
Article IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

(Sermon Title)

Ephesians 1:14-17

Understanding matters! Some people think that what you do not know or what you do not understand will not hurt you. Yes, it can! There was a little old lady and three of her

friends cruising around in her Crown Vic. Blue lights appeared behind her and pulled her over. The officer approached the window and said, "Ma'am, you were going entirely too slow. I clocked you at twenty-one miles per hour. This is very dangerous." She replied, "Oh, officer, I always drive exactly what the signs tell me to drive. You see, the sign right up there says twenty-one. I always drive exactly that speed." The officer realized that he had a bit of a challenge on his hands. He proceeded to explain to her the difference between the highway number signs and the speed limit signs, and she finally got it. As he was about to let her go, he said, "Ma'am, I have one more question for you. Your three friends are as pale as ghosts. They look like they have had a traumatic experience. What is wrong with them?" She winked at the officer and said, "They will be okay in a few minutes. We just came off of highway 135." What you do not understand can have an effect upon you and others!

Paul wrote to the Romans to help them understand about salvation. We need to understand more about it today. The Ed Sullivan Show is a 1960s version of American Idol. I remember it only vaguely, since I was a mere child at the time. Ed Sullivan, the host, after most acts, though all of them were not, would often say, "wonderful, wonderful, wonderful," about the acts of the show. Paul was also writing to help the Romans and us understand how wonderful and how glorious the gospel and salvation are.

In my preparation, I have become convinced anew that this subject of salvation is wonderful. I have become convinced that this statement of the Baptist Faith and Message is wonderful. I have become convinced anew that salvation is wonderful! I

believe that understanding more about salvation and understanding salvation as wonderful will help us to enjoy it, live it, and proclaim it.

What makes salvation wonderful? Let us do an investigation of the various facets of this doctrine to understand more about it and to discern how wonderful salvation truly is.

First, let us investigate the source of salvation. We should affirm that salvation has one source, yet it is expressed in Scripture in several different ways. First, God is the source of salvation. He is the source in that He initiated salvation even in eternity. Before we as sinners were even created, before there was sin, God had in mind, and God put in motion salvation for us. God is also the initiator in each life as each person relates to Him or runs from Him. God is at work initiating the process of salvation in each life. We should also emphasize, relating to God, that salvation is by His grace, His unmerited favor, God showing mercy, grace, and love to a world, to us, to provide and be the source of salvation.

Let us also understand the source of salvation as Jesus, God in flesh, the One who was crucified, buried, risen and exalted. Jesus is the source and the provider through the cross. His is a substitutionary atonement for us. The Baptist Faith and Message reads, "Jesus by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer." Jesus is the only source. Jesus is the only provider of salvation. Acts 4:12 reads, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." Jesus, Jesus only, is the source of salvation!

We should also discuss the gospel. Paul discussed the gospel's role and the gospel message --- the good news that God became flesh, that Jesus went to a cross

and died paying for our sins, that through Him we can have forgiveness and life. Paul described how the gospel leads to salvation. The hearing of that gospel and the message of that gospel is a source of salvation. The Baptist Faith and Message reads, "salvation is offered," implying both a source and a provider.

Understanding salvation as wonderful, we do so because of the source. I love to eat at many different places; that is obvious. One of the places I really love to eat is at my mother's house. My mother can put on a spread. The food is delicious! One of the things that makes it so good and so wonderful is the source. The food comes right from her heart, through her hands, delivered to the table. It is good because of the source. Salvation is good and wonderful because of its source.

Let us also investigate the facet of the need for salvation. The very word salvation implies a need. The Bible and the Baptist Faith and Message statement will affirm that all are sinners --- sinners by nature with inherited sin, a sin problem inherited from Adam, and sinners by choice with active sinfulness and sinful actions. We are indeed evil, ungodly, unrighteous, unholy, dead in sins, depraved, separated from God, transgressors, rebels, disobedient, followers of the world, followers of the evil one. We are indeed sinners, and because of our sin the writers of the Bible would describe us as objects of wrath, condemned already, bound for an eternal, horrible hell. I am convinced that a part of what makes salvation wonderful is that from which we are saved, God delivering us from sin and the consequences of sin.

Now, let us turn our attention to another facet, the purpose of salvation. Our text and the Baptist Faith and Message use several different words, images, metaphors, and concepts that help us to understand the purpose for salvation. One of them is our main

word salvation. The verb to save, sodzo, means to rescue and to deliver. The picture provided in a word study on salvation is the idea of a deliverance or rescue from a hopeless, perishing situation, like a military deliverance, a medical deliverance, or a drowning deliverance. I have in hand a Baptist Press article from this morning (February 12, 2008), and it relates a story about Kevin Furniss, a Union University student and one of six students trapped in a dormitory bathroom trying to find a secure place when the tornado destroyed their dorm. He was trapped for four hours while rescuers tried to dig them out. Kevin was trapped between a collapsed wall and a sink, in pain and could not move. He could not get out. He was helpless on his own, but workers came with sledge hammers, chainsaws, and other tools and dug until they finally got to him. He told the story how he managed to punch his arm through a wall, and he felt air on the other side, and then suddenly a rescue worker grabbed his hand. At that point he realized he would be delivered and saved from where he was. He was rescued.

Another picture we have from the passage and the statement about salvation is the idea of righteousness. Paul, in Romans 1:17, described a righteousness from God that is revealed to make us righteous. The wonder of salvation to me is that God takes sinners and makes us righteous. We also have the idea of transformation in this verse, that those who were once going away from God, living for self and in sin, become those who live by faith in Jesus, a transformed life. The writers of the Baptist Faith and Message used the word redemption. The statement reads, "Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man." Redemption is buying back, the buying back of a slave or the buying back/ransom of one who is kidnapped, the buying back from our sins.

The Baptist Faith and Message writers emphasized four very important theological concepts. They are big words, and you will study more about them in Dr. Rathel's classes, Theology 301 and 302. Let's simply do a brief preview here. First is the word or concept regeneration. The statement reads, "Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit." The word and concept implies a recreating, God taking that which is old and defiled, and recreating it into something new. A wonderful salvation it is! Another word is justification. The statement defines justification this way, "Justification is God's grace and full acquittal." This is a judicial term. Who is the judge? God is the judge. Who is the accused? You and I are the accused. Before a holy God we are accused of a crime and guilty in our case. It was God who judged us, and He acquitted us. He declared us free and able to go. Now notice what the statement indicates that He gives, "full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness." How can a holy God declare the sinner fully acquitted? It is because Jesus has paid the penalty. Jesus has paid the consequence of the sin. He has borne the punishment for us. Thus, we are acquitted of the sin. The statement also reads, "Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God." We were enemies, rebels, transgressors, those going our own way, but God brings us into relationship. Another word or concept is sanctification. The statement reads, "Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life." Sanctification is both

positional, meaning that God does something immediately to us, sanctifying us, cleaning us, making us holy, and setting us apart. It is also progressive or practical in that it is never finished, never until death or the return of Christ, or until heaven. Sanctification is an ongoing process of God sanctifying or making us holy, cleaning us, making us pure, making us a fit vessel. Fourth is the word glorification. I love that word. It just sounds good, doesn't it? Glorification, the authors of the statement described it as, "the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed." That is simply fancy language for saying --- heaven, with Jesus forever! How much better could it get? The end of the process, the end of salvation is glorification, being with God in heaven forever!

Let me remind you. Yes, salvation involves concepts like entering a relationship and starting a faith journey. Biblical ideas, but let us never forget that the central concern of salvation is God saving sorry sinners from their sin, forgiving them and giving them a place in heaven forever. The wonder of salvation, the wonder of what God does for us is that God takes us from being sinners, to the sanctified, to the splendor of heaven. Salvation is so wonderful!

Let us also address today the recipients of salvation. The writers of our passage and the Baptist Faith and Message discussed the recipients in several different ways. First, let us define the recipients. Paul declared that the gospel is "for everyone who believes." Salvation is for the Jew, for the Gentile, for the Greek and the non-Greek, for the wise and for the foolish. Paul was convinced that everyone is a potential recipient of salvation. Paul was convinced that everyone should have the opportunity to hear the

gospel that leads unto salvation. The Baptist Faith and Message reads, “salvation is offered freely to all.” What a wonderful salvation it is!

The writers of our text and statement also discussed how to receive salvation. The text reads, “salvation to everyone who believes.” The concept of believing or faith is crucial for recipients. Salvation is by faith. The Baptist Faith and Message reads, “there is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.” None, no matter what the world thinks, no matter how much they want to push tolerance and pluralism doctrines down our throats, there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ! There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus, a person hearing the gospel message and responding personally and explicitly to the gospel message. Let’s understand that in our text and statement there is no easy believism, none at all. The Baptist Faith and Message authors declared repentance and faith. Repentance is a turning, a turning away from sin and turning to God with life. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Savior and Lord. These are simultaneous, synonymous concepts of Scripture: repentance, faith, and surrender to lordship. Salvation is provided when persons respond to Him in that way. Salvation is wonderful because of the recipients and because of how salvation is received!

Let us also address the challenge of salvation. Actually, the idea of the challenge of salvation is only applied in article four about salvation, but it will be addressed clearly in article eleven, about evangelism and missions. The text of Romans 1 is very clear that because of the gospel and salvation there is a challenge for

us. The challenge would include the idea that salvation should be lived out, verse seventeen. Also, salvation obligates us to proclaim to others. Paul sensed a profound obligation because of the gospel, because of the salvation God had provided to him. Salvation should also make us eager to proclaim. Paul was eager to proclaim the gospel in Rome. Also, salvation should make us unashamed of the gospel. Paul declared that he was unashamed of the gospel. Certainly a part of that was because of how wonderful salvation was for him and how wonderful salvation is for us. Salvation is so wonderful that we should passionately, eagerly, unashamedly proclaim the gospel of salvation to our world.

Yes, understanding is important! Yes, an understanding that salvation is wonderful is important. Salvation is definitely more important and more “wonderful” and wonderful than the acts of the Ed Sullivan Show. Actually, salvation is more wonderful than we can comprehend at this point. What should we do? We should continue to seek to understand it. While we are seeking to understand salvation --- enjoy it, live it, and proclaim it!

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