

The Eternal Purpose of God

***“Blessed be the God
and Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ,
who hath blessed
us with all
spiritual blessings
in heavenly places
in Christ:
According as he
hath chosen us in
him before the
foundation of
the world, that we
should be holy and
without blame
before him in love.”
—Ephesians 1:3,4***

WITH THIS ISSUE AND THE beginning of another new year, *The Dawn* magazine will introduce a new series of articles that will feature various aspects in connection with the present Gospel Age call to the church. This call has emanated from our loving Heavenly Father who is gathering a select number from among the present evil world who will share as members of our Lord Jesus’ bride. The word ‘called’ identifies those Christians who have thus responded

to this wonderful invitation. Together they will comprise the body of Christ, our Lord being the Head, who will inherit the Divine nature in a heavenly home that has been especially prepared for them.

When this great work of the present age has been completed, the full number of the called and

faithful ones will all be brought together in the first resurrection. They will then share with our glorified Lord as members of the promised seed class that will bring the blessing of life and peace to all the families of the earth in accordance with the Abrahamic promise. (Gen. 22:16-18) This will take place under the administration of Christ's future kingdom, and the terms of the New Covenant which will then be established on the basis of truth and righteousness. God's plan and purpose is to institute a work of reconciliation for the sin-sick human family, and to offer everlasting life to all of the obedient of his human creation. This new law and world order will take place under the direction of Christ's rule, and will introduce to the human family the necessary provisions whereby they may attain everlasting life on a perfected earth with the Christ as its just mediator.

The Prophet Isaiah spoke of the endearing relationship with the Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus that the New Creation, who are presently being called in Christ, will enjoy, and the glory that shall ultimately speak of his name. In the distant past, the prophet wrote in connection with those who would be called to this glorious inheritance that would be accomplished during this Gospel Age. "Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." (Isa. 43:7) The revelator echoed these prophetic promises with the words that will be spoken by the heavenly host who will proclaim, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."—Rev. 4:11

When he wrote to the brethren at Rome, the Apostle Paul pointed out that those who are being called during this present age are called to the same glorious nature and inheritance as was our Lord Jesus during the time of his earthly ministry. "We are buried with him [Jesus] by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4) This is a remarkable prospect for each of us to consider, and with great humbleness of mind.

PAUL'S LETTER

In consideration of the featured text of this lesson, and the opening verses of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, we soon recognize a true sermon of grace in itself. It points to the very high level of love and devotion that the apostle possessed in accordance with his brethren's spiritual growth and welfare as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. His words were meant to encourage them to greater faithfulness in their walk in the narrow way of sacrifice, and they also serve to arouse a greater sense of faith in our own consecrated walk during these closing years of the Gospel Age.

In Paul's introductory remarks, he spoke of the Heavenly Father's preparation in connection with this wonderful calling which began many ages ago, even from before the foundation of the world. In reference to God's ultimate purpose, the apostle said, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."—Eph. 1:5,6

The apostle's use of the word 'predestinated' in his letter lends special attention and recognition to the Heavenly Father's foreknowledge in determining long beforehand the class of Christians who would respond to his calling of a New Creation. The call would go out to members of the fallen race who were under the sentence of death because of sin. There would thus be a predetermined number who would respond to the call. By his special provisions of grace these Christians would be made acceptable to him through their faith in Jesus' blood which had been shed for them as their Savior. John's account bears record, "Jesus saith unto him [Thomas], I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14: 6) "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—Rom. 5:1

The Apostle Paul made this point clear in his letter to the Ephesians when he explained, "In whom we have redemption through his [Jesus'] blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."—Eph. 1:7,8

A SPIRITUAL CALLING

There are various points of emphasis in connection with the church's calling in Christ Jesus that is truly a most wonderful and blessed inheritance. In the apostle's letter to Timothy, he spoke of this as a "holy calling" and added, "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) When he wrote to the church at Philippi, Paul directs our attention to the further dimension of this call, and emphasized that he was using all of his strength and effort to reach the mark for the prize which he said was the “high calling” in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:14) In his message to the Hebrew brethren, he addressed them as “holy brethren,” and partakers of a special inheritance promised to the saints. He told them that it was a spiritual or “heavenly calling” in Christ Jesus.—Heb. 3:1

SAINTS OF GOD

In the context of our featured scripture, we note that Paul greeted the church at Ephesus as “saints” and as the “faithful” children of God who were being called “in Christ Jesus.” To them he proclaimed, “Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 1:1,2) The word saints means to be sacred or holy, and these brethren at Ephesus were among the special class of Christ’s followers who were being called out of the world by the Heavenly Father, and were consecrating their lives to him and to the service of the Truth. They were of the overcoming class of believers in Christ. The apostle took seriously his own opportunity and responsibility to care for this special class of Jesus’ faithful followers, and appreciated his privilege to supply their spiritual needs and progress in the narrow way.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD’S WILL

On one occasion during our Lord’s earthly ministry, the disciples of Jesus asked him why he spoke

and taught in parables. “He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” (Matt. 13:11) The Master was speaking about the church—his faithful people who would be told about the mysteries of the kingdom. Peter said, “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”—Acts 2:39

In our featured text, Paul also spoke of the mystery of the heavenly calling, and that it has gone out to the church of Christ only during this present Gospel Age. He wrote, “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”—Eph. 1:9-12

Again, when writing to the brethren at Colosse, Paul spoke of God’s mystery and said, “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you [among you, *Marginal Translation*], the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:26,27) The mystery is that Christ will share his glory with others, a class of 144,000 faithful followers who hear

the Father's call, and desire to become members of the body of Christ with Jesus as their head.

THE SPIRIT OF PROMISE

The marvelous calling to which we are responding is the Heavenly Father's blessed promise to us. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13) The saints of the most high God have thus received the seal or mark of the Holy Spirit of God which provides us with a new standing as sons of God, and with the seal of adoption. This gives us the Father's blessed assurance that we shall inherit the kingdom promises when we have faithfully endured and carried out the tests of love and devotion to him.

The apostle then points to the blessed promises from God, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (vs. 14) The word 'earnest' means that it is God's pledge until such time when we shall receive the actual inheritance that he has promised us. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."—vss. 18,19

Paul encourages us to a higher degree of faithful endeavor, saying, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the

vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling.”—Eph. 4:1-4

JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST

Paul explained this wonderful assurance and relationship that we have with the Heavenly Father in his letter to the church at Rome, when he said, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—Rom. 8:14-18

The faithful class who are being called during this present time are children of the Heavenly Father, and begotten of his Holy Spirit. They will share as joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus in his kingdom. “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3: 29) “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”—Gal. 4:6,7

(Continued on page 35)

(Continued from page 31) The apostle again writes, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"—Rom. 8:28-31

BE YE HOLY

In his first epistle, the Apostle Peter also spoke about the glorious and precious promises of our spiritual calling, and the need for us to walk in newness of life. He said, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (I Pet. 1:13-16) Peter is pointing to the glorious hope of our High Calling, and the severe trials that are necessary to fit us for an exalted position in our heavenly inheritance. It will require casting the weights of worldly cares, hopes, and ambitions aside that we may obtain the prize of our High Calling in Christ Jesus. Holiness is the standard of righteousness, and must be diligently sought after.

A SEPARATED PEOPLE

The called-out Christians constitute the consecrated church class who are separate and distinct from the rest of the world of mankind. The Apostle Peter explained, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased, *Marginal Translation*] people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”—chap. 2:9

This special class are a New Creation—a new order of beings who are chosen of God and are heirs of his special favor. The royal priesthood’s head is our Lord Jesus, and the under-priests are anointed in him for the future great work of blessing all the families of the earth. The Christ, head and body, will be the antitypical ‘royal priesthood’ under the administration of Christ’s future kingdom. The ‘holy nation’ of which Peter spoke are the spiritual Israelites that are now being gathered out of all nations, tongues, and people. They are a ‘peculiar [purchased] people’ who have been called from the world into the marvelous light of God.

Further in his letter, Peter also pointed out, “Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps.” (vs. 21) The true class of saints must all suffer with Christ even as the apostle has again stressed, “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”—I Pet. 5:10

In his second epistle, Peter wrote concerning the blessed calling of God, and said, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."—II Pet. 1:2-4

NOT MANY WISE OR NOBLE

We note God's words which were spoken to Samuel when he spoke favorably concerning Eliab whom he believed the Lord would anoint. We read, "The LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."—I Sam. 16:7

This is an important lesson for the called of God to contemplate. When writing to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul made some comparisons between the worldly wise and those who are presently being called by the Holy Spirit of God. He wrote, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are

despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written [Jer. 9:23,24], He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”—I Cor. 1:26-31

James tells us, “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”—James 2:5

MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS

We catch a glimpse of the true character and nature of the apostle, when he wrote, “He [the Lord] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”—II Cor. 12:9,10

Our Heavenly Father is seeking the meek, the humble and those who are willing to learn of him and to follow the only true pattern, our Lord Jesus. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:1,2

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

The consecrated life of the true child of God who has been called from the present evil world, is one of spiritual growth and development as a New Creature in Christ Jesus. It is a lifetime work, and it is taking place under the care and keeping of our loving Heavenly Father. Paul expressed this transformation in his letter to the Corinthian brethren, saying, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (II Cor. 3:18) "As it is written [Isa. 64:4], Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."—I Cor. 2:9,10

GIVE DILIGENCE

The call to the Divine nature has been the Heavenly Father's great mystery and secret of the ages, to select a class as the bride for his only begotten Son. This class is called from the sin-sick and death-ridden world of mankind. Thus we heed the admonition of the Apostle Peter, who said, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—II Pet. 1:10,11 ■