

Confirm Your Calling

by Sam Dilbeck

Recently I asked someone if her salvation was secure. She gently patted her chest and said, "I know I am saved because I feel it in my heart." For many people emotions and feelings have become the guarantee of their salvation. Others appeal to their good works or generosity to affirm their security. But Peter's challenge to secure our salvation involves more than emotions and works (2 Pet. 1:10).

When Adam and Eve sinned, it ushered in the fall of humanity because every person has sinned—except one (Rom. 5:12-13). Since the Garden God worked and planned to orchestrate man's salvation. Jesus paid the ransom price for our redemption. And now, God pleads with us to accept his offer of grace.

However, God established a plan for rescuing us from death—the wage of sin (Rom. 6:23). Without God's grace we have no hope of escaping hell. Money cannot buy pardon. Good works cannot nullify iniquity. Emotions cannot whisk away the spiritual jeopardy. Only God can save us.

Once we realize the danger of sin we must trust God. Trust means we believe we cannot save ourselves. We believe God wants us to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9). We believe he can save us (Heb. 7:25). We believe Jesus is his way of salvation (John 8:24; 14:6). This faith forms the foundation of hope.

Upon this foundation of faith, we build a life of repentance (Luke 13:3-5). This requires us to refocus our eyes on God, and not this world (Mat. 6:19-24). It means turning away from sin, and seeking the

things above (Col. 3:1-2). Repentance renews our minds, transforming them to pursue spiritual things (Rom. 12:1-2).

Our new mindset must be declared to the world. Our friends and families need to know about our changed allegiances, so we confess Jesus as our Lord and Master (Rom. 10:9-10). Salvation is not solely a private personal revolution. It includes a dynamic, outward announcement of faith.

After faith, repentance, and confession, Jesus commanded us to be baptized (Mark 16:16). Through baptism we wash away the sins that threaten us (Acts 22:16). Through baptism we put on Christ as a new cloak (Ga. 3:26-27). Through baptism the guilt of our sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38). Through baptism our relationship with Jesus is changed to disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Through baptism we are saved (1 Pet. 3:21).

When Peter told us to "confirm our calling and election," he is challenging us to make sure we have obeyed God's plan of salvation. For many people, their redemption relies on how their hearts feel, or on the word of a preacher, friend, or parent. But sincere feelings may be wrong like Paul's (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 26:9). Friends and family can lead us astray (Acts 18:24-26; Gal. 1:14). Good works cannot remove the guilt of sin (Acts 10:1-4; Eph. 2:9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:10). God wants us to examine ourselves in light of his word. Only God can determine the way to him, and only our hearts know if we have followed it (Rom. 8:16). "Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election" (2 Pet. 1:10).

Personal Salvation?

by Kevin Cauley

That perfection, on man's terms, is impossible to attain, has been a theme of many recent movies. The 2010 Disney movie *Tron* emphasized this point. There is no perfect system whereby man may save himself, and, in fact, when man seeks to establish some perfect system, man goes horribly astray, committing atrocities the likes of which have not been seen. Recent studies in the history of communism have produced clear historical evidence of this fact. The notion that "there is no God to save us, so we must save ourselves" is a notion born out of the misguided and mistaken enlightenment idea that man intrinsically has within his capacity all of the necessary tools to successfully shape his own destiny in a morally acceptable way. To the contrary, the Bible declares that man is fallible, imperfect, and incapable of providing for his own salvation.

The message of the Old Testament proves this point exactly. In providing a history for and of Israel, the Old Testament text declares clearly man's failures regardless the position in society that he holds. Consider Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Here are two individuals who are tempted and then succumb to moral failure. They do so because of their own misguided thoughts regarding themselves and God. They are cast out of the garden and then begin to produce offspring. These offspring also succumb to moral failure to the extent that God records in Genesis 6:5 "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." God destroyed that wicked earth with a flood. Noah and his family were only saved because they followed God's instructions, not man's. Nevertheless, it is obvious that individual person's cannot provide for their own salvation.

After the flood, God purposed that He would choose a particular family from the children of Noah, and that through them man's salvation would be fulfilled. God chose Abram, and promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him. Abram and Sarai took it upon themselves to seek to fulfill God's plan in their own way. Abram went in to Hagar, Sarai's handmaiden, and conceived Ishmael. This was not God's plan; it was man's plan. The consequences of Abram's and Sarai's decision are still being suffered in the world today. God corrected Abram, gave him a new name, Abraham, and through him and Sarah came Isaac, the child of promise.

In the family of Abraham, we continue to see moral failure. Isaac's children, Jacob and Esau, fuss and fight over the birthright and blessing. Jacob seemingly makes the same mistake as Abram, thinking that he can gain the birthright and blessing through his own devising, instead

of allowing God to work out His plan in His own good time. Jacob's children as well, the twelve sons, perpetuate Jacob's moral failures within their own lives, selling their own brother into slavery (Genesis 37), committing fornication with Jacob's concubine (Genesis 35:22), lying and engaging in acts of great violence (Genesis 34). The consequences of their decisions are also still felt today. Nevertheless, it is clear by the end of the book of Genesis, that salvation cannot come through the family system (patriarchy).

In making a great nation of the family of Abraham, God moves mankind into a second stage of moral development. This stage involves the creation of a nation. Moses is the man that God chooses to lead his people out of Egyptian captivity and into the promised land. Perhaps what cannot be accomplished through individuals, or through families, can be accomplished in a nation. It is not long, however, before the nation plunges itself into moral degeneracy. All of those who come out of Egypt are punished with dying in the wilderness because of their rebellious spirit (Numbers 14:32-34). The next generation that enters the land of Canaan does not fully obey the Lord, and results in the perpetual troubles with idolatrous nations during the period of the judges, a time when every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6, 21:25). Israel again sought to do things their own way, demanding that God give them a king like the nations around them (1 Samuel 8:5). God told Samuel that Israel had rejected Him as King (1 Samuel 8:7). The period of the kings arrives with Saul who commits suicide after ruining his kingship through jealousy and disobedience to God. David commits adultery, and is a warrior king, not a man of peace. Solomon multiplies wives, makes idols for them, and commits spiritual whoredom. Israel becomes divided with kings ruling in Judah and the North separately. Both are taken into captivity after their iniquity becomes full. God does so to punish them for their sin and wickedness. It is obvious that salvation cannot come through a system of national government.

In all of the history the Bible records, the one resounding theme is that man cannot save Himself with his own devices, under his own recognizance. God Himself must provide for man's salvation, and He does this through the person of Jesus, the Christ. In thinking about Jesus as our Savior, we must acknowledge that man cannot save himself regardless the means or methods that he may use, be they individualistic, familial, or nationalistic. Salvation is from above – from God alone – and it is only through seeking and doing God's will in our lives as revealed through the person of Jesus the Christ that we may find comfort, hope, and blessing in this life, and in the life to come.

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Prayer List

JoAnn Chambers is in ICU at Navarro Regional.
Robby Thomas was in the hospital for a couple of days last week, but expected to go home Thursday.
Gayle Garner is not doing well.

Melba Bower is in room 105 at Heritage Oaks for rehab. He fell las Sunday breaking a wrist and shoulder.

Eleanor Bower is recovering from flu. Her fever had come down by Wednesday and she hoped to be better by the weekend.

Billie Thomas' surgery went well. The polyp removed was benign and she is recovering.

Meagan Gould had a knot removed that appeared to be cancer. She had a PETScan Friday to take a more comprehensive look.

Melissa Armstrong, Cecil & Pat Ellis' daughter, has experienced some spasms and swelling in her brain.

Bonnie Ellison, Christine Garner's sister, has been placed on Hospice in Oklahoma City.

Dalton McCullough, grandson of Roy & Sandra McCullough, will have serious brain surgery on February 17.

Continue to Remember: Don Bowen, Bobby Compton, Velma McDougald, Bud & Barbara Moore, Ruth Moore, Henry & Eula Parrish, Irene Ross, Jan Ross, Helen Strange, Pat Wheat, Alyce Barnes, Earlean Bailey.

Service Men: Clay Bayes, Jason Book, Alston Compton, Robert Johnson, Josh Moehring, Ryan Payne, Devin Peterson, Douglas Ramsey, Ryan Stewart, Morgan Weaver, Payton Weaver, and Kye White.

Announcements

Thank You for all of your prayers. My brother is doing so much better!" Love, Jan Ross

We Will No Longer have a song service at TriSun on the second Sunday of each month. Thanks to all who have particiapted in this effort.

Youth Devo Tonight at Sam & Julie Dilbeck's house. They are having chili and ask that the kids bring chips, cheese, desserts, drinks and the like.

Westhill Ladies Luncheon this Wednesday. All ladies, especially those with Feb. birthdays are invited to join us at Applebee's at 11:30 AM.

The Sweetheart Banquet will be Saturday, Feb. 14 at 7:00 PM. Please, sign up in the foyer.

Attendees of the Sweetheart Banquet are asked to bring a picture from when you were dating (couples) or when you were about that age (singles). Please, turn them in to the office by Wednesday this week so we can prepare for the activity.

Our Annual Couple's Retreat is Feb. 27-28. Any married couples interested in driving out for these lessons (the rooms are all booked), see Brent or Lanette Stewart.

Birthdays This Week:

February 8 - Janet Parrish
 February 9 - Teresa Shastid
 February 12 - Debbie Wylie
 February 14 - Andy Parrish

Next Week's Bible Class

Judges 4-5
 Deborah: The Northern Conflict

Records for February 1, 2015

Bible Class	195
AM Worship	271
PM Worship	125
Wednesday	177
Contribution	\$10,535.95

Privileged to Serve

Song Leader	Zach Drain
Opening Prayer	Jim Haden
Communion Leader	Paul Ross
Communion Servers	
Bryan Bearden	Dan Gibson
Wade Hall	Zack Lewis
David Mahoney	Gene McDougald
Buck Murphy	Rick Newton
Aubrey Parrish	Wayne Prater
Austin Roughton	Robby Thomas
Bronny Watson	
Closing Prayer	Ken Green
Nursery	Macie Bearden & Debbie Wylie
PM Song Leader	Joshua Haden
PM Opening Prayer	Michael Jones
PM Closing Prayer	Justin Williams
Wed. Song Leader	Tyler Baumgartner
Wed. Devo	Gene Steinkraus
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