



## Salvation (Things we believe)

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 5th June 2022 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

### Introduction

Good evening. Let's pray.

Tonight, we are continuing our series looking at things we believe as Christians. Of course, there are many things we believe - but in particular the things we have been looking at so far, and will do over these 7 weeks are foundational to our faith. While there may be room to disagree on some smaller topics in life that the Bible speaks little about, that's not the case here - for these beliefs, these doctrines, are not found in just a single verse of the Bible, but rather are spoken of in many places.

As a quick reminder, so far we've looked at:

- Creation
- Infallibility (of the Bible)
- Incarnation (God with us)
- Resurrection
- Baptism

Tonight, we're going to study the topic of Salvation, then next week Matt will be concluding our series looking at Jesus' return.

- **Salvation**
- Jesus' return

Largely, these topics have been in the logical order you'd expect - from creation to Jesus' return. But as Pete noted last week when he taught on baptism, that is something that should follow in response to salvation, not precede it. And rather, we taught them in this order purely down to how our calendars worked.

As we've gone through each of these Bible studies we've been sure to note what we read in 2 Timothy:

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

That is, the Bible, inspired by God, is profitable. For what? For doctrine - that is; what we believe. For reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Why? That as Christians we might have all we need, that we might do all we should. And if we move away from what the Bible teaches, we won't be adequately prepared.

So then, let's begin looking at tonight's topic of Salvation, and see what the Bible has to say.

## **What are we talking about?**

Salvation is the good news of the gospel. It's the very heart of it. Not social or practical action (though necessary, and good) - but salvation. Not church, or friendships, or community - but salvation. *That's* what the gospel is all about - that's why Jesus came. We read...

### **John 3:16**

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.

The gospel is simple enough for a child to understand, yet marvellous enough that the greatest theologian can't adequately explain it. This verse is perhaps the best known in the Bible, for good reason, and you'll see 3:16 banners pop up everywhere from concerts to sports events, on bookmarks and t-shirts. And while those can be good reminders of this verse, this verse is not the only thing that the Bible has to say on the topic, for we read Jesus' words in the very next verse...

### **John 3:17**

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Now, that should cause us to think - if Jesus didn't come to condemn but to save, *what was it* that we needed saving from? We get our answer in the following verses...

### **John 3:18-20**

He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

That is, we were already condemned because of our sin, and ultimately, men will be condemned because of their refusal to accept Christ as their Saviour - their only hope to rescue them from their sin and the consequence of it. So it follows that to better understand salvation, we need to better understand sin.

## **Why do we need saving?**

So where does sin come from? Well, God could have created robots, but instead decided to create us with free choice, and thus, the very real possibility of sin. We read of this choice in Genesis chapter 2:

### **Genesis 2:15-17**

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Clear instruction, and clear choice. We then read at the start of chapter 3:

**Genesis 3:1-5**

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Satan uses the oldest trick in the book, causing Eve to doubt what God had said. Promising that good will come from sin - and that it will be pleasant. And he'll try that with you today - and if you're not careful, you'll do as many do, and buy into that lie as Eve did...

**Genesis 3:6-7**

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Sin entered the world through free choice, and man died spiritually, resulting in separation between a good God, and sinful man. Note how Adam & Eve's conscience kicked in and convicted them:

**Genesis 3:8-13**

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Adam blames Eve. Eve blames the serpent. Neither taking responsibility for their actions. But they were both to blame, and they hide from God. Remember Jesus' words we read?

**John 3:20**

For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

That's exactly what happened here. Adam & Eve hid following their sin. And their sin cost them more than they would ever have realised. It wasn't merely been thrown out of the Garden of Eden - no, it was far more serious than that.

And following that terrible event we call the fall, every human born since has sinned too. We've made the same choice. Every single one of us. In Romans chapter 3, quoting Psalm 14, the apostle Paul writes:

**Romans 3:10-11**

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.

And while we may not care to admit it, we know this to be true - for we all know that you don't need to teach a child to be naughty - they do it naturally. It's their sinful nature kicking in.

Regardless of the specific sins we've committed, the very existence of sin in our lives leaves us in real trouble. In fact, that's an understatement. So, what hope do we have?

**How can we be saved?**

Well, the first thing many suppose will save them is God's goodness. Especially when we only tell them that God loves them. Yes that's true, but it's only part of the picture. Yes, God so loved the world that He gave His only son... however, the eternal life He promises is not simply given to everyone on the basis He is good.

Rather, without a Saviour you'll face God's wrath because of your sin. Later in John 3 we read:

**John 3:35-36**

The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

This wrath is spoken of elsewhere, including Colossians chapter 3, 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, and Revelation chapter 6 which says of a moment still to come:

**Revelation 6:17**

For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

You see, the problem is that the very goodness of God which some rely on to save them, actually requires that God, in His goodness, will see sin dealt with - it will see those that have sinned held to account and judged. And no-one, will be able to stand.

So if God's goodness won't save us, but rather will see us judged as is only fair, then could our own goodness save us? That's what some have believed, specifically that keeping God's law, the 10 Commandments, could save them. But that's not the purpose of the law. We read in Romans 3:

**Romans 3:19-20**

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

So rather than dealing with sin, God's law exposes it. James even warns us:

**James 2:10**

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

The law holds us up to God's standards, and we see how far we've fallen short - just like looking in a mirror shows you how dirty you are and that you need a wash! Indeed, we read about the function of the law in Psalm 19:

**Psalm 19:7a**

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul...

That is, the law lets us know we need a Saviour. It lets us know how very bad we are, so that we might seek Jesus. Paul writes in Galatians chapter 3:

**Galatians 3:24**

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

But *how* can we be justified by faith? Well, we can summarise that in one word: GRACE.

There's a good acronym of grace that tells us more: God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

In other words, we are beneficiaries of eternal life and all that God has given us because Jesus died in our place on the cross. You see, God, because He is good, cannot let sin go unpunished. And we, cannot undo our sin by doing good. Good works don't outweigh bad works. That won't work in a court of law, and it won't work before the throne of God.

Someone had to pay for our sin with their life - that's the punishment that was due to us. And that's what Jesus did by dying on the cross in our place and rising from the dead. Like having a fine to pay, but someone else paying it for you; justice is done, the demands of the law are satisfied, but at no cost to you. But again, it is not automatically applied to all. We read in Acts:

**Acts 4:12**

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Rather, something has to take place. And once again it comes down to choice, for God will not force His salvation on you any more than He'll prevent you from sinning through your choice in the first place. And this choice is whether to repent, receive, and believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour, or not. Speaking of the need for repentance, Mark records Jesus words:

**Mark 2:17**

When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

But it is necessary to believe in the completed work of Christ, as Paul notes in Romans 10, saying...

**Romans 10:9b**

...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

No works necessary. Yes, choice is necessary. But it is Jesus' works, and not your own that will save you. Not your goodness, but His - not because He let you off the hook, but because Jesus died in your place, and thus satisfied the righteous wrath of God.

That is salvation! Not that you may have a nice set of friends at church, or a cause to believe in. But that justice would be done in your sin being paid for, AND you would have eternal life. What a marvellous thing this is!

### Can we lose our salvation?

Now before we reach some final conclusions this evening, I want to note one thing - that some wonder if, indeed some believe that you can lose your salvation - that you can only keep it by doing certain things, by persevering in your faith. Now we should persevere, but that is a result of salvation, not a requirement to maintain it. To put it another way, if salvation cannot be obtained by works, what makes you think you can retain it through works?

The apostle Paul addressed this very topic to the believers in the Galatian church:

**Galatians 3:1-3**

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Furthermore, Jesus said as recorded in John chapter 10:

**John 10:27-30**

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

No-one is able to take your salvation from you, including you. However, what we are to do is to be sure that we are actually saved in the first place. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

**2 Corinthians 13:5-6**

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

The worst thing you can do is to think you're a Christian, when in fact you're just masquerading as one. You do not want to be one of those who will say Lord, Lord - but to whom Christ will say "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

Instead, examine yourself to see if you are in the faith - to see if you really are reliant on Christ for your salvation. Test yourself - be honest about where you stand. Because while you may be able to convince others that you are a Christian, by saying the right words, by going to church, by keeping your language clean, you will never convince God that you know Him if you don't.

### Our response

How do we respond to all this? Well, it depends on whether you are already saved. If you are not, then your priority is simply that you need to be. God wants everyone to come to repentance, but He won't force you. You have to make that choice to accept or reject Him, and all that Jesus has done for you. Don't buy the lie that God will let you off because you're basically a good person. Neither buy the lie that there's so much wrong with you that God doesn't want to save you. An American evangelist called DL Moody put it well...

If the devil cannot make a man feel that he is good enough without being saved, then he will tell him he is so bad the Lord will have nothing to do with him.

**DL Moody**

Listen - Jesus died for you. He paid for all of your sin, so that you don't have to. But you must come to Him in repentance and faith if you want to be saved. As we've read already, there is no other name under Heaven by which you must be saved. There is no other way. This is THE way.

Now, if you are saved, if you do know Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, then there is only one response - gratitude. That is not spelt the same as indifference. John writes in his first letter:

#### **1 John 3:1-3**

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! 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. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

So live in thankfulness for your salvation. While grace is opposed to earning, it is not opposed to effort - and you and I really should live our lives in response to the gospel. We will not get any better news - ever!

Therefore, spend time with your Saviour in reading your Bible, in conversation with Him in prayer, in fellowship with those He has saved by being actively part of a church (which is way more than turning up on a Sunday), and by never forgetting the sacrifice He made, through the remembrance of communion. God's grace should change everything about us - including our worship to Him. I encourage you to do a keyword search of "Salvation" in Psalms - there is so much there! We don't sing because we like the tunes, enjoy the atmosphere, or even because we like the words. We sing to worship Him! He is the focus of our worship, not us. Consider the picture we have of what is to come in Heaven:

#### **Revelation 7:9-12**

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honour and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

## **Application questions**

As we close then, let's consider a few things...

- Is Jesus your Saviour? If not, now is the time to do something about it
- If yes? How are you living in response?
- If we have such good news in the gospel, why don't we share it more?

See...

#### **Acts 4:12-13**

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

**Let's pray.**