

Salvation: God's Love Forever

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, February 17, 2013

“Because The Lord Loves You . . .”

THE 'WHY'
OF
SALVATION

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THE 'WHAT'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'HOW'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WHO'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WHEN'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WHERE'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WONDER'
OF
SALVATION

In our last study, we began to consider the great “why” of salvation--why it is that God would, in mercy, save sinners like us. What is His motive? And as we discovered, one of the great motives that the Bible highlights to us for why He saved us is that He would thus be praised for the glory of His grace. The Bible talks much about the depths from which He saved us, and the heights to which He has glorified us in Christ, and the majesty of His grace that all of this demonstrates. Because there is no greater being than our God, the praise of His own glory for our salvation truly is the highest and purest motive of all.

But that's not the only motive that the Bible mentions. As a key aspect of His grace, we're told that God saved us from our sins out of pure love for us. This wonderful motive is presented to us in several great passages about salvation; and together, they give us yet another aspect of God our Savior to praise! As we consider certain key passages this morning--although we could never completely understand the depths it all--we can at least discover certain principles about God's love for us in His work of salvation toward us.

I. GOD'S LOVE IS UNDESERVED BY THOSE HE SAVES.

We sometimes sing that old hymn, “Why Should He Love Me So?”; and it's a fitting song for us who are saved by God to sing; because we can find no worthiness for that salvation in ourselves. This was first pictured in the Bible clearly for us in God's love for His chosen people Israel. Their deliverance from bondage in Egypt illustrates our own deliverance from our state of sin. In Deuteronomy 7, just before the people of Israel entered the promised land, Moses told them, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:6-8).¹ Note that there was no worth in the people of Israel themselves that would have moved God to set His love on them or choose them. In fact, God says that they were the least of all peoples. They were slaves in bondage; and yet, God delivered them and made them a great nation. This passage clearly says that the reason God set His love on them was because He loved them. That expressed reason may not make complete sense to us; but it's the only reason given--and it surely is the best!

II. GOD'S LOVE IS WHAT TAKES THE INITIATIVE IN SALVATION.

In the book of Jeremiah--an Old Testament prophetic book filled with promises of judgment--God also promises to preserve and protect for Himself a remnant of Israel. Jeremiah writes; “The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you’” (Jeremiah 31:3). Note two things from this: (1) God's love is an everlasting love that was expressed from of old--long before any worthiness in the ones who are loved could be demonstrated; and (2) it was expressed in a lovingkindness that drew the ones who are loved to Himself. This same truth--the initiative that God's love takes in salvation--is

expressed in Romans 5:6-8; “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8). While we were still sinners--while we were still in a state of enmity toward God--it was His love that took the initiative. In fact, it was a love so great that it demonstrated itself in the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for us “while we were still sinners”. In his book *Testaments of Love: A study of Love in The Bible*, Dr. Leon Morris wrote, “God’s love is not some vague, theoretical thing, a woolly benevolence. It took the hard way; it meant the cross. Paul is saying that it is the cross--and nothing less--that shows us what God’s love is.”² As it says in 1 John 4:10; “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” A “propitiation” is that which satisfies the righteous wrath of God. And it was God Himself who provided His own Son on the cross as the satisfaction of His own wrath toward our sins! Truly, in the fullest possible degree, God--in love--made the first move!

III. GOD’S LOVE EXTENDS TO THE SALVATION OF THE UNLOVELY.

We couldn’t possibly appreciate the greatness of God’s saving love for us unless we first understood how unlovable we were before He saved us. The apostle Paul describes what our condition was when God moved in love toward us: “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Ephesians 2:1-3). There is nothing attractive about a dead, rotting corpse; and spiritually, that’s what we were. But it wasn’t our worth that moved God to save us. “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (vv. 4-7). The greatness of His love--expressed in the cross--is highlighted by the greatness of our unloveliness. Again Dr. Morris writes, “God does not love us because we are fine attractive people--not at all. But God loves us despite that fact.” (p. 134).³

IV. GOD’S LOVE ACTIVELY SAVES THE SINNER FROM DEATH.

God’s love is a deeply emotional love. But it isn’t *just* emotional. It’s very practical. It takes action, and effectively results in salvation of the lost. In one of the most beloved passages of the Bible, we’re told, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17). Note that God’s love “gave”--and gave sacrificially. And what’s more, it resulted in the ones who are loved being delivered from death and granted life. Similarly, 1 John 4:9 says, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.”

V. GOD’S SAVING LOVE RESULTS IN A TRULY SAVED LIFESTYLE.

God’s great motive in our salvation--His unmerited love--should be a

transforming force in our lives. For one thing, it should motivate us to live a sincerely holy life. In a wonderful passage about God's saving love, the apostle John wrote; "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). God's love is shown in that now--even while we are far from behaving like what we should be--God says that we are His children. "Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (v. 2). And what should be the consequence of this? John goes on to say, "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (v. 3). What's more, the impact of God's love toward us in saving us should also demonstrate itself in our of love toward others. Again John writes, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:7-11).

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We could never fully understand the depths of God's love that moved Him to save unworthy sinners like us. But it's greatly to the benefit of our souls that we--by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit--grasp something of it. The apostle Paul once wrote that He was praying for his believing friends; that, among other things,

. . . you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:14-19).

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version; copyright 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.

²Leon Morris, *Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981 (p. 133-4).

³*Ibid.*, p. 134.