

TBC – 5/4/03 p.m.

## **SALVATION: WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT IT IS NOT** Ephesians 2:8-10

**Intro:** These three verses were not selected for this book because it was thought that no one would know them, but because they are of such importance that we need to make as sure as we can that every child of God does know them. I would imagine that there were very few who were memorizing especially the first two of these verses for the first time. I don't think that I ever sat down to memorize them; I just heard them over and over again until I realized that I knew them. Verse 10 is not always included with them, but it certainly should be.

But regardless of how familiar a verse, or verses, might be, one good thing to do in memorizing them is to take your Bible and read at least the chapter in which they appear, or, if possible, to read the whole book where they are found.

If we do that with Eph. 2:8-10, we will see that these verses are a part of a section beginning with verse 4. And if we go back to the beginning of chapter 2 we will see by reading the first ten verses of the chapter over and over that what the Spirit of God has led the Apostle Paul to do in these verses is *to give us a definition of grace – the grace of God!*

The word “grace” appears in this chapter twice before we get to verse 8. You will see it in verse 5, and again in verse 7. But we also see some other words which we might call *companions* of the word “grace.” I am thinking about “mercy” and “love” in verse 4, and “kindness” in verse 7. And all of these words “grace,” “mercy,” “love,” and “kindness,” are attributes of God!

The verses in this part of Ephesians which deal with our salvation are verses 4 through 10, but in order to understand more fully the meaning of grace and mercy and love and kindness, we need to see ourselves in verses 1 through 3. The people that Paul was describing in verses 4 through 10 come out of the group that he described in verses 1 through 3. Not everyone who is described in verses 1 through 3 has experienced, nor will they experience, the salvation that is described in verse 4 through 10. But Paul wanted every child of God to remember what he or she was like before salvation. He did not want any of us to forget that it is only because of the grace of God that we have been saved. And so we need to spend a few minutes looking at the first three verses of this chapter.

Let's call this:

**I. GOD'S PORTRAIT OF THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE (Eph. 2:1-3).**

He described what we were, how we lived, both our bondage and our contentment with it, but worst of all, that we were "by nature the children of wrath" just like everyone else.

This is not the only passage in the Bible which gives us God's portrait of human beings as they are by nature, but they all say essentially the same thing. Read the first two and a half chapters of Romans as an example.

Now when you read verses like 1 through 3, asking your self why God would save anyone who was like that, you would have to say that there is not one reason why God would be attracted to them. On the other hand, you would have to say that is every reason why God should not have anything at all to do with them. In fact, all are deserving of the judgment of God, not salvation.

Probably most people would say that these words are not true. Paul was not saying that we are all as bad as we can be. Nor was he saying that there are not evidences of goodness in man (because we all are made in the likeness of God). But he was telling us what we are before God. There is nothing in verses 1, 2, and 3 that man realizes his need for God, his need for the forgiveness of sin, because man by nature doesn't really believe in sin.

But the picture here helps us to understand the grace of God, the mercy of God, the love of God, and the kindness of God. For God to have mercy upon any of us, for God to love any of us, for God to be kind toward us, instead of dealing with us in wrath, is what grace is. He does not give us what we deserve, which is judgment, but He gives us salvation instead. This is the grace of God.

So as you read this chapter, notice the first two words of verse 1, and contrast them with the first two words of verse 4 – "And you . . . But God . . ."

And so in verse 4 through 7 we not only are told what God has done, but why! And when I say why, we can see that Paul was not thinking just of

what God was accomplishing, but about *what would move Him to do what He did.*

## II. GOD'S WORK OF SALVATION (Eph. 2:4-8).

Long before you and I were even born, many things were taking place which were going to have an eternal effect upon us. And three points are especially important for us to remember. One was before there was any creation at all. And the second had to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world as a Man. In between those two points there was a third. That was when Adam sinned, and brought the whole human family under the judgment of God. And yet it was all according to the plan of God before time began.

See Eph. 1:3-4.

Now in our text for tonight, verses 4 through 7, the Apostle Paul traced the whole course of our salvation.

Was God moved to save any of us because He saw something good in us which was deserving of such a great reward? No, it was because He is "rich in mercy," and because of "His great love wherewith He loved us. It was because of His grace, "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Jesus Christ." If you want to know why God saved you, don't look at yourself. The reason is not there. The reason is to be found in the heart of God, and in the heart of Jesus Christ.

When you and I really understand what we are and who we are in ourselves, and what Jesus Christ has done for us in order that we might be saved, then we will sing from our hearts,

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene,  
And wonder how He could love me, a sinner condemned, unclean.

Cf. Deut. 7:7-8a:

7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers . . .

There is no way to explain God's love for us except to say that He loved us because He loved us. He didn't need any reason beyond that.

We were dead in trespasses and sins. We were hopelessly in bondage to sin and to Satan. What we needed was life, eternal life. But someone had to atone for our sins, and that is why Jesus Christ came. It is not wonder that one of the Lord's servants in the past said that the greatest word in the Bible is the word "so" in John 3:16. God not only loved us, but He "so loved" us that He sent His Son to die for us that we might have eternal life.

And Paul, in verse 7, takes us all the way into the ages to come. We know a little bit about how wonderful it is to be saved, *but we don't know it all. There is more to come!*

Now we come to the last three verses which is the main text for the evening. And here we have:

### **III. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (Eph. 2:8-10).**

I am going to divide what Paul said here, taking the positive side first, and then point out what salvation is not!

#### **A. What salvation is.**

It is God's gift to us by grace through faith. It is all a gift of God, even the faith. But faith in what or whom? It is faith for us in God's Word, faith in the Gospel. And the Gospel is the message of salvation through the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The penalty for sin is death, eternal death. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. See Rom. 6:23.

But this isn't all that Paul had to say about salvation. He said that saved people are "His workmanship." Geoffrey Wilson says in his brief commentary on Ephesians that the word which is translated "workmanship" is only used one other time in the NT. That is in Rom. 1:20:

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Here it is translated with the words, "the things that are made." The universe in which we live did not just develop over millions of years; it was made by God in just six days, brought into existence by His word. A Christian is not a self-made man. He is given a new life by God through

Christ. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17. It is just as impossible for a person make himself a child of God as it would be for any of us to create this world in which we live. When God saves us, He does not restore us, but He redeems us, and makes us new creatures in Christ.

And the way you can tell that a person has been saved is that his life is changed. Then we do good works. We live, not according to this world, but according to the Word of God. The old walk, or life, is in Eph. 2:2; the new walk is in Eph. 2:10. Any person who claims to be a Christian, but who still walks in Eph. 2:2, doesn't know what a Christian is. Salvation is an inward change which is the result of God's work, but it shows itself outwardly in a new way of life, a life that is fully described for us in the Word of God.

But before we finish, let think about:

### **B. What salvation is not.**

And here Paul made two very important statements. It often helps us to know what something *is*, by pointing out what it is *not*.

#### **1. It is “not of yourselves.”**

#### **2. It is “not of work.”**

These are two statements which mean exactly the same thing, but as Charles Hodge says in his commentary on Ephesians, the second is given to reinforce the first. But put together they mean that there is nothing that God sees in me that merits salvation, nor is there anything that I can do so as to earn salvation. If it were available either way, we would be sure to boast about it, whereas Eph. 1:3-14 emphasizes the fact that God has designed salvation for His glory, not so we can boast about what we have done for ourselves. So God does not save any of us because we try to do the right thing. All the right things that we can do will not atone for a single sin. Nor can we buy it. It is without price. If you owned the whole world, it wouldn't even amount to a down payment. Baptism is important, but baptism will not save you. If you aren't saved before you are baptized, baptism means nothing. People join a church thinking that will guarantee heaven for them. Judas was one of the original apostles, but that did not save him, nor will church membership save any of us. There can be no salvation without a Savior, and that Savior is God's Son,

the Lord Jesus Christ. If you and I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not believe in Him, it doesn't make any difference who we are, nor how many good works we have done, we will not be saved.

**Concl:** Let me say one more thing before I close.

I think that we all have to say that the way of salvation is very, very clear here in Eph. 2:8-10. Salvation is through Christ by faith. It is a gift, a free gift. You know, we have all received gifts which haven't cost us a penny. But they had to be paid for by someone else, and for an expensive gift the price was very high. God and His Son Jesus Christ have paid for salvation. The price was the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the Cross for guilty and unworthy sinners. What a tragedy it would be if any of us has spent time memorizing these verses, or others which give the same message, and yet we turn away thinking that because we know the verses, we know the Lord. We need to be sure that we are trusting in the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The faith is a part of the gift, so if you are not trusting in Christ, go to God and ask Him for the faith to be saved. He will not turn you away.