

Salvation by Christ

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Ephesians chapter two is going to be my text today. The Lord directed my mind and heart to this particular portion of Scripture and after I began studying it, preparing, I realized that probably not too long ago I preached from this chapter, but there is a reason the Lord directs us to come again and again to certain portions of Scripture. So I pray that he would, indeed, make this new and fresh.

I never really like to go back to old outlines. It is kind of like old manna. It gets worms and it stinks. But I went back after I had been studying and tried to think back what I had preached on. I went and looked at some of my notes and saw already one thing that I would change from what I preached before. And it is not that it is that big of a change, but entitled the previous message, "Salvation by Grace." And I believe that we need to really be more precise than that and talk about salvation by Christ, because he is full of grace and truth. There is no grace apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. And so that is why that particular title in this message, "Salvation by Christ."

And we are going to read from verse one all the way down to verse 22, the whole chapter, although I will just be preaching on verses one to 10. But as we read, I want you to consider why salvation must be and is exclusively in, by and through the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Whatever you are looking to other than him, I can tell you is false. Whatever hope you may have that is not wholly based upon who he is and what he has accomplished as revealed here in this Word is false. To have any other thought is to be an idolater. And I know that people don't like you calling them that, but that is what it is. It is idolatry. Idolatry is an idea that people form of God whether they ever make an image of it or not. It is still in their mind. And if that idea, if that thought, if that hope, if that faith is not Jesus Christ and him crucified, you have a false hope. It is no faith at all and it will not stand in the day of judgment.

So why? Why so exclusive? Why so narrow? You know, people say, "Well, you are cutting out so many." Well, it is what the Scriptures teach.

So we want to look at that. But, secondly, we want to look at how. How is Christ? How is salvation exclusively by Christ? It is not just a statement.

You know, I hear... I hear certain preachers on the radio making that statement, salvation is by Christ and Christ alone. And then as you listen to them talk, they undo the whole thing. They add something. They take it away. So we want to look at how salvation is by Christ alone. And then, thirdly, to what end. What purpose? Is this just some doctrine we hang a hat on and then go our way? Or does it have some purpose or end in our lives, how we live, how we think, how we walk, what we do?

Well, let's read this chapter.

*“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”*¹

Notice that “hath he quickened” is not in the original. It is in italic. You can read this simply:

“And you... who were dead in trespasses and sins.”²

The translators, I believe, jumped the gun a little bit. He will get to it, but think of the flow here. It is just describing some people dead in trespasses and sins.

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)³

And notice grace is subservient to Christ. That is why in studying it I went back and thought, I have got the cart before the horse. It is not... it is salvation by grace, but that grace is in Christ. So it is salvation by Christ.

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.⁴

You can't speak of kindness without it being through Christ Jesus.

¹ Ephesians 2:1.

² Ibid.

³ Ephesians 2:2-5.

⁴ Ephesians 2:6-7.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:⁵

In other words, on the whole, up until Christ came most of his dealings were with that nation of Israel. There are exceptions you go back and read in the Old Testament, but for the most part.

But verse 13.

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity...⁶

Now here it is not talking about your enmity. It is talking about that wrath that stood against you in the law. There was a true wrath of God that had to be satisfied on behalf of those for whom he died. And it says:

“...even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.”⁷

What is that new man? That is the Church. That is Jew and Gentile having been brought together in one body by one Savior and by one work, his death.

“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”⁸

There is not only enmity of the law, but there was enmity between Jew and Gentile. Yet in Christ they are one.

And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto

⁵ Ephesians 2:8-12.

⁶ Ephesians 2:13-15.

⁷ Ephesians 2:15.

⁸ Ephesians 2:16.

the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.⁹

So why is salvation exclusively by Christ alone? That is the first question I want to answer and verses one through three tell us the why. It could be no other way. There is nobody even with the best upbringing that can qualify to be called a child of God. I don't care how moral you may think that you were raised, went to church every day, did everything they told you to do. The fact is that you are a sinner and I am a sinner. And that sin unless it could be dealt with in a just and legal way and put away, that sin would have separated you forever from God. And that is what he is reminding them in these first verses that begin the chapter.

“And you.... who were dead in trespasses and sins...”¹⁰

Not only dead spiritually, but dead particularly legally. Can you imagine a man that is already condemned by the law thinking that somehow by some good that he has done in his lifetime that somehow he might get off? That is the way most people think. They think, well, you know, God is a reasonable God. God is a loving God and so even though I know I have done a lot of bad things, is how most people in their minds reason, natural minds. Still he has got to consider some of the good that I did.

Well, what does the law say? You know, that might be your feeling, but what does the law say? The laws says you are dead. You are a dead man. You who are dead in trespasses and sins. And the proof is, it is not just a declaration, but the proof is in your conversation. Turned loose with no rules or regulations or laws or anything to restrain you, where does your nature take you? It doesn't take you to God. You would run head long into condemnation. That is what it says there.

“Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world.”¹¹

I have people that argue it is not fair that God should judge me based on what Adam did. I wasn't there.

Well, how do you live? Do you live any different than Adam did now? You know, given the opportunity would you do anything different than what he did? No, you wouldn't. The proof is in your conversation. You...

“...walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”¹²

⁹ Ephesians 2:17-22.

¹⁰ Ephesians 2:1.

¹¹ Ephesians 2:2.

You notice the three influences that affect us? The world, the prince of the power of air, Satan, but you can't even say the devil made me do it, because it says the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. That is your own part that condemns you. So you have got three witnesses against you. You would open your mouth in court and wonder what the prosecuting attorney will bring, well, here is the world says, "Hey, he is just like us." There is Satan. He find ... you want him to listen to things? But your own spirit and conscience would tell you that you are condemned.

And it says in verse three:

"Among whom also we all ..." ¹³

You know, typically when you hear that word "we" sometimes you exclude yourself if you are thinking, ok, he is talking about in general. But here when they put the word all that kind of messes that up, doesn't it?

"...we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." ¹⁴

Those two are connected. You know, that is what depravity is. It doesn't mean that you are as evil as you could be. It just means that everything you do, even the best is tainted with sin. And it says:

"...were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." ¹⁵

When it says "by nature" I don't believe it is saying there that you were at one time children of wrath and now no longer so. That is not what it is talking about. But if you weigh what the nature of a child of wrath is and you look at your own nature, you would have to say there is no difference, that until Christ was pleased to reveal himself in you, you walked in rebellion. You followed the way of the flesh and of the mind and it took the grace of God in Christ.

All right. So given that if salvation were in even the smallest measure dependent upon you or me, none would be saved. That is basically what those verses are saying. And that is why salvation is exclusively by the Lord Jesus Christ alone. It is not being difficult. It is not being narrow. It is just the truth.

All right?

But secondly, how is salvation by Christ alone? There is substance here to that statement and that is what I want you to see.

¹² Ephesians 2:2.

¹³ Ephesians 2:3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Knowing that we are sinners by nature, knowing that we are by nature the children of wrath as others, knowing that we deserve the wrath of God even as others, how then is salvation by Christ alone? We see here in verses four through nine the answer.

“But God...”

It took God determining who he would save and who he would pass by. It is God’s determination. You know, you are already excluded. So don’t cry unfair. Don’t say, “Well, if I were given the opportunity I would do differently.” You wouldn’t. You are already condemned.

So now sinners are cast entirely upon the mercy of God. You have heard that statement being cast on the mercy of the court. I have heard some convicted criminals plead the mercy of the court. They have been brought to realize and to say, “I did it. You know, I am guilty.” And so they cast themselves on the mercy of the court. Many of them if the court should just grant a general mercy and say, “Ok, out of general pity, I will turn you loose,” what would happen to that individual? They would probably go right back to what they did and hope not to get caught the next time. That is just the nature of man unless there has been a true work of grace done in the heart.

“But God...”

And here is how salvation is of Christ. It says, first of all:

“...who is rich in mercy.”¹⁶

That word “mercy” can be used sometimes of his general mercies. You know, even the reprobates benefit from the general mercies of God. He is merciful. He feeds them. He gives them clothing. He gives them a living. Many of them a very successful living for a while and they benefit from those general mercies. But here I believe it is a very special mercy.

“But God, who is rich in mercy...”¹⁷

He is a merciful God. He loves to show mercy. I am reminded of that even as his child now when I know myself to be a sinner. Where does the Spirit of God take my mind back to? He is a merciful God, not like an old grandfather sitting in a rocking chair half blind and can’t see, you know, what is going on. God knows everything. He sees it all. You know, we hide it from men, but he knows the heart. Even before the thought is even formulated, he knows it. He knows us from afar. He knows us inside and out. Christ says, “I know my sheep.”

¹⁶ Ephesians 2:4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

You know, that is one reason why we don't play the hypocrite. We don't try to put on a façade. We don't try to be something other than what we are, because we know ourselves to be who we are, sinners. So that is fundamental to how salvation is by Christ, God's mercy. And then you notice it says, secondly there:

“...for his great love wherewith he loved us.”¹⁸

So we have got mercy and we have got love. What is that love? Well, it is an unconditional love, just like his mercy is unconditional. God is not reacting to what we do and think and say. I am thankful for that. You know, we react. Our kids, they do something wrong, we are ready to, you know, take it out on them. No, God is not that way. He always in every way acts toward his own in love and mercy. It is unconditional. He doesn't change. He doesn't love me less today because of some fall. He doesn't love me more today because I think somehow I am being good. He loves me. He loves me because he purposed to show mercy to me. This is an eternal love. It is an unconditional love. It is an eternal love. It is an unfailing love.

This is one of the reasons why I have said to some when they have argued that they believe that Christ died for every single person in the world and I say, “Well, why would you say that?”

And they answer, “Well, because God loves everybody in the world.”

So then my logical mind goes to this question. Well, if God really loves every single person in the world, why doesn't he save them? God is love. True love always acts in the best interest of the other and will do everything that is necessary for that individual. So if you are telling me that God loves every single person in the world and that there are people who die out there in some of the far reaches of this world or even with the gospel right around the corner, and God doesn't do everything that is within his power to bring them to hear Christ, what kind of love is that?

You know, I love him, but I am just going to let him go. Well, I will tell you this. This love of God that is described here gets the job done. When Christ said, “Of all that the Father has given me, I will not lose one,” that is love. And isn't that what Christ did? He came and paid the price and now the Spirit of God is calling out every one for whom Christ died. There is not one person in hell for whom Christ died. The love of God would forbid it. The love of God.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us...”¹⁹

The tense there goes back to some past action, some past determination to love and nothing will change. That is love.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Well, he determined it in eternity. He revealed it there at Calvary. What love? How great a love that Christ should actually lay down his life for sinners such as we are. And so that answers the question. His mercy. His love, but that is not it. You know, mercy and love doesn't just look the other way. And that is why this next part is so vital here.

How is salvation by Christ alone? His death. It required his death. That is what we are here to commemorate at the Lord's table. Christ's death. Is this just a ceremony or is there something significant here as you see this bread and you see that cup. It is not just a symbolism. It is a memorial, in memory of.

You know, we see memorials all the time of loved ones who have passed and every time I see one of those crosses and flowers by the side of the road, you know, in my mind I think there is a loved one, somebody that passed away and that is even though cars drive by every day to me it is a reminder to maybe slow down or be careful. It is a bad corner or something. That is the way I think.

But what if I knew that person? Would that memorial mean something to me? Absolutely, because there is a relationship. That is what this is that when we talk about the Lord's table. For many it is just a ceremony. They look at it and wonder, you know, what is the significance? Let's have it [?]. Not for me. When I think of the bread, when I think of the cup, what the bread represents, that unleavened bread. That represents a person. The fact that, you know, it required a body. When you hold it in your hand...

This salvation was not worked out by decree from heaven. It was worked out in a man who came and lived and died and rose again. And when we talk about death, you know, I am not one that likes blood. You know, I hate to look at it. There is just something about blood that it... that is offensive and yet that is what it required, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is what it required in order for God to be merciful. That is what it required in order for God to manifest his love. You know, and he... Christ didn't die in order to make God lovable. No, he loved... you see the verse there previous.

“...for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins...”²⁰

Even when the condemnation of the law stood against us, but what does it say?

“...hath quickened us together with Christ.”²¹

Quickened together. That is not talking about individual quickening in regeneration. That is talking about when Christ was raised from the grave. We were quickened together with Christ. There is all our salvation. If we are saved, there is all our salvation. When he died, I died. When he rose again, I rose again. When he ascended on high, I ascended. When he sat down at the right hand of the majesty of high, I sat down. Was I there? Yes

²⁰ Ephesians 2:3-4.

²¹ Ephesians 2:4.

in him. Maybe I wasn't born yet. But my salvation was wholly based upon that finished work, that finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it says there in verse six:

“And hath raised us up together...”²²

Together means every one of God's elect, every one that the Father loved, every one to whom the Father purposed to show mercy, raised together. You know we are all on equal footing here one way or another. We are all sinners worthy of condemnation. But if we are the Lord's we are all just as equally justified and forgiven and at peace with God in that standing through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no degrees of holiness or spirituality or righteousness. Together. Look at that word, together.

“...made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”²³

If that one seated there right now on the throne is not my Savior and not my substitute and not my representative, heaven is not my home. You know, it doesn't matter what I think I can do to get there. It is not my doing. It is not my getting. It is what he did, what he got, what he obtained by his death.

And it say there in verse seven, and this is the fourth thing. It took God's mercy, it took his love, it took Christ's death:

“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace...”²⁴

See, grace is that favor which God has purposed to bestow and does bestow unmerited, undeserved, unearned by us. It had to be merited by Christ. He had to earn it. It took his shed blood to do that.

So his grace and then, fifthly, you see there in kindness towards us.

Again, don't interpret grace in the sense of pity. It is not that. It is all that is essential and necessary for God to deal with us as sons. And don't take kindness in the same way.

I know we think of kindness in terms of helping somebody out. You know, we did him a kindness. But that word in the original is a lot stronger. The word “kindness” means to do everything necessary to ensure that other's safety and satisfaction.

Think of the good Samaritan. There is an example. He didn't just pour oil and wine into his wounds and then go on. He took him. He literally took him on his beast to an inn and

²² Ephesians 2:6.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ephesians 2:7.

then provided the inn keeper all that was necessary so that that one who had been wounded should be made whole. That is what kindness is. That is how it is described here.

All right. So that is how salvation is by Christ and then you say, “Well, why is it that way?”

Verse nine.

“Not of works.”²⁵

I don’t know, you know, what part of no don’t you understand? What part of not don’t you understand?

“Not of works.”²⁶

People say, “Well, it is like a man walking on a tightrope with a balance bar, you know, he is... on one end is Christ’s righteousness and on the other is... you know, I have got to balance it.”

“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”²⁷

If you have any small part in this matter, you would have reason to boast, but you have none. You have none.

So to what end? That is the final point. What end is salvation by Christ? Well:

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”²⁸

I don’t know if you know what that means, but that means there is nothing that we could ever do to condemn us, not even our unbelief. If Christ did the work, we are his workmanship. Created how? When he died, when he rose again, when he ascended on high, when he sat down did he not say it is finished? Now does that mean that I am going to run out there and want to live in unbelief? No. But what it is saying is not even my unbelief is an evil before God, because he sees it no more. It has been put away.

How many times you have beat yourself to death over something you did. And most of the time when you do, it is because of how you think others might receive it. It has nothing to do with really being repentant of what you did. It is like, “Oh, I wonder what so and so might think if they knew.”

²⁵ Ephesians 2:9.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ephesians 2:10.

What does that have to do with it?

Is there any moment at all that you can say that you are not, you don't live in unbelief? Is there any moment that you can say that somehow you have had a pure thought? You know, we tend to think so, but then we are just looking at it from our own blind prejudiced viewpoint. What this is saying, dear friends, is that so complete is the work of Christ...

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”²⁹

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh...”³⁰

I am not walking after rules and ordinances made of men and somehow trying to prove myself. I don't have to prove myself. God sees me for how he has created me through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ and I am like that Mephibosheth that David fetched to come sit at his table. Was he still lame? But, you know, when you sit at a table, you don't see those lame feet. They are tucked up underneath. Looking around that table everybody is sitting there, David's sons right along with Mephibosheth. They all look whole and they were.

That is the end to which God has been merciful and loving and sent his Son to die and gracious and kind.

You know, it is unkind. Wouldn't it be unkind for you to point out another person's fallacies every time or this isn't that right or you realize that is not right? That is hard to live around people like that. Every little thing is it is not right.

I just... I walk away. You know? Oh, but God. I am thankful that he has removed my sin as far as the east is from the west. He remembers it no more. Why? Because of Christ, because of what Christ accomplished.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Romans 8:1.