

Called out of darkness into light

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] I'd like to turn with you now to consider the words in the first epistle of Peter, chapter 2, reading at verse 9.

First Peter, chapter 2, verse 9. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood and holy nation, a peculiar people.

And particularly the words that follow, that ye should show forth the places of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

God willing, tomorrow morning we shall assemble here to remember the Lord's death till he come. And you know that at that service we speak of what has become commonly known as the, we speak of what has become commonly known, the action sermon.

[1 : 21] Whatever it means I think that it brings before us that on that day the theme is Christ's work, Christ's atoning work and atoning death.

Christ's action or activity in his death. Christ's action or activity in his death.

At the same service people sit at his table, at the Lord's table and engage in an action themselves. Christ's action or activity in an action of Jesus. They, as the New Testament tells us, they are there to show forth the Lord's death till he comes.

now you know that this showing forth is just a witnessing on their part a testifying of on their part a declaration of by the people at the table of what the death of the Lord Jesus Christ means to them its importance to them in their lives the place it has in their lives what it has meant to them and done for them and its preciousness to them to this very time but the witness the ministry the testifying of by the Christian of the importance of the death of Jesus Christ in his life isn't something that takes place just at the Lord's table as you thumb your way through the pages of the scriptures you discover that the death of Jesus Christ is something which governs regulates the way in which a Christian lives in this world and part of Peter's purpose in penning these words to the believers who were scattered throughout the various regions at the time of which this letter was written part of his purpose is to remind them that they are living in a world in which they are to show for him to testify of to witness to the praises the virtues the things that are true concerning the one who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light and the believer therefore is a person who whether he is sitting at the Lord's table or living in whatever way he is wherever he is in this world is a person who has something to say to people by his life and by his witness about the God who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light as a matter of fact as you know in various parts of the Bible particularly from the Sermon on the Mount a Christian is one who has been called by God out of darkness into light and as we home in on these words we discover that this is one of the very important statements in the Bible about a Christian so that when we ask as we tend to ask and as people quite rightly tend to ask who sits at the Lord's table who should be there this is one answer to that question the person who has been called by God out of darkness into his marvelous light and for a little tonight

[5 : 45] I would like to just concentrate with you on these words the call that we have here spoken of the call and what it is in its nature and what it does just these two thoughts its nature the call that comes from God to the sinner called by God and what this call does and it does two things it calls people out of one state or condition and it calls them into another called out of into I think that it is accepted by most people that we live in a day in which the line of demarcation between what a being a Christian is and what a

Christian isn't is becoming almost obliterated it's interesting to note that in the old days when there's a case recorded for example of a young convert who went to his minister into the Kirk session with a request to be admitted to membership of the congregation by profession of faith and when he

came into the session the minister who had the minister who in charge there asked him this question now he said what can you tell us about a change of heart a change of heart and again whatever else a Christian is he is a person surely whose heart whose life whose outlook has been changed and changed firstly because as we see here

God has called him now this is a very important word as most of you not all of you will know particularly in the New Testament I think it is used 35 times in the New Testament of what is essentially the efficacious what we call the efficacious call of God in the life of an individual but just in the passing we tend to speak of the call in another way sort of what we speak of as the general call for example everyone when the gospel is preached and let's say there is a congregation of a hundred fifty of them are Christians and fifty are unconverted and the gospel is preached to that congregation of a hundred people and the claims of Christ are brought home to all everyone in the congregation is called everyone hears the general call of God then in the gospel remember the Lord Jesus sent his disciples out to call people into his kingdom and he commanded them to go into the highways and byways and to bid them to come bid them come

God calls their men and women everywhere son and daughter give me thine heart and it is our responsibility as ministers of the gospel to present that call to all on Sunday to everyone who thirsts and everyone is in a state of need in a condition of need in the presence of God and to all who need therefore the call comes come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and the minister of the gospel delights in addressing that call to any who will listen to it that's his meat and his drink he is never happier maybe in this life than when he is presenting the call of God to men that they might believe some of course respond in different ways some don't hear a word that is said they come into a church they leave it not a syllable do they take with them of what they've heard others come and they might be impressed by the manner in which the call is presented they might not be but they react in that way they're impressed or they aren't others perhaps may tremble under the call they may feel convicted like Felix did in Agrippa and like people in times of revival tell you that they have been they feel something but they don't respond in pain to the call but when God calls it is so different it is so different here is a call that comes in a way in which it cannot be refused as someone has put it it is a summons when it comes to the individual it is a summons to which he is constrained to respond he garant he cannot refuse it and when it is used as it is used in this verse it always refers to God's predestinating call unto salvation

God speaks to the heart to the conscience to the mind and to the will and he summons that individual with irresistible call in other words the call comes to this person with the power that enables him to respond called by God as someone has put it God calls this person so that he is delivered to the intended destination of the call and the intended destination of course as we shall see in a minute is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ now the Christian therefore is a man who is called to respond and every man that's called does respond and no one is a Christian unless and until he responds to that call called by God out of darkness into his marvellous light now just one or two other things on this poor believer every man does someone to believe is a Christian or a saved person what happens is that a work of God takes place in that person's mind in his heart in his will in his understanding the call comes to him direct to his heart from God there's a classic example of this in the New Testament in the life of Lydia you remember you remember the story

[13:27] Paul preached spoke to them from the word of God at the riverside and this is what we read as Paul spoke the Lord opened her heart and this is always what happens in the call God calls so that our passion responds to the call and when he does call there is nothing in the world more passionate than this call nothing you may sit you may have been sitting for years under the gospel in a church becoming so used in perhaps dozing through us and then everything changes when God calls when God speaks like the young fellow who went to a meeting once and he heard a minister preaching on the text the request of the Greeks who came up to the feast sir we would see Jesus and the Lord blessed that sermon to his heart saving and he left the meeting and shortly after just having gone down the road a wee bit he met an old

Christian who had also been to the meeting the old Christian asked the young fellow I saw you said in the meeting yes he said what do you think of that sermon well you know said the young fellow to him I thought there was no one there but myself I thought there was no one in that church but myself and the old Christian replied well he said that's the way I felt as well and the young fellow couldn't understand how the old Christian could have felt that you you see they both felt the power of God and under the constraining interest of that power the message was so personal to them both

it was just for them when God speaks when God calls is it not true that that becomes the most personal moment in your life remember what Joseph did when he made himself known to his brethren he caused all the Egyptians to go out their own and he made himself known to them what a personal moment that was for them so it is for you and for me when God calls by his power it comes from him to you and to no one else it's a personal call the call of God but then secondly in this two pronged view that we have of it here it's a call that comes to us to deliver us out of and to call us into he calls us out of darkness into his marvelous light in other words this call comes this call comes with delivering power it comes that it may separate us from now I think that everyone would agree with this that the bible never speaks of a changed person spiritually who can continue living in the kind of life that he used to live it never speaks of a changed man in that way never but it always speaks of a changed man who must because of the change break with the life that he lived and you know we make it far too easy

I think when we tend to give people the impression that they can be Christians they can consider themselves called by God and continue to live the way the way it just doesn't square darkness the word that is associated with ungodliness it speaks to us of the ungodliness of this life in which you and I live as unconverted sinners the life of misery and evil and thirst and ungodliness that expresses itself in so many ways that must seek satisfaction in so many avenues by indulging in so many practices and cultivating so many habits what do we have here here we have people who have been called out of that kind of life called out

God calls us in that he may deliver of sin calls him to a hatred of sin to a renunciation of sin to a denial of sin if any man says Jesus will be my disciple if any man will be my disciple let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me oh you say it's difficult of course it's difficult every creature knows the difficulty and maybe it's because we're not prepared to accept the difficulty that we tend to think of our life in which a person can be a Christian and remain what he wants and there is no such picture given in the Bible I must say that I came across this quite recently with a group of our own young

Christians in Inverness talking about the problems that they have to face and I have no doubt that young Christians in this part of the world have even greater difficulties and problems to face and speaking about some of the issues that are seemingly becoming problems for the young people today the question of what is permissible for me to do where can I go what practices can I engage in and indulge am I allowed to do this and am I allowed to do that and I couldn't help but think that 20 years ago these issues these wouldn't be issues at all with young Christians certainly wouldn't have been 30 years ago now it's a reminder of something that I heard an old minister once saying at communion in

[20 : 50] Aberdeen putting it very strongly he said that no Christian no young Christian should think like that what can I do what can I do what am I allowed to do and I wonder why it is that in our day why it is that things which weren't problems at all and practices which a Christian had no doubt at all were taboo in his life because he was a Christian I wonder why for us today some of these things may become permissible I wonder if it's because we're not prepared to accept the clear cut definition the clear cut distinction the Bible makes between the life of the Christian and the non-clad and are we becoming a wee bit too clever in applying things and allowing saying that yes that's alright the next thing's alright the next thing's permissible maybe it's the influence and I hope

I'm not telling any tools when I say this maybe perhaps it's the influence without realising it over a period of time of the what has become known as the charismatic moment when in certain circles you can be a Christian and take your Christianity with you anywhere the trouble being of course that there are some places that Christ won't go with you that there are some places to which Christ will not go with you and we go to we do these things and go to such places after peril if we have to leave him behind after all he has called us out of darkness I think it's true to say that whenever he associated himself with Christians in his own days whenever he came to to minister to them and to commune with them and to eat with them the parishes found fault with them this man eats and drinks with sinners yes he did not to condone the sin but to deliver them from sin here we have it again called out of darkness into this marvelous light you've heard the story of the lady in bygone age who advertised for a driver for a horse drawn chariot a horse drawn chariot and she had four applicants interviewed the first fellow and asked him how good a driver are you oh he said I consider myself a good driver I would go within a fruit of a precipice and I would guarantee you he said that I wouldn't overturn the carriage so the next fellow was called in and asked how how good

a driver are you and he assured that he could go even closer to the precipice than the third one came in and he assured her that he could go within an inch of the precipice without overturning the carriage then the fourth came and she asked him how close to the precipice can you go without overturning the carriage madame said I wouldn't go near the edge of the precipice I will try to keep the middle of the road if I can at all or she said you will be my driver and it's not a bad practice for us all to adopt that to remember that the Lord has called us out of sin it is our privilege it's our duty to put as big a distance between ourselves and sin as we possibly can look at the picture you have in the chapter you write in Romans chapter 8 there you have the picture of the Christian warring against sin he's locked in deadly conflict with the sin and he's given the Holy Spirit to help him to lead him and the leading of the spirit is supremely for this conflict to help him mortify the flesh and the deeds of the flesh destroy all that is evil in his life and that's why the Lord saved us by his power to deliver us from sin and from a sinful course and in delivering us remembering at the same time the second thing that we have here called into or unto his marvelous light if on the one hand is a call that delivers us from it is also on the other hand a call that beckons us to we are called into Paul speaking of the revival that took place in Thessalonica has something very interesting to say of that revival he said it has lots of people he said lots of people have heard how you have turned from idols to God to serve the living God there are some people who tend to think that conversion when they think of conversion for themselves I'm talking about the unconverted if it be that they think of conversion at all they almost they find it difficult to understand that when God breaks you away from a life of sin he doesn't leave you in a vacuum he delivers you into a life that is full and in that sense Paul speaks of the life that he left behind as not so much as a loss but as something that wasn't worthy of being esteemed even it was a loss yes but he went further than that

[27 : 00] I look and he says a refuse the life I live just fit to be thrown away in the interest of this life into which I have been called called into as he puts it here into life you see the call of God comes with this effect it delivers us into a certain condition into a certain way of life it's called here light it is called many things in the New Testament just to mention them in the passing before we thought to our close we are called for example to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the power of God lays hold of us as it were and delivers us into the hands and into the arms of the Lord Jesus it's a call that comes enabling us to believe some person put it like this once speaking about his conversion speaking about the way in which he sat for a long time under the conviction of sin under the ministry of the gospel and you know he said

I was almost screaming at the minister tell me how I can believe and the call of God enabled him to believe it is the gift of God called that we might receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior called and into faith called into the exercise of faith called into the exercise of love we read that again in Romans chapter 8 all things work together for good to them who love God who are the called according to his purpose called not only to faith called not only to believe but called that we might love that we might love that the soul might go out and delight in God that the soul might express itself in reverence for God that the soul might see that it has uninterested in the things of God in the law of God that it might know that it can think no evil of God that is love just as the soul expresses itself in faith so it expresses itself in love it is called for we are called to love called thoroughly as he says right in the Corinthians called into the fellowship of his son the barrenness of our sinful life is repressed now by the fruitful life of fellowship in the Lord Jesus this is the condition of the state into which the soul is now called faithful is he that has called you into the fellowship of the son and the faithfulness of God is seen in that he delivers the soul into that condition into that state this is where his faithfulness is expressed he has promised he has decreed to call into fellowship and he fulfills his purpose he calls his people into the experience of fellowship with the Lord in which they delight in the Lord Jesus Christ a life that you delight in sin and in the practice of sin the pursuit of sin is now replaced by a life in which there is delight in his fellowship conduct is made with the Lord Jesus Christ and they find his fellowship and his fruit sweet unto their taste called forthly unto the sufferings for Christ remember how Paul again Prince of Philippians it has been given to you he said as a gift not only to believe in him but also to suffer for a save called to sufferings as a Christian suffering for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ I wonder how many of us are prepared to consider it a privilege to suffer for the Lord Jesus called into life and into as he puts it here into light everything is seen in a new light

God is seen in a new light sin is seen in a new light self is seen in a new light the world is seen in a new light people are seen in a new light everything is seen in a new light called into the light that is God himself called into the peace of God into an acceptance of the grounds of reconciliation between God and man called to an acceptance of the method by which this reconciliation was effected we tend to speak of the peace of God in a purely subjective way and we tend to think it as feeling good feeling great and having no problems in life there's no doubt that it is that there's more than that a person can know the peace of God that passes all understanding and be confronted with awful conflict in his life what is it what is the peace of

[32 : 55] God God's way of reconciliation and God's ground of acceptance for sinners my acceptance before God is not grounded in what I am myself but in what God has done for me in Christ and this is of peace in the presence of God and we are called to an acceptance of it called unto holiness it comes to us a high and a heavenly calling a calling that beckons us to God himself a call that directs us to holiness not only in its origin but also in its destiny because we are called to be conformed to the image of a son and called as this verse tells us called that we might witness to the praise of his grace that he should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light surely it stands to reason that if you and

I were taken up more with the purpose for which we have been called than many of the questions and the issues that pose so many problems for us would cease to be issues at all we are called to witness to tell to declare what we think of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light and if we cherish the hope tonight that his power has laid hold of our lives if we cherish the hope that he has called us by his grace away from the service of sin and into a life of service to the Lord Jesus Christ that is our hope and our confidence let us remind ourselves that he calls us to live to the praise of his glory and that part of that living is sitting with him at his table showing forth by that act that he has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light let us pray oh Lord our God we bless thee for thy word and we thank thee that thou art able to bless it to us forgive us our sins in holy things we thank thee that there is forgiveness with thee that thou mightest be feared oh Lord help us to fear thee and help us to live to thy glory part us with thy blessing for Jesus sake Amen