

A NEW CREATURE

2 Corinthians 5:17

Intro: Through the years I have been teaching the Word, I have had an increasing impression that one reason more Christians do not make more progress in the Christian life, is because they don't really understand *what the Christian life is*. Of course, I have also learned that not everyone who professes to be a Christian is a Christian. This sometimes even applies to leaders in the church. They may get involved in something that is clearly condemned by the Word of God, you confront them with the Word, and find them determined to do what they want to do in spite of what the Word of God teaches.

So I have been looking at the some of the details about salvation that are not always made clear to people in the hope that a better understanding of what salvation is, will cause all of us to be more assured that we are Christians, and more determined to live as Christians should live.

Therefore, in my first message in this series I spoke about *knowing God*. My text was 1 John 1:5:

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

The words “God is light” mean that God is holy, God is righteous, God is totally good. And to say that no darkness is in Him, is to say that there is no sin in Him. When we understand this, then we understand why it is that we need to be saved because we are sinners, and there is no one who is “good” in God’s sight. He is holy; we are sinners. He is perfect; we are corrupt and defiled because of our sin. And so if we are to live a life of fellowship with God, something has to happen to us to make us acceptable to God. And that certain “something” is salvation! No person can really understand his or her need for salvation, without knowing something about *the holiness of God*.

In my second message I sought to deal with *the high cost of salvation*.

My text was 1 John 4:9 and 10

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Most people will readily admit that they are not perfect, or that they are not what they ought to be. But they bristle at the idea that they are so bad in God's sight that in no way can they be forgiven and cleanse of their sins except through the terrible suffering and death of God's own Son. Bad, they will agree, but not that bad!

And yet there is no other explanation for the death of Christ when we turn to the Scriptures. Here again we need to understand in salvation the total holiness of God, and the total sinfulness of man. The cost of our salvation is so great that none of us can pay for it. It cannot be earned because it is too valuable. We certainly do not deserve to be saved. Salvation, as amazing as it may sound, is rooted in God's love for us, not in our love for God, nor even in our desire to please Him. The only way a holy God can accept guilty sinners, is for those sinners to be covered with God's own righteousness, and that was the purpose of the death of Christ. That is what we are told in 2 Cor. 5:21. I will read it from the NKJV:
(2 Cor. 5:20-21)

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:20-21, NKJV).

Two weeks ago when I brought the third message in this series, I raised another question, "Why did Christ die?" My text was in Romans 8, and especially in verses 28 and 29 where we read:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:28-29).

We are saved from hell so that we can go to heaven. But that is just a part of the reason that God has saved us. The main reason is that we might be "conformed to the image of His Son." God saves us by the death of Christ in order that we might be like the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the object of our predestination. And we need to understand this in order to understand the Christian life. After we are saved, God is working all things together for that one good and glorious purpose. And we as Christians need to understand this.

Tonight I want us to take a glimpse at salvation through another verse of Scripture, and that verse is 2 Cor. 5:17. And this is what it says:

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

We could translate that verse, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation . . .”

Now to be “in Christ” is another way of expressing what it means to be saved. It speaks of the position that we have before God. God looks upon us “in Christ,” and that spiritually is the position that we have before Him.

But this is the question that I want to consider with you tonight: What is there about salvation that made the Apostle Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, speak of it as being “a new creature,” or “a new creation”? What truths about creation help me to understand what it means to be a Christian?

Well, the first thing that comes to mind ought to be that:

I. CREATION WAS A WORK OF GOD.

That was true of creation, wasn't it? Creation was not something that happened by chance. It was not the result of some kind of a big bang. We read in Gen. 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” And the Apostle John in writing his Gospel said in chapter 1, verse 3, speaking of Christ, “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” And the latter part of Gen. 1:2 tells us that “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

So if salvation is likened to creation, then all Three Persons of the Godhead were active in salvation. And our salvation can be called a creation because all Three Persons of the God-head were active in our salvation. The Father chose us, and sent Christ to die for us, and the Holy Spirit convicts us and regenerates us.

But let me make a second point.

II. CREATION WAS ALTOGETHER A WORK OF GOD.

God did a masterful thing when he made man last because if He had made man first, there would always have been people who would have said that

God made man first so man could have helped him with creation. But man was created last, and he had nothing to do with his creation. God alone, without any help from man, “created the heaven and the earth.”

And so if salvation is called a creation, it has to mean that God saves us without any help from us. In fact, we are the new creatures, so how could we have had a part in it.

So for the Spirit of God to liken salvation to creation, meant that just as God did all of the work of creation from start to finish, so the same is true of our salvation. There is nothing that we need to add. There is nothing that we could add. God did a complete work of creation, and He has made full and complete work for our salvation.

Let me draw a third parallel between creation and salvation.

III. GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH BY JUST SPEAKING HIS WORD.

Read the record in Genesis 1 and you will see over and over again, “And God said . . . and there was.”

How has God saved us? The Apostle Peter has told us in 1 Peter 2:23. This is what he said:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:23).

We are saved by grace. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. But in some way, and probably in many ways, God has spoken to us by His Word in our hearts, and we have become new creatures in Christ. That is why it is so important when talking to others about salvation that we use the actual wording of Scripture. It is living and powerful, sharper than anything that you and I could say. It is capable of overcoming all resistance, and bringing people to the Savior.

But there is another point that needs to be made which makes creation a wonderful illustration of salvation. It is this:

IV. GOD CREATED THE WORLD OUT OF NOTHING.

When it comes to salvation, what does God have to work with in us?

Nothing! Absolutely nothing! And that is the way it was in creation. Before God could create anything to put on the earth or in the sky, He had to make the earth and the sky. He started with nothing, but by His mighty power and infinite wisdom He made the heaven and the earth and everything that went into them.

What material is there is us by nature that can be made into salvation? There is nothing, nothing to build upon. And so salvation calls for a work of creation, and only God can do that. It is a “new creation,” a creation in your heart and mind that will never pass away. And the word that the Apostle Paul used here for “new” means a variety of wonderful things. It means that God has made us into a being that as far as each of us individually is concerned, did not exist there at all before we were saved. We become a completely new kind of a person. For it to be “new” means that the work that God does in saving any person has never been heard of by unregenerate men. With all of the scientists are talking about doing with respect to human life, this is something that has never even entered into their minds, a work which only can be done by a Creator!

Liberal theologians used to talk about all of us having a spark of divinity in us, and that salvation was just a matter of fanning that spark into a flame. But anyone who believes that is a false prophet. There is not a word of truth in it. You will never find that in the Bible. Salvation is not improving something that we already have, it is giving us something and making us into the kind of a person that we could never make ourselves, nor could anyone else make us. God creates in us something that was not there before. That is why it is called a creation.

Let me give you another parallel between creation and salvation.

V. GOD AS THE CREATOR WAS ALSO THE GIVER OF LIFE.

After the Lord created light, and had made a firmament which divided the waters above the firmament from the waters below the firmament, and then separated the water on the earth so that dry land appeared, then the Lord made grass to grow, fruit trees to bear fruit. And then he placed lights in the firmament of heaven, the sun, the moon, and the stars to regulate time, days and years, the four seasons. And then he put living creatures, fish, etc. in the waters, birds to fly in the air, and living creatures of many kinds to walk upon the earth, beasts and cattle, etc.. So with all of these he not only made their bodies, but He gave them life!

Finally, God made man out of the dust of the earth, “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). So the Creator gave life to all that He created.

Therefore, when we read that salvation is also a creation, it should not surprise us that in salvation God also gives us life. John 3:16 tells us that. And it is a unique kind of life. It is eternal life. The Apostle John in 1 John 5:11 and 12 said,

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

A Christian is one who has the Son, and to have the Son is to have life. So since salvation is a new creation, and a part of original creation was the bestowal of life – plant life, animal life, bird life, fish life, and human life, so we should expect that in making people “a new creation,” that, too, included the giving of life. But in the new creation it is eternal life.

VI. CREATION WAS ORIGINALLY DECLARED BY GOD TO BE “GOOD.”

Please turn with me to Genesis 1.

Notice that you have the word “good” in verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31. Do you know what that word “good” means there in Genesis 1? It means that what God had done was pleasing to Him. He was satisfied with his work.

In this connection let me call your attention to several verses we always read especially at Christmas time, but you are in this part of the NT if you are reading your Bible on our schedule. I am referring to Luke 2:8-11:

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

The words “I bring you good tidings” are the translation of the Greek

word which can be translated, *to preach the Gospel, or the good news*. But why is it good? Is it because it tells us of the Savior? Yes, but that is not the only reason that it is “good.” The primary reason is that it is “good” because it is pleasing to God. It is acceptable to Him. And let me say very clearly tonight, it is the only way of salvation. There is none other. And before we put our trust in any way of salvation, we need to know that God has pronounced it “good.” And there is no other way to God. Christ is *the only Savior. There is none other*.

I am sure that there are other parallels that can be drawn between creation and salvation, but let me mention just one more before I close.

VII. CREATION WAS DESIGNED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

Cf. Psa. 19:1 ff.

Now turn with me to Ephesians 1, and we will see the same thing regarding salvation. Notice especially verses 6, 12, and 14.

God created the heavens and the earth for His glory. What a tragedy that most people’s understanding is so darkened that they have never realized this. But God has made us *new creatures* for the same purpose. And if we are going to glorify Him, it must mean that we always humble ourselves.

Concl: So I hope 2 Cor. 5:17 will mean more to you from now on as we have seen why it is that a saved person is called a new creature. It is because God is our Savior, because He has done the whole work, He did it by speaking the Word, He made it out of nothing, what He did He declared to be “good,” and He did it for His glory.

May this help us to understand more clearly what our salvation is by noting the parallels between the creation of the heaven and the earth, and the work that God does when He takes a guilty, defiled sinner, and makes him a new creature in Christ.