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Make Your Calling and Election Sure

by Aaron Odell

Recently I had a conversation with a fellow Christian and during the conversation it became clear that this individual had doubts about his faith and calling. That brought to mind the Scripture in II Peter 1:10 where we read, "Therefore my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure." (NIV). The New Living Translation (NLT) (which translation is used throughout) renders the same verse in II Peter 1:10, "So dear brothers and sisters work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen."

How can we be assured that we really are among those God has called and chosen; that we make our calling and election sure? God's Word, the Holy Bible, does provide answers for this question and by examining this matter more carefully, we can indeed make our calling and election sure.

In this verse, the Greek word for calling is *klesis*, which means an invitation, calling. Paul, in writing to the Christians in Thessalonica, wrote the following, "With this in mind (referring to the Christians believing in Christ's return), we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of His **calling (klesis)**, that by His power, He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith." II Thessalonians 1:11 Notice this calling comes from God. We find further confirmation of this in Paul's second letter to Timothy, "For God saved us and **called (klesis)** us to live a holy life..." II Timothy 1:9 Again we find that God calls us.

As we learn from I Corinthians 1:24-26, our *calling (klesis)* is to salvation. What a tremendous gift God affords us! This aids our understanding of the parable given in Matthew 22:1-10. Jesus also told them other parables, He said, "The kingdom of heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for His son. When the banquet was ready, He sent His servants to notify those who were invited. But they all refused to come. So He sent other servants to tell them, 'The feast has been prepared. The bulls and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the banquet.' But the guests he had invited went their own way, one to his farm,

another to his business. Others seized His messengers and insulted them and killed them. The king was furious, and He sent out His army to destroy the murderers and burn their town. And He said to His servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren't worthy of the honor. Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.' So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests." The original guests, the household of Judah and Israel, failed to accept God's calling, His invitation. Thankfully God invited us to this banquet, this wedding feast of "salvation." Paul discusses this invitation in Romans 11. In this chapter, He compares Israel to the natural olive tree and the rest of the world, the gentiles to the wild olive tree. The natural branches, Israel, were broken off when they failed to accept God's invitation. This resulted in the gentiles (which includes most of us) being grafted in, or in light of the parable in Matthew 22, we received the invitation to the wedding banquet, to salvation.

Now that we know God invited us, called us, what do we do about making our calling and election sure? We've briefly examined the calling, the invitation from God, mentioned in II Peter 1:10, now we will focus on *election (ekloge, in the original Greek)*, which means selection or chosen. In other verses we discover that *ekloge* is often translated chosen. A good example is in I Thessalonians 1:4 where Paul writes, "We know, dear brothers and sisters, that God loves you and has **chosen (ekloge)** you to be his own people." Again we discover that God does the choosing. He has chosen us to be his sons and daughters in Christ. Other scriptures bear out this principle. I Corinthians 1:26-28 states the following, "Remember dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considered foolish in order to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world; things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considered important." God not only invited us, called us, but He chose us as well. So we can see that both our election or invitation and our being chosen involve God's

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action not ours.

We know from God's Word that we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23. God loved us while we were yet sinners as we read in Romans 5:8, "*But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*" As we discover in Isaiah 59:2 and other Scriptures, our iniquities, our sins have separated us from God. Because our sins separated us from God, only God could bring us into fellowship with him. Only He could invite and call us!

So far, we've seen that God does the calling, the inviting and the choosing, but that still leaves us with the question, what do we do? What is our role in this process of invitation and choosing? The first part of our role involves accepting the invitation. We have to choose God after He has invited and chosen us. This is illustrated in the parable Christ gave regarding the marriage banquet in Matthew 22. Notice the new people invited by God came to the banquet. This is an issue of faith. In Romans 5:1-2, Paul writes the following, "*Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.*" Our faith is demonstrated by accepting God's invitation and calling, but is that all we do?

Reading further in Matthew 22 verse 11 thru 14, we read the following, "*But when the king came in to meet the guests, he noticed a man who wasn't wearing the proper clothes for a wedding. 'Friend', he asked, 'how is it that you are here without wedding clothes?' But the man had no reply. Then the king said to his aides, 'Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'* For many are called, but few are chosen." This parable clearly shows that it's not enough to simply have faith and accept God's invitation. As the apostle James explains in James 2:17, "*So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.*"

Just as we learned from the wedding banquet parable, we need to be dressed appropriately, or, as we read in II Peter 1:10, "...*work hard...*" So what work should we be doing that allows us to be dressed in the wedding clothes? God has plans for us, plans that include doing good things. "*God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is*

not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago," Ephesians 2:8-10. Clearly we have good things God wants us to do.

As James so eloquently puts it, "*What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith, but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, 'Good-bye, and have a good day; stay warm and eat well' - but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? ...Now someone may argue, 'Some people have faith; others have good deeds.' But I say, 'How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds?' I will show you my faith by my good deeds,*" James 2:14-18.

Christ, our Messiah, shows that our good deeds, the way we live our life, comes from God's Word. In His response to Satan's tempting Him in the Wilderness, Christ says the following, "*...People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" Paul discusses this point in the following way to Timothy, "*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true, and to make us realize what is wrong with our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work,*" II Timothy 3:16-17.

God's Word clearly shows that our work involves living by God's Instructions, His Word. We need to fan the flame of God's Holy Spirit, to allow God to direct our steps from His instructions as revealed in the Bible. We have to choose to accept God's invitation and choose to wear the robes of righteousness that come from living as God instructs us. If we continue to abide in Christ and follow the path God lights for us, we can be certain that our calling and election are sure. Our lives will then be a reflection of Christ and we will be doing the good deeds for which God created us. I believe, as Paul did, "*...I am certain that God, Who began a good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns,*" Philippians 1:6. See you at the wedding banquet.

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