**“TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY: THE WONDER OF SALVATION”**

Let me begin by asking you a question – What was the single biggest thing that ever happened to you?

This morning we are going to take a closer look at that wonderful event we call “salvation” – the day we met God. Watchman Nee described salvation like this: “What is salvation? It is none other than God saving man out of himself into Himself. Salvation has two facets: a cutting off and a uniting with. What is cut off is self; the uniting is with God.

The language of salvation in the Bible includes (from the O.T.) deliverance, victory, rescue, renew and restore; (and from the N.T.) redeem, regenerate, reborn, reconcile

So, what is it that we are being delivered, rescued or saved from?

Romans 5:8-9, Romans 1:18 (the wrath of God) Give a brief background to the fallen nature of man. We are doomed and need divine intervention! We could not save ourselves Illustration: burning World Trade Center on 9-11.

Turn to Ephesians 1.

In Chapter 1 and verse 1 we see that Paul is writing to the “saints in Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus.”

Who are saints? Christians, those who have come to faith in Christ.

We also see that Paul is writing to saints (Christians) in Ephesus. Does this mean that Paul is not writing to us here in Rockwall, Texas? No, by application of scripture Paul is writing to us also.

Paul has a very important message for us from God Himself (he is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit). His message has to do with the topic of our salvation. Let’s pick it up in verse 3. READ Eph. 1:3-6

The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being (Baptist Faith and Message). So we believe in one God who is 3 persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and each plays a part in the salvation process.

Verses 3-6 refer to the part that God the Father plays in our salvation.

1. In verse 3 “every spiritual blessing…” the word “blessing” means a gift or a benefit bestowed. Over in Eph. 2:8 it talks about being saved as “the gift of God.” Paul goes on in verse 3 to say “…in the heavenly places in Christ.” Over in Eph. 2:6 it says that He (God the Father) raised us up with Him (position) and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” So God **initiated a plan** to save us – a gift from Him not just to save us from destruction (mercy) but to place us with Him in His eternal kingdom (grace)!

[Disclaimer about verses 4-5 regarding the Doctrine of Election – I want to make it very clear at this point that I hold to the absolute sovereignty of God. He neither forces people to be saved who don’t want to be nor does He keep someone from being saved who wants to be saved. I believe in the Doctrine of Election as well as the free will of man. Both are taught in the Bible. There is an obvious “tension” between the two, but they somehow work together in the economy of God. How exactly is a mystery and is a discussion for another time.]

1. God the Father **chose us** in Him (Jesus) before the creation. “chose” comes from Greek word meaning “to select.”
2. In love God the Father **predestined us** (determined beforehand) to adoption as sons thru Christ Jesus to Himself. “predestined comes from Greek word meaning “to predetermine, to foreordain.”

“Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.” (Baptist Faith and Message)

Ends with “to the praise of the glory of His grace” in verse 6

So God the Father in the kind intention of His will, because of His love has given us something (a gift) that we did not earn nor do we deserve. He has this great plan for an eternal kingdom that we get to be a part of.

Did God have to save sinful man? Was He obligated to set up a plan of salvation?

No. Discussion of the fallen angelic beings who rebelled with Lucifer (Satan). Angels are a higher created order than man (ref Hebrews 2 when Christ became human for a little while He was “lower than the angels” plus how men act when they come face to face with angels). But can angels repent and be saved? No. Yet God provided a means by which we can be saved. Why us and not the angels? Verses 5-6 tell us.

The part that God the Son (the Beloved) plays in our salvation (7-12).

1. **Redemption** thru His blood (**death** on the cross). 1 Cor. 6:20 says “For you have been bought with a price therefore glorify God in your body.”
2. **Forgiveness** of our trespasses. “trespasses” comes from Greek word which means “a false step, a transgression” Which trespasses have we been forgiven of? All of them!
3. Verses 8-10 “In all **wisdom and insight** He made known to us… the mystery of His will” (the church, Gentiles get to be a part of God’s kingdom)…”the summing up of all things in Christ” – where everything is going, to the eternal kingdom
4. Verse 11 “we have obtained an **inheritance**.” We are heirs with Christ! (Rom 8:17, Gal 3:29, Eph 3:6, Titus 3:7, Heb 11:9, Jas 2:5)
5. My **identification** with Christ (Romans 6:1-14) When I became a Christian I identified myself completely with Jesus Christ, God’s Son. He became my new Lord and Master. I identified with His death. When He died, I died. But I also identified with His resurrection; His victory over sin is also my victory. Sin has no power over Christ and, therefore, has no power over me. I willingly submit to Christ’s authority in my life. No longer do I identify with my old sinful, fleshly nature, but I completely denounce and lay aside my former lifestyle with all its evil thoughts and deeds.

Ends with “to the praise of His glory (verse 12).

The part that God the Holy Spirit plays in or salvation (13-14).

1. **Sealed** as a security measure, our guarantee. Eph 4:30 says the Holy Spirit of God was the One “by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” The Greek word “sealed” indictaes security and permanency. That is why we Baptists hold to the Doctrine of Eternal Security.
2. “given as a **pledge** of our inheritance.” “pledge is from Greek word that means “an earnest (part payment in advance for security).
3. Jesus taught in John 16:8 that the Holy Spirit (Helper) will “**convict** the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment”

Ends with “to the praise of His glory.” Verse 14

The part that man plays (2:1-9). This was alluded to back in 1:13 when talking about the Holy Spirit it says, “after listening to the message of truth, having also believed…you were sealed”

1. Through **faith** verse 8. We trust Christ completely (without actually seeing Him physically and without seeing the end) to save us. We either accept or reject the message of the gospel. Analogy of burning building. For our part is to jump into the saving arms of Jesus and trust Him to catch us.
2. You do **not work** your way to salvation. Your good deeds and actions do NOT save you. Because of our faith in Christ and His work, His righteousness is credited to our account (Romans 4).

Jonathan Edwards said, “If there be ground for you to trust in your own righteousness, then, all that Christ did to purchase salvation, and all that God did to prepare the way for it is in vain.”

This morning my goal has simply been to remind us of what God has done in our lives. By His grace He saved us. In the O.T. there is a story in 1 Samuel Chapter 7. The children of Israel have done a wicked thing by worshipping foreign gods. God became angry with them and the Bible says that God “struck the people with a great slaughter.” The people mourn. Samuel preaches a sermon (READ 1 Sam. 7:3). The response is a great revival breaks out and the people repent and turn back to God. Shortly thereafter God gives Israel a great victory over the Philistines. To commemorate how God helped Israel win their victory Samuel raised up a stone of remembrance. He named the stone “Ebenezer,” the “stone of the help.” That is the meaning behind verse 2 of the great hymn of salvation we will close with. In closing let’s sing this to God as a prayer of praise.

**COME THOU FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING**

1. Come, thou Fount of every blessing,

Tune my heart to sing thy grace;

Streams of mercy, never ceasing,

Call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,

Sung by flaming tongues above.

Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,

Mount of thy redeeming love.

2. Here I raise mine Ebenezer;

Hither by thy help I'm come;

And I hope, by thy good pleasure,

Safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,

Wandering from the fold of God;

He, to rescue me from danger,

Interposed his precious blood.

3. O to grace how great a debtor

Daily I'm constrained to be!

Let thy goodness, like a fetter,

Bind my wandering heart to thee.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,

Prone to leave the God I love;

Here's my heart, Lord take and seal it,

Seal it for thy courts above.