

Trinity: The Sweetness of Salvation
Sermon 5-21-17
Pastor Curtis Dehmey

Ephesians 1:3-23

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

¹⁵I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Message:

(Play <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB-vXY5bOFI>) “⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” Joanna is a perfect example of what I hope many of us have experienced. That we have been adopted by Christ. We didn’t deserve this adoption. We didn’t earn this adoption. But Jesus chose us.

You know, when we talk about salvation, we talk about the word “salvation” exclusively referring to Christ’s salvation. But the word “salvation” isn’t just used in the New Testament or to Christ. “Salvation” is something that was spoken of long before Jesus came to earth. In Genesis 49:18 in Jacob’s last words to his sons, “I wait for your salvation, O LORD.” In 2 Samuel 22:51, David is singing a song of thanksgiving, “He is a tower of salvation for his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed...” In Job 13:16, Job is responding to one of his friends Zophar, “This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him.” The word “salvation” is rampant in the Psalms. The last instance of this word in the Old Testament is in Habakkuk 3:18, “...yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation.”

Some of us may be familiar with salvation. We talk about out in our society in a lot of different ways. Someone breaks their addiction from smoking. While hard and trying at times to break this addiction, once it is ultimately broken, it brings a sense of freedom. They are no longer chained to the cigarette. That chain is broken. Or maybe we get of out a mountain of debt. When we pay-off that last outstanding balance, we feel this sense of relief that we are no longer chained to a credit card company, to a mortgage or a car loan. There is this huge sense of relief. So, many of us may be familiar or at the very least, long for, salvation or freedom from the chains that bind us.

But there is something that we desire even greater. While God can offer us salvation in all the previously mentioned, it doesn’t compare to the salvation we receive through Christ. The salvation of our sins. Have you ever felt so guilty by your actions that it weighed on your soul? That it just drugged you down. You couldn’t take it back. You couldn’t make it right. But what you did or said, created irreparable damage. I have had many of these times in my own life. And the only way for me to get past these mistakes and my guilty conscious is to rely on the salvation that I have in Christ. Because only He can offer the freedom from my sin that I seek. Verse 7, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us.” He lavished on us. We didn’t deserve it, but for some reason or another God chose us.

But why did God choose us? Just to refresh your memory, God chose each of us from the beginning of time. Before you or I were born. When he created Adam and Eve, God had great plans in store for humanity. But He gave humanity one gift that led to estrangement. Free will. And in that free will we chose independence from God. That we wanted to do things on our own. And all through the Old Testament through worship practices, Kings and Kingdoms, there is this longing to be restored to God because humanity acknowledged their mistake when they chose independence from God. And so when Jesus comes to earth, through his sacrifice on the cross, God chooses us. Now, this isn't a passage that Paul intended for a theological argument of predestination and election. Paul is saying that God chooses each and every one of us. God wants all of humanity to be restored unto Him. God wants us all to experience the sweetness and euphoric nature of salvation in Him. ³“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.” Skipping ahead to 8b, “With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.” Why has God chosen us to inherit this redemption? This salvation from our sin? To praise God. To reflect his glory. That as others see redemption in us and in our lives, that this will lead others to God's redemption. That when someone says, “What happened to you?” That you can proclaim that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has saved you and released you from whatever sins weighed on your soul and life.

Do you recall that moment when you accepted the gift of Christ's Salvation? Do you remember that weight being lifted from your soul? For some of you, it may not have been any singular moment, but multiple moments of experiencing Christ's salvation. You may have been raised Christian and in the church. And at different moments when you allowed for Jesus to bring redemption and salvation into your life, you experienced great freedom from the captivity and pain of sin. And for those of us who made a decision long ago to follow Jesus, God wants us to continue to taste of that sweetness of salvation. That our faith is not a once and

done deal. That it's not in some bygone past, but that we are continuing to taste the sweetness of salvation.

If we go back to verse 9, "...he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ..." So in one sense, we are privileged to know of Christ's salvation. That we have committed ourselves to His saving grace. But on the other hand Paul seems to indicate that we are not a finished work starting in verse 17, "¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power." In other words, we have made an initial commitment, but we are in process to completion. We can trust that by confessing our sins and claiming salvation in Christ that Christ has forgiven all past, current and future sins. And that we will inherit eternal life. But yet, we still live in this world. We can still create damage. And so we need continual refinement in this place and time. And to be continually refined, or to speak technically, "sanctified," we need to return to that sweetness of salvation that we have in Jesus Christ. Some of us have wandered away from salvation. Some of us may have thought that we were a complete work or good enough. But Jesus isn't done working in us. For a people that believe that they are finished work, are a dead people in Christ. God can do very little with the faith of people that believe they are complete or good enough. God wants us to stay connected to the sweetness of salvation that we have in Christ. And how do we do this? Through the seal of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit keeps salvation at work in our lives.

And a people that has salvation working in lively and active ways, there is this reputation. When Paul writes to the church of Ephesus, there seems to be some indication that the people have a reputation. Starting in verse 15, "¹⁵I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers." Are we a people that has a reputation of Christ's salvific work alive and well in our lives? Or have we stunted or rejected that salvific work from continuing to speak in our lives? For whatever reason. You know, when I look at the decline of this church, one of the first questions I ask is, "What's the reputation of Providence Church in the community?" And with the little interactions I've had in the community, we have no reputation. And for some a negative reputation. I have yet to meet someone who says, "Yeah...I've heard of Providence Church. There seems to be some really great things happening there." Now, I don't say this to shame you. I say this to say that no advertising or publicity blitz is going to

change our reputation in the community. The best way for the community to see that great things are happening. That Jesus is really working here. Is through all of you. Is through word-of-mouth. It's through you speaking highly of this congregation. It's through us being out there in the community speaking and testifying of the salvation that we know in Christ. For the many and countless ways that Christ has freed us from sin. That's how we build the kingdom. That's how we work towards all of humanity being God's chosen.

To summarize, are we still tasting that sweetness of salvation? Do we know it? Or have we decided to move-on from the salvation that we have in Christ? I hope you haven't chosen to reject the ongoing work of salvation in your life. I hope that you have chosen to continue to engage in God's continual work in your lives. What do you need to be freed of? What do you need to confess? Where can you recognize sin in your own life? Where do you need forgiveness or maybe to forgive? Where can you testify of this salvation that you have in Christ? What is your salvation story? To close, I'd like to show you one last testimony of salvation at work. (Play <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBY13yYtAZI>)