



THE MAGNITUDE OF CALVARY

MERVIN SUNDBO

I have been thinking of late of the magnitude of Calvary and the significance of Christ's sacrifice for a fallen creation. The fall of man in the Garden of Eden set in motion a desperate need for a remedy for the sin that had fallen not only on Adam and Eve, but on everyone born after them. David says in Psalm 51:5, "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*" This was the inauspicious beginning of all of us. The presence of sin impacted the entire creation through the curse that God brought on the earth and that curse included death; and we deal with the curse, in one way or another, on a daily basis. There is nothing left untouched by the curse.

Let me insert here that the curse will one day be lifted, and we get a glimpse of that day in Revelation 22:1-3, "*And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.*" What a day that will be!

Yes, a remedy for sin was required and God made that provision through His Son, Jesus Christ. Let us always remember that what was accomplished on Calvary was so all-embracing and complete that it incorporated the entire creation. The love that was resident in Jesus when He sacrificed His life extends to a fallen creation. Nothing was left out at Calvary. I cannot find the words to adequately express the magnitude of Calvary nor can my mind grasp the extent of it. My words will, no doubt, fail in an attempt to express how far-reaching and inclusive was God's remedy for sin and His plan of restoration for His entire creation.

In 1895 William Newell wrote the hymn, "At Calvary." Here are the words to one of the verses and the chorus:

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan!
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary!

Mercy there was great, and grace was free;
Pardon there was multiplied to me;
There my burdened soul found liberty
At Calvary.

Let us pause for a moment and think of the tremendous resources that Christ purchased for us through His obedient act of sacrificial love on the cross of Calvary. This is where He made provision for the sins of the entire world as the prophet declared in Isaiah 53:6, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him (on His Son, Jesus) the iniquity of us all.*" Paul expressed it this way in Romans 5:19, "*For as by one man's (Adam's) disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one man's (Jesus') obedience many will be made righteous.*"

Here we have a clear statement of the remission of sin by the cross of Calvary. If that was all there was, that would be wonderful in itself, but there is much more. Let us continue reading from Isaiah 53:5, "*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*" So Calvary not only includes forgiveness for our sin, but it provides healing for our bodies. Notice what Romans 8:11 says, "*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead (the resurrection) dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*" The Phillips Translation puts it this way, "*Nevertheless once the Spirit of him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead lives within you he will, by that same Spirit, bring to your whole being new strength and vitality.*" Something else to note about Isaiah 53:5, "*... the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ...*" In other words, He purchased our peace or our reconciliation to God by the punishment laid on Him on the cross of Calvary.

“What love, what wondrous love. That God could love a sinner such as I, how wonderful is love like that.” The songwriter said, “When He was on the cross, I was on His mind.”

Jesus said that after His departure, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come to dwell with us and in us. John 14:16 & 17 says, “*And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever ... for He dwells with you and will be in you.*” It is through Calvary that the Holy Spirit was dispatched and these mortal bodies of ours are quickened, made alive and given new strength and vitality. Then God provided a very practical application for our healing by the order that He established in the local church, which we find written in James 5:14 & 15, “*Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*”

Jesus spoke much about forgiveness and it was on the cross that He showed us what the ultimate in forgiveness really looks like, as recorded in Luke 23:33 & 34, “*And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’*”

Calvary revealed that sacrificial love is limitless and that the Saviour found it in His heart to request of His Father that even those who were taking His life be forgiven. He spoke those words of forgiveness for those who perpetrated the cruelty that He suffered – the wounds, the bruises, the stripes, the nails that were driven into His hands and feet, “**Father Forgive them.**” Perhaps we struggle with forgiving the smallest of offences. When we struggle with forgiveness, let us remember Calvary. Christ is our example of what forgiveness really means.

His mercy is extended to all who seek forgiveness, as is evident by the account of the thief on the cross. This man was a common criminal without any spiritual experience, yet somehow he discerned who Jesus was. An unknown author described the encounter this way, “He couldn’t even bend his knees or fold his hands to pray. He didn’t say the sinner’s prayer. Jesus didn’t take away his pain, heal his body, or smite the scoffers. Yet it was a thief who walked into heaven at the same hour as Jesus, simply by believing. He had nothing more to offer other than his belief that Jesus was who He said He was.” What love, what mercy did the Lord extend to this penitent heart.

Calvary set in motion the ultimate purpose of God. Not only is there remission of sin in the death and resurrection of Christ, but there is healing for our bodies and transformation of our fleshly natures into the likeness and image of Christ. Salvation is instantaneous, but transformation is a process that is not just tinkering with the carnal nature, but bringing about dramatic change that will impact (is impacting) every facet of our lives. It changes our behaviour, the language we use, the deeds we do and the thoughts we have. It changes our attitude and how we treat others. It changes our homes and our relationships

in our natural families and church families and the business we do on a daily basis. It changes the carnal attitude of being served to an attitude of serving, just as Jesus demonstrated when he washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:4-17).

The transformation or metamorphosis that is taking place will continue until the image of Christ Himself is manifest in our lives. The songwriter penned the lines, “Transformed by grace divine, the glory shall be Thine; to Thy most holy will, O Lord, we now our all resign.” We are familiar with the scripture found in Romans 12:2, “*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” We can get drawn into the world’s thinking, which is summed up rather nicely in Isaiah 5:20 & 21, “*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.*” Our transformation is not by the reforms or thinking of this world but rather by the Spirit of Christ working to renew our minds from the carnal, fleshly mind to the mind of Christ.

Nelson’s Study Bible has this commentary on Romans 12:2, “Transform is used to describe an inward renewal of our mind through which our inner spirit is changed into the likeness of Christ. Transformation does not happen overnight. Our regeneration is instantaneous but our transformation is continuous. We are conformed to Christ’s image gradually as we spend time in intimate fellowship with Him.”

There is much more that could be said about Calvary, but let me reiterate in a few words what this brief message has attempted to rivet our attention on and for which we must be thankful on a daily basis.

1. Salvation is available only through the finished work of Calvary. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “*You must be born again*” (John 3:7) and later on in verse 17 He said, “*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*”
2. Healing was purchased by the lashes that Jesus suffered on the cross. Isaiah 53:5, “*... by His stripes we are healed.*”
3. Peace and reconciliation with God were made possible through Calvary. Isaiah 53:5, “*... the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.*”
4. The suffering of Jesus on Calvary’s cruel cross revealed to mankind the ultimate in sacrificial love, forgiveness and mercy.
5. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, was sent to indwell us after Christ’s departure from this earth.
6. Calvary made possible the transformation of every penitent sinner from the life of the flesh to life in the Spirit.

What God starts, He completes as is expressed in Philippians 1:6, “*Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*” What is the good work? “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Colossians 1:27). ✝

WAKE UP, DEBORAH

STEPHANIE SEABROOK

Over the last few years, God has highlighted the story of Deborah to me. This past year I’ve heard about Deborah and the *Deborah Anointing* more frequently than ever in my life and I believe it is because this passage is for today. These scriptures have greatly encouraged me and I hope they encourage you.

As part of the victory song at the end of the passage, they sing “Arise, Deborah” but the New International Version (NIV) really stands out to me,

“Wake up, Deborah” (Judges 5:12)!

I picture waking up from a spiritual sleep, like suddenly being able to see from blindness, to what is going on in the spirit realm, or moving from inaction to action with courage and obedience and leaving the busyness of our lives in order to walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit. We can even be literally awakened to intercessory prayer in the middle of the night. God is calling us to be aware and in tune with His work and then to obedience and action.

Though I believe this passage can be an encouragement to both men and women, what I hear for women specifically, is a call from the Lord to be spiritual mothers in Israel - obedient, courageous, and full of faith. Let us wake up to this call of the Holy Spirit and join our brothers and sisters in Christ in the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding of the Lord.

God highlighted a few themes to me from Judges 4 and 5:

1. Deborah and Barak worked together
2. The Lord went before them
3. Discretion and wisdom of Jael

Deborah and Barak Worked Together

We read in Judges 4:1-13 *When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel.*

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the LORD God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand?'"

And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!"

So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.

Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaïm, which is beside Kedesh.

And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon (NKJV).

The Bible does not say why Barak, the leader of the army, would only go to battle if Deborah joined him. However, it's an example of how we truly need each other to do God's work. God blesses plurality and unity. I believe he wanted the guidance of the Holy Spirit there with him which, at the time, Deborah had through her prophetic word and role as judge.

The Lord Went Before Them

In Judges 4:14-16 we read, Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left" (NKJV).

The Cyndi Aarrestad song, *The Battle Is The Lord's*, is one we love to sing and this truth is shown time and time again in the Bible. The Lord went before Barak, Deborah and the Israelite army, and He did the work needed for victory. We are so overwhelmed with despair at times to think of how we can fight against some of the evil in this world. God is clear that He wants to work with us and through us and what He requires from us is our faith and obedience. However, it is He who does miracles. He is the only one who can defeat impossible challenges. Deborah says to Barak, *Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord*

gone out before you? You can see the courage and faith that God gives her through the Holy Spirit and the obedience that Barak has as he immediately responds with his army. The story of Deborah is right before the story of Gideon, which is another example of how God shows His miraculous ways, and I would also encourage you to listen to the teaching from the 2022 North Battleford summer camp on the Global Missions podcast by Trevor Sundbo.

Discretion and Wisdom of Jael

In Judges 4:17-24 we read, However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket.

Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him. And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there any man here?' you shall say, 'No.'"

Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, I will show you the man whom you seek." And when he went into her tent, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple.

So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan (KNJV).

As noted in these verses, the next part of the story involves a wise woman named Jael. Her husband Heber had separated themselves from their people, Israel. Heber betrays his people and notifies Sisera, the enemy leader, of Barak's location and gives Sisera the chance to get his army ready (see verses 11 and 12). However, what man planned for evil, God planned for good. Jael was obedient, courageous, and displayed great wisdom. After Sisera fled from his fallen army, she gave him a false place of safety and was able to defeat him with wisdom from her Lord. This makes me ponder how God will work with people hidden in the midst of evil to do His purpose. Jael needed discretion on when to act on God's plan for if she had openly made it known she was against Sisera, she would not have been able to defeat him.

The Song of Deborah and Barak

Songs were often sung in biblical times to mark and remember God's glorious work in the earth, and to give praise to God. The song of Deborah and Barak reminds me of the song we sang a lot as children, *Hear The Trumpet Sounding*, and the lines,

*It is time to waken out of slumber and of sleep,
For our redemption now is drawing nigh.
See the evil forces now arrayed against the church,
Put on your armour and be brave and strong,
Christ will give command; His Kingdom is at hand,
Let us begin to sing the victor's song.*

In Judges 5:1-31 we read, Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:

*"When leaders lead in Israel,
When the people willingly offer themselves,
Bless the Lord!*

*"Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!
I, even I, will sing to the Lord;
I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.*

*"Lord, when You went out from Seir,
When You marched from the field of Edom,
The earth trembled and the heavens poured,
The clouds also poured water;
The mountains gushed before the Lord,
This Sinai, before the Lord God of Israel.*

*"In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath,
In the days of Jael,
The highways were deserted,
And the travelers walked along the byways.
Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel,
Until I, Deborah, arose,
Arose a mother in Israel.
They chose new gods;
Then there was war in the gates;
Not a shield or spear was seen among forty
thousand in Israel.
My heart is with the rulers of Israel
Who offered themselves willingly with the
people.
Bless the Lord!*

*"Speak, you who ride on white donkeys,
Who sit in judges' attire,
And who walk along the road.
Far from the noise of the archers, among the
watering places,
There they shall recount the righteous acts of
the Lord,
The righteous acts for His villagers in Israel;
Then the people of the Lord shall go down to
the gates.*

*"Awake, awake, Deborah!
Awake, awake, sing a song!
Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away,
O son of Abinoam!*

*"Then the survivors came down, the people
against the nobles;
The Lord came down for me against the
mighty.
From Ephraim were those whose roots were in
Amalek.
After you, Benjamin, with your peoples,
From Machir rulers came down,
And from Zebulun those who bear the
recruiter's staff.
And the princes of Issachar were with
Deborah;
As Issachar, so was Barak
Sent into the valley under his command;
Among the divisions of Reuben
There were great resolves of heart.
Why did you sit among the sheepfolds,
To hear the pipings for the flocks?
The divisions of Reuben have great searchings
of heart.
Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan,
And why did Dan remain on ships?
Asher continued at the seashore,
And stayed by his inlets.
Zebulun is a people who jeopardized their lives
to the point of death,
Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield.*

*"The kings came and fought,
Then the kings of Canaan fought
In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
They took no spoils of silver.
They fought from the heavens;
The stars from their courses fought against
Sisera.
The torrent of Kishon swept them away,
That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.
O my soul, march on in strength!
Then the horses' hooves pounded,
The galloping, galloping of his steeds.*

*'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the Lord,
'Curse its inhabitants bitterly,
Because they did not come to the help of the
Lord,
To the help of the Lord against the mighty.'*

*"Most blessed among women is Jael,
The wife of Heber the Kenite;
Blessed is she among women in tents.
He asked for water; she gave milk;
She brought out cream in a lordly bowl.
She stretched her hand to the tent peg,
Her right hand to the workmen's hammer;
She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head,
She split and struck through his temple.
At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still;
At her feet he sank, he fell;
Where he sank, there he fell dead.*

*"The mother of Sisera looked through the
window,
And cried out through the lattice,
'Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?'
Her wisest ladies answered her,
Yes, she answered herself,
'Are they not finding and dividing the spoil:
To every man a girl or two;
For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments,
Plunder of garments embroidered and dyed,
Two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of
the looter?'*

*"Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord!
But let those who love Him be like the sun
When it comes out in full strength."*

So the land had rest for forty years."

The beautiful reward from the Lord for the obedience of this mother in Israel was that they had rest for 40 years! Be encouraged to follow in boldness what God has spoken to you.

In summary, women, men, mothers, and fathers, be greatly encouraged by how God works in our lives to defeat the enemy. We have power over death, by His Spirit that dwells in us. Wake up to the destruction that the enemy would have for our families and church through deception. *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10, NKJV).

Encourage one another often as the enemy is the father of lies and many things that appear good are not. In the last days evil will be called good and good evil. *"But exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"* (Hebrews 3:13, NKJV). *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12, NKJV)

Let us cry out to our God to be able to discern what is true and holy. Let's rise up and be obedient to the calling of the Lord. Thank you God for your grace, truth, and love through your Son Jesus Christ. Amen. ✝

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