

THE CALL TO GLORY – 1 Peter 5:10

The Call of God #8

If you Google December 21, 2012, you will get nearly 7 million hits. If you put the same date on the search engine of Amazon, you will find more than 400 books that have written on the subject. And this is just the beginning. As we get closer and closer to 21/12, we are going to find more and more anxiety about this date.

The reason for the popular obsession of many with December 21, 2012 is the simple fact that this date marks the end of an ancient Mayan calendar that was found by archaeologists some time ago.

The Maya people were an ancient civilization that lived in what is today Central America. When the Spaniard Conquistadores arrived in the early 16th century, they were shocked to find a remarkably developed civilization. The Mayans had a fully developed written language, advanced art and architecture, even mathematical and astronomical systems. But what caused the most interest was the discovery of what has become known as the Mesoamerican Long Count Calendar. This calendar began on the date which would be equivalent to our August 11, 3114 B.C. And more important, it ended on December 21, 2012. This archaeological discovery has led some to believe that this date, December 21, 2012, marks the end of the world as we know it.

This discovery, in part, has spawned an avalanche of end of the world movies out of Hollywood. I counted no fewer than 239 disaster movies that have been produced in Hollywood just since the year 1990 – that's an average of 12 disaster movies a year for the past 20 years. We have self-proclaimed global warming prophets who are predicting that the world is going to end within just a few years if we don't do something to alter the course of our planet. The cumulative effect of this almost constant barrage of doom and gloom scenarios is a tremendous amount of anxiety and fear that hangs like a dark cloud over many people's lives.

Now Christians know that God has predicted an end of the world scenario in the Bible. But as Christians, we also know that all future events are in the capable hands of an all-knowing and all-powerful God not in the predictions of an ancient civilization that could not even out-live its own calendar or the random whims of a chance universe. This knowledge gives hope and confidence to those of us who have been called to glory even in a world that is swimming in anxiety and fear.

We have been looking at various calls that God offers to his children during these past Sunday mornings. We have already seen God's call to salvation, His call to holiness, the divine call to be God's children, the call to service, God's call to peace, the call from darkness into light and God's call into fellowship. The calls that we have previously studied are all invitations that can be enjoyed right here and now. The final

2 Biblical calls that we want to see together are calls of God that his children will receive in the future. One of these is a call to glory. The Bible makes it crystal clear that this present life is not all that a Christian will experience, but there is an eternity in heaven that is the destiny of every one of God's children.

During that last night that Jesus spent with his disciples here on this earth before his journey to the cross, he gave them a wonderful promise. That promise was designed to bring peace to their hearts in a fearful and uncertain time. Jesus told them as recorded in John 14:1-3:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Now just as a baby born into a human family in a hospital then receives a new home, so every Christian who is born into God's family has a new eternal home. That new home will be experienced when we are called to glory. I want to look at a passage from 1 Peter 5 that speaks of this call to eternal glory that God extends to every one of His children.

1PE 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Now there is a process that is involved in our call to glory that is important for each of us to see. It is important for us to note this process because while we are naturally attracted to the call to eternal glory for that brings great hope and joy into our lives, we are not so naturally attracted to the process that gets us to that eternal glory. But this process is very critical for us to see for it is all part of our call to glory. It is so important that God continually emphasizes it in His word. **The process begins with suffering.** “And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory, after you have suffered for a while . . .” This call to eternal glory begins with suffering. The suffering, of course, takes place in this life. The call to glory comes at the conclusion of this life.

Now one of the questions that I am asked most often as a pastor is why do we have to suffer? Why is there so much suffering in this world? And why do Christians have to suffer? Why doesn't God protect His children from all suffering?

The answer to the question of suffering in this life is too complex and lengthy to deal with in one sermon and it frankly is too complex for any of us to fully understand. But there are many blessings that can only come into our lives through suffering. Just as storms bring some blessing to us, so suffering also brings some blessings with it into our lives as well. Sunshine all of the time eventually makes a desert. We need periodic storms in order to have crops and flowers and trees and life.

So it is in our personal lives. If we only received sunshine throughout our entire life without any storms at all, we would miss out on so many blessings. Our lives would be extremely shallow. We would become parched and barren in our character like a desert.

Now what happens as we endure suffering in life? We become strong, firm and steadfast. READ vs. 10:

1PE 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Now the word that is translated “restore” here is an interesting one. It means to equip or outfit someone with all of the gear needed for a successful mission. It is the Greek term from which we derive our English word “artisan”. An artisan is a craftsman, someone who is skilled at a specialized trade. Peter is saying here that while suffering is necessary in the growth process, God will never leave His children to suffer helplessly. Rather God equips His children as a skilled mechanic so that followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are prepared to endure the sufferings to which they are called victoriously.

Sandy and I used to take the boys camping each year on our vacations when they were young. The Yogi Bear Campground was the family favorite because it had so many family activities. For several days before our departure, Sandy would pack up food and clothing and supplies and I would get the pop-up camper all cleaned up and ready to go. Then when the day for the start of vacation came, we would all pile into the van and take off. When we got to our destination, the boys would jump out of the van and into their bathing suits and would be off into the lake while Sandy and I would set up the camper and unpack the supplies. When the boys got hungry, they would be back at the camper asking what was for dinner. Even though they were too young to know all about the process involved in camping, they had all the necessities provided for them because Sandy and I had planned and packed ahead of time.

Peter is saying that this is what God does for us as His children. He knows what is necessary for our life journey. God knows what we are going to be called upon to suffer. So He equips us so that by trusting in Him and walking in His will, we can make our journey through this life. He gives us all the tools at we need. He packs every necessity in our make-up before we ever come to need it. He has promised to never leave us defenseless and helpless in this world.

And Peter uses 3 words to describe our growth throughout this life journey.

*We will be made strong – our spiritual muscle of faith will be strengthened in the process. As we flex our faith muscle while trusting God through adversity, we will grow stronger and stronger in our faith.

*We will be made firm – this Greek word is found only here in the Bible. It has the idea of not wavering or vacillating, being convinced of one’s faith and convictions.

*We will be made steadfast - this word comes from the Greek word for the foundation of a house. It has the idea of an enduring structure, one that is built solidly upon a foundation of bedrock.

It is interesting that the first word that Peter chooses here is the very same word that Jesus used while addressing him as recorded in Luke 22. This has led many commentators to believe that Peter had this scene in mind as he was originally writing these words.

You might recall that scene from Luke 22. Jesus had just revealed his upcoming betrayal and death to his disciples. But the apostles were so consumed with who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom that they were arguing with one another. Peter in a boast of self-confident pride asserted that even if all of the other disciples fell by the way side, he would stand with Jesus even if it meant his own death. Jesus realized that Peter's pride had so blinded him that he wasn't even aware of the spiritual battle in which he was engaged. So Jesus said to Peter as recorded in Luke 22:31, 32:

LK 22:31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

That word translated "strengthen" that Jesus spoke to Peter is the same word that Peter used here in 1 Peter 5:10. Peter had experienced the equipping power of God in his life, hadn't he? Even though Peter failed the Lord miserably because of his pride and arrogance at the time of Christ's crucifixion, Peter was not overwhelmed by his suffering, but he recovered to the place where he became the primary speaker for the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost just 50 days later.

Peter had experienced the process that he was speaking about here in his life. He knew what suffering was all about. But Peter also knew a God who was able to fully equip His children so that they could endure the suffering successfully.

So now Peter writes that the end goal of this process is eternal glory.

1PE 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ,

Every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who has been born again into the family of God has the secure hope of eternal glory to look forward to. Our true citizenship is in heaven. We are pilgrims and sojourners on this earth. So when the process of becoming strong, firm and steadfast through suffering is completed, God will take us home to heaven because we have been called to eternal glory. We can have the confidence that this process will be completed because God has equipped us giving everything necessary for ultimate success. In writing to the church at Philippi, Paul would write that they should be confident that the one who had begun the good work of salvation in their lives would complete it (Phil. 1:6). So Christians can

look forward to eternal glory in heaven with the same confidence that someone camping out at a state park looks forward to returning back to their home in the city.

Ruth Bell Graham gives an account in her book entitled “Legacy of a Pack Rat”. The Graham’s, of course, had the opportunity to rub shoulders with the most famous people in the world and hear many different stories. Ruth told of a time when Canon Bewes invited Malcomb Muggeridge to speak at the church where he was pastoring, the well-known All Souls church in London. Muggeridge was a respected British author and philosopher. He had become a Christian after being an out-spoken atheist. So it wasn’t surprising that the All Souls Church was filled with many atheists who had looked forward to the opportunity to trip up their former colleague with difficult questions. And the evening didn’t disappoint anyone. It was filled with a thought-provoking speech from Muggeridge and a stimulating question and answer time spiced with many questions from the atheists present. It was right near the end of the question and answer time that Muggeridge noticed one young man who was sitting in a wheel chair. This young man had been trying to ask a question for some time but had been drowned out in his effort by the intellectuals all around him. Muggeridge held up his hand to stop all the other questions and said that he had noticed somebody who wanted to ask him something. The young man in the wheel chair was so disabled that he had trouble articulating his question. Several times, Muggeridge encouraged the young man to take his time, that they would not leave until he had asked his question. Finally, the gifted speaker and writer went down from the platform to the young man’s side so that he could help him better. Putting his arm around him, Muggeridge encouraged him yet again to try to ask what was on his mind. Slowly the disabled young man said in a barely audible voice, “You say there is a God who loves us. Why me?” Silence filled the room. Finally, after a long pause, Muggeridge asked the young man, “If you weren’t so disabled, do you think you’d have come to this meeting tonight?” The young man shook his head admitting that he probably wouldn’t have come. Then Muggeridge continued, “God has asked a very hard thing of you. But remember He asked something even harder of his son, Jesus Christ. Jesus died for you. Maybe this was his way and making sure that you’d hear of his love and come to put your faith in him.”

Jesus never promised that this life would be easy. In fact, he promised quite the opposite. Jesus never promised happiness to us, but he did promise that he would give us joy in the midst of temptations if we would accept it. Jesus never promised perfect health to us, but he did promise that he would give us his strength in the midst of our infirmities if we would accept it. Jesus never promised a stress-free life, but he did promise that he would give us his peace in the midst of our tribulations if we would accept it. And he did promise sufferings. But he also promised the grace to be able to endure them. And Jesus has never asked anything of his followers that he was not willing to endure himself. For the temptations and physical abuse

and stresses that he suffered were more than any of us will ever be called upon to bear. And right now, Jesus is fulfilling his promise of preparing a place for us so that we might be with him when he finally calls us to glory.

If you are a child of God this morning, you have been called to eternal glory. Right now you might not feel too exhilarated by that call because you are in the midst of a process. That process involves suffering. But that suffering will eventually make you to become strong, firm and steadfast. And God has equipped you with everything you need to make it through the process. But at the end of the process is eternal glory. For we have been called to eternal glory.

No wonder the Apostle Paul could exclaim in Romans 8:18:

RO 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.