart of the thing.

A certain man was there which had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity. And what is the Jewish background? There is very little doubt that the Jewish background there was Israel's journey in the wilderness. The thirty eight years of their wandering in the wilderness.

What cripples they were in the wilderness. They could have made the journey from Egypt to the land of Canaan in eleven days. It took them thirty eight years.

And during the thirty eight years they were really making no progress at all. They were in bondage to their own self life. They were impotent helpless cripples because the self life was in the place of mastery.

You have no need for me to tell you how that self life governed them in the wilderness. They never looked at anything as to how it served God, as to how far it satisfied God's interest. They looked at everything as to how it affected them.

All their murmuring and rebellion was because they were not getting what they wanted. It was never what God wanted. They were just a self centered people.

And the self life was their bed. And they were cripples lying on the bed of the self life. Never really able to get up and march straight forward to God's purpose.

Well that's the old Israel background. Jesus takes up an illustration of that right in the presence of the Jews. And he takes this man and puts him on his feet.

And the members of the new heavenly Israel are people who have been delivered from self interest into God's interest. People who have been put on their spiritual feet by Jesus Christ. And are walking in strength in the way of the Lord.

Now don't you think it's a very significant thing that the first miracle after the day of Pentecost was the raising of an impotent man at the gate of the temple of Jerusalem. You see these are not just pretty stories put together to make an interesting book. God knows what he's doing.

And when he puts the first miracle of the Christian era as the raising of an impotent cripple. He is saying that the people of this new Israel are people who have been delivered from this impotence. And put on their feet spiritually.

Are there any cripples here tonight? And there are a lot of Christian cripples about. They can neither get on their own feet. Nor can other people put them on their feet.

You try to pick them up. They may take a step or two. And down they go again.

A lot of people like that. You have to spend your life trying to get them up on their feet. What is it that is eating the very life out of them? What is it that is making them such helpless cripples that cannot walk? It is self-centeredness.

Make no mistake about it, it's self in some form. It's self that wants to be taken notice of. It is self in the form of pride.

This poor man was delivered because he knew his own helplessness. But he believed what Jesus said. He believed unto Jesus Christ.

Which means he believed out of himself. Yes, that's the secret. That we shall turn from our miserable selves and cease to be occupied with them.

Say, once and for all, I am done with you. I am done with you, wretched self. I throw myself unto Jesus Christ.

I take the one great step of commitment. And Jesus never let such a person down. Number ten.

I think we can take number ten for granted. We have already said something about it. Chapter six, the bread of life.

And you know how the Lord Jesus said, it was not Moses that gave you the manna, it was my father. That's the Old Testament Jewish background. Now right in the presence of the Jews, he is saying, I am the living bread.

Which has come down from heaven to give life to the world. Well, I say we can leave that. Here is the very obvious transition from the old to the new.

We have seen in the book of Numbers that the manna did not fully and finally satisfy. But this bread which came down from heaven is the full and the final satisfaction of all who receive him. I do want to say a word about number eleven.

That is why I have hurried over number ten. This is in chapter seven of John. But perhaps I better ask you, would you like me to stop now? Shall I stop? Thank you, because I have seen some people looking at me as though they have had enough.

Very well then, chapter seven. First verse one. After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for he would not walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him.

Now the feast of the Jews, the feast of tabernacles, was at hand. Verse fourteen. But when it was now the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and talked.

Verse thirty-seven. Now on the last day of the feast, the great day, on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of him shall flow rivers of living water.

But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive. Well now we are in the presence of the feast of tabernacles. Numbers chapter twenty-nine.

If you look at that chapter, you will see what led up to this great day of the feast. All the different kinds of offerings had been presented to the Lord. I need not enumerate all the kinds of offerings.

They are all mentioned there, and they have all been presented to the Lord. Then came the last great day of the feast. It is called the feast of tabernacles, but it is also called the feast of trumpets.

On that great day of the feast, in the temple in Jerusalem, the priests brought out great vessels of water and poured out the water on the top of the steps of the temple, so that it flowed down the steps in great volumes. Jesus stepped forward at that time. All in him, all the offerings are presented to God.

He in person is the embodiment of all the sacrifices and all the offerings. And he, as the completeness of all God's requirements, presents himself to the Lord. And then he comes to this day of the feast of tabernacles.

And it says in Numbers, And the priests shall sound with the trumpet, and Jesus took the trumpet, and he cried with a loud voice, Here is the trumpet of the feast of tabernacles. In him all the offerings are perfected. God is fully satisfied.

God is vollkommen zufriedengestellt. Therefore he can pour out his spirit in fullness. He cries like the trumpet with a loud voice, He that believeth on me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water.

Now this is the heritage of all who are of the new Israel. Dear friend, it's your, it's your inheritance. If the word of God is true, if what Christ has said is true, if on this only occasion when he lifted up his voice, he cried with a loud voice, that is before the day of his cross when he cried with a loud voice, the early time when he lifted up his voice, if this is true, he has put great emphasis upon this, that if you and I will accept Jesus Christ as God's full satisfaction on our behalf, if you and I will accept Jesus Christ as the one who has brought every offering that God has stipulated to God himself, and he has done it for us, if that is true, and Jesus wanted it to be known that it was true by crying with a loud voice.

The trumpet sounds this very loudly. Jesus is God's satisfaction on our behalf. He has offered, he has answered to every sacrifice and every offering.

If we believe that, if we really believe that, then his great cry is true for us. Out of us can flow rivers of living water. That is that others shall be receiving of his life through us as his channel.

That is how it ought to be in the case of every true believer. And Jesus has made it possible by satisfying God completely on our behalf. So people of the new Israel ought to be people with a river flowing out.

Believe. Proclaim your faith. Keep not silent.

Take the trumpet to your lips and let people hear. And you will be surprised that when you begin to testify to the Lord Jesus, people begin to receive life. Something will happen in other people.

If you keep your mouth closed and you refuse to testify to the Lord Jesus in your home or in your village or in your work, then you are holding up the river of the Spirit. You are just... You are just checking the flow of the river that ought to be flowing out of you. Now if you have never done it, you try it.

And I want to tell you that the first soul that comes to the Lord Jesus through your testimony will release something in you that you will never again want to keep your mouth closed. There are a lot of miserable Christians because they will keep their mouth closed. I know there are those Christians who talk too much.

But there are quite a lot of Christians who do not talk enough. And so they are spoiling their own Christian life. Take the trumpet of the Lord Jesus and cry with a loud voice.

And the rivers will begin to flow. Well, you told me to go on. But I'm only ten minutes late after all.

But we haven't finished yet.

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