

head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory."

What was it about salvation that made the apostle Paul break out into spontaneous, exuberant praise? He began to understand what had happened to him. If you could catch a glimpse, if your spiritual eyes could be opened to who you are in Jesus and what has happened to you in Jesus, you would also break out in spontaneous praise and adoration.

I. OUR SALVATION WAS PLANNED BY THE FATHER

1. He chose us in the past

First of all, our salvation was planned by the Father. It says in verse 4, "he chose us in him before the creation of the world." Let me share two glorious truths with you about how Jesus and the Father and the Spirit have already worked in salvation. First, the Father chose us in the past. If you are a Christian, He chose you and he chose me from the foundation of the world that we were to be Christians, that we were to be his children. If I were to ask you, "When did your Christian life begin?" Some of you might say like Buddy said, "When I was 8 years old, I became a Christian. No. Your salvation began before Adam and Eve were created. Your salvation began before God said, "Let there be light," because the Bible says, "before the foundation of the world, God chose you." He says, "I'm going to choose you to be one of my children." Isn't that great to know? That means is you did not initiate salvation, God initiated it. It was not your idea, it was God's idea.

Don't you like to be chosen? Remember when you were a kid playing kickball, or softball, or "Red Rover?" There were usually two captains and they would choose sides. They'd say, "I choose you." "I choose you." Kids love to get there and say, "Choose me! Choose me!" I remember one time I was playing football with some older boys and they were choosing sides, and I was the very last one chosen. Wasn't that great for a kid's self-esteem? They chose everybody else and then one of the captains pointed at me and said, "I guess you guys can have him." That's so hard when you are not chosen. I have good news for you though: In the most important choice that was ever made for you, God chose you! This is called the Doctrine of Election. It's a wonderful Bible doctrine, but sometimes it's misunderstood. Some people say, "If God chose me to be a Christian, what responsibility do I have?" God chose you and then you chose to accept God's will for your life.

John Calvin, one of the great reformers, was a wonderful Christian and had many wonderful things to write. I love to read John Calvin, but he took this Doctrine of Election even further than most of us believe. It has often been called "Calvinism" or "hyper-Calvinism," which basically takes the Doctrine of Election and says, "God has already chosen who is going to be saved. He has already pre-determined and chosen who is going to be lost, and there is nothing in the world that we can do about it." In fact, in the 18th century when William Carey, the father of the modern missionary movement, stood up in a church in England and begged the pastors and the Christians to send missionaries to Africa, an old Calvinistic preacher stood up and said, "Young man, sit down! When God gets ready to save the heathens, he will do it without your help,"

meaning there is nothing we can do. We are called "missionary Baptists," because we do not believe in that "hyper-Calvinism." We believe it is our job to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to people who have never heard it. There are Calvinistic Baptist churches that do not support or practice "missions." That's why we call ourselves "missionary Baptists." This idea of hyper-Calvinism taken to its extreme says, "God's already determined some are going to be saved eternally, God's already determined some are going to be damned eternally and there is nothing you can ever do about it." The flaw in that is it doesn't recognize that God wants *everybody* to be saved. How do we know this? Look at 2 Peter 3:9. "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." I believe hyper-Calvinism takes the Doctrine of Election, too far. It says, "You're number six; you're in a fix. You're number seven; you're going to heaven. You're number eight; you're too late. You're number nine; you're fine." God wants everybody to be saved. He offers you the gift of eternal life. He has chosen you now; you must choose that. But, God knows in advance who is going to take the gift and who is going to reject it. You might think that sounds like God is manipulating your choice. No. He just knows he is not making you choose. Sometimes people are a little confused by that.

Let me illustrate it. When I go home today, if my wife sets a bowl of rice and gravy down and right beside that she sets a bowl of Brussels sprouts on the table before my two daughters and says, "Okay, girls choose which one you want to eat." I know which one they're going to choose. I know enough about my daughters to know their choice is going to be the rice and gravy, but I am not manipulating them. I'm not forcing them—I just know. God in his foreknowledge knows who is going to say, "Yes" and who's going to say "No." That's the beautiful Doctrine of Election. He chose you in the past.

2. He changes us for the future

Here's the second glorious truth about God the Father's part in salvation. He changes us for the future. Look at verse 4. "He chose us from the foundation of the world" but he chose for us "to be holy and blameless in his sight." By the way, you may say, "Why did God choose me?" Look at the last part of verse 5. He just did it because it gave him pleasure to choose you to be his child. He chose us in the past, but now he changes us for the future. Now, this is the Doctrine of Predestination. Some people misunderstand this. Predestination says, "God chose you, and he already has predetermined what he wants you to become." What is it? "Holy and blameless." You say, "Wait a minute, pastor. I'm a Christian, but you know I'm not always holy and I'm not always blameless. There's still sin in my life." Here's what predestination is. God takes you from where you are and he wants to begin to change you into what he wants you to become. He wants you to become "holy and blameless." Look at Romans 8:29, one of the greatest verses in the Bible. One of the dangers of a Bible verse is being right after a very popular Bible verse, because a lot of times people don't notice it. Romans 8:28 is one of the greatest verses in the Bible and what comes right after that? This glorious truth "For those God foreknew" that means he chose "he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn [Jesus] among many brothers." God has already predetermined what he wants you to become. He wants you to conform to the image of Jesus.

What is God's will for your life? People say, "I want to know God's will." God's will for your

life is to be like Jesus, who is holy and blameless. Granted, when Jesus comes back to rapture the church or you die and you go to be with Jesus, you’re going to be like him, totally and absolutely—but, right now God is trying to change you gradually to be more like Jesus. Are you more like Jesus today than you were one week ago? Are you more like Jesus today than you were one year ago? That’s God’s will for your life to conform you to the image of his Son Jesus. He wants to change you.

I heard a funny story about an old West Texas rancher. He grew up on a ranch and had always lived there. He visited Odessa once years ago after they had built their first three-story building. He had never seen a three-story building or an elevator. He walked into the lobby and was looking around. He saw the elevator doors open and an old lady with a cane walked into it and the doors closed. He saw the lights blink a little bit and in just a few minutes, the doors opened again and a beautiful young girl walked out. His eyes got as big as saucers and he said to his son, “Go get your Ma—we want to run her through that thing a couple of times.” That’s exactly what God wants to do to you. When his elevator comes down which is his Holy Spirit he wants to take you and change you to make you like Jesus.

What does it mean to be like Jesus? Does that mean I have to have long hair, grow a beard and wear a robe and sandals?” No. We’re talking about the inner qualities of Jesus. If you want to know what those are, they’re the fruits of the spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, self-control as you are becoming more like Jesus. That is God’s predestination for you. Don’t get tripped up on that word. What does the word “destination” mean? If you going to get on an airplane at Pounds Field and you are going to end up at DFW, your destination has already been predetermined. If you get on the right plane, you’ll get to that right destination. Your luggage may not, but you will get to your final destination. That is what God is saying. “Your destination that I have already prearranged is for you to be like Jesus.”

II. OUR SALVATION WAS PURCHASED BY THE SON

Number two, our salvation was purchased by the Son. Paul breaks into exuberant praise about the fact that Jesus purchased our salvation. He bought it. Look at verse 7, “In him we have REDEMPTION through his blood, the FORGIVENESS of sins in accordance with the riches of God’s GRACE.” Here’s the problem: God chose you and me to be his children. Our problem is our spiritual ancestors, Adam and Eve, chose to sin. And when you and I were born, we were born into the wrong family. We were born into Adam’s family. The Bible says, “In Adam, all men die, but in Christ, all are made alive.” We were born in the wrong family. We chose the wrong spiritual forefathers even though we didn’t have much of a choice. Then, there came a time in our lives when we also made the wrong choice. There came a time when we got old enough to understand the difference between right and wrong, and we looked at both of them and we willingly chose to sin. That means is you and I are sinners by nature and by choice. God chose us and then we were born and made the wrong choices, so God has to do something to fix the problem. So, he sent Jesus to redeem us, to forgive us, to show us his grace.

Blessing #1: Redemption

Last week I said you have been the recipient of all kinds of spiritual blessings. It’s like you have

already received a \$12 million inheritance, you just may not be acting like it. A couple of people asked what some of those blessings are. Let’s look at three of them you possess. Number one is redemption. What does it mean? It’s a good Bible word. We sing “Redeemed, redeemed, how I love to proclaim it.” What is redemption? Jesus bought us back with His blood. We do not really have the point of reference for redemption that the Biblical audience did, because in Bible times there were more than six million slaves in the Roman Empire. Slaves were bought and sold, bartered just like people go out to Canton once a month and sell their goods and buy goods that’s how they bought and sold slaves. It was possible for a person to buy a slave and then to set them free. That’s what the word redemption really means, because we don’t have slaves and we have never been slaves, we have a hard time understanding it. This is what it means spiritually. You and I were slaves to our own sin and Jesus Christ comes to the slave block and he says, “I’m going to buy that person back so I can set him free.” Do you know what the price is? The Bible says he redeemed us with his blood. Wouldn’t you think he could have paid with one of his sermons, like the Sermon on the Mount? That wasn’t good enough. Don’t you think Jesus could have purchased us with one of his healing miracles, like when he healed the leper? No, that wasn’t enough. Jesus Christ had to go to a cross, he had to climb on that cross and had to die and shed his blood to redeem us. That’s the price he paid. In order to do that, Jesus had to become a man that was God in the flesh becoming one of us so that we could identify with him and he could identify with us.

In his book, *In the Eye of the Storm*, Max Lucado tells the story of a little boy who goes to a pet store and looks in the window and he sees a bunch of little puppies. He goes inside to the owner and says, “Sir, I want to buy one of those puppies. How much are they? The owner says, “They are twenty bucks, son.” The little boy says, “I don’t have twenty bucks, but you keep that puppy and I’m going to make the money.” The owner said, “Son, that puppy probably will be gone by the time you get the money. They sell real fast.” The little boy said, “That puppy will still be here. I know it!” So, the little boy went off and he washed windows and he cleaned yards and did errands until he had twenty dollars. Then, he rushed into the pet store and with those bills wadded up in his little fist he put them down on the counter and said, “Now, I want my puppy.” The owner said, “Go over there and choose your puppy.” The little boy went over there and sure enough the puppy he wanted was there. He picked that puppy up and the owner noted it was the runt of the litter and it had a broken, crippled leg, a birth defect. The owner says, “Son, you don’t want *that* dog because that dog can never run after you. That dog will never be able to fetch. I’ve got all of those healthy puppies. Son, don’t you want one of those healthier puppies?” The little boy said, “No, sir. This is the one I want.” He took the puppy and he started walking out. For the first time the owner noticed the little boy had braces on his legs and he knew what it was to be crippled. He bought that little puppy because he could identify with it and he could relate to it. He could see there was something worthwhile in that puppy, so he bought it. You see, that’s what Jesus did for us. He came down here and he became one of us and he looked at us in all of our crippled condition of sin, and when he died on the cross the Bible says he took all of our sins upon himself, and he became sin. That’s what it means to be redeemed.

Blessing #2: Forgiveness

Then there’s the second thing Jesus did for us, he removed the penalty of our sin. The Bible says there is a penalty attached to sin. The Old Testament said “The soul that sins, it shall surely die.”

The New Testament says, “The wages of sin is death.” That word death means spiritual separation from God forever and ever in a place called Hell. We were born with a nature to sin and then we chose to sin. The Bible says the penalty we earn (like wages) is death; separation from God forever and ever. Let’s be honest: Every single person in this room has sinned—we have all sinned. We all deserve Hell. But forgiveness is Jesus Christ stepping up to you and saying, “If you trust me and believe in me, I will remove the penalty for your sin. Every sin you’ve ever committed, every sin you will ever commit, I remove the penalty of it. God will look at you and write across your life FORGIVEN the debt is paid.”

Gordon McDonald is a pastor in the Northwest. He said he had a dream one night where a bunch of people were walking around in a room. (like a party or something) You know how we all put on these little name tags that say, “Hello, my name is _____”? he said everybody was wearing one. His said, “Hello, my name is Gordon.” Underneath that it said, “adulterer.” He looked at somebody and their name tag said, “Hello, my name is John ‘liar.’” Somebody else’s tag said, “Hello, my name is Mary ‘drunkard.’” He noticed everybody in the room had a sin underneath their name. Everybody there was a sinner. Then, he said in this dream, Jesus Christ walked into the party. One by one he started taking those name tags off and started putting them upon himself, because that’s what Jesus did on the cross. The Bible says, “He became sin.” He carried our sins in his body and he forgave us of our sins. If that doesn’t get you excited, you are probably unexcitable, because the Bible says, “Jesus has taken your sins. He has separated them as far as the East is from the West he has put them behind his back he remembers them no more he has buried them in the depths of the sea and he put a sign up that says, “No Fishing Here.” He has totally, absolutely forgiven you. If that’s not a spiritual blessing, I don’t know what is.

Blessing #3: Grace

There’s a third thing and it gets even better: It is grace. Grace is when Jesus treats us as if we had never sinned. He looks at you and me in our sinful condition and says, “That’s okay. I’m looking at you through the filter of my grace and the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” We’re going to study a lot about grace in Ephesians and one of the things I am excited about is helping you understand what grace is. If you can catch a glimpse of what grace is, you will never again sing that song, “Amazing grace,” as repetition and routine, because you will understand that grace really is amazing. Grace is God giving you what you *need*, not what you deserve. I deserve the same thing you deserve, death, hell, because we have all sinned and the wages of sin is death. You’d better be careful making a statement like this. “I’m not getting what I deserve.” You’d better be careful, God may GIVE you what you deserve. Grace is not giving you what you deserve, grace is giving you what you need.

Now, look at that list of spiritual blessings: Redemption through his blood, forgiveness of sins and grace. Verse 8 says, “he lavished us with his grace.” That is the verb form of the word grace that means he has given you so much grace that it is a verb! He *graced* you; he is gracious towards you. Now, you may be saying, “That’s pretty interesting. It kind of makes me feel good on the inside to know that I have been redeemed, and I have been forgiven, and I have been the recipient of grace, but how does it apply to my life, Monday through Saturday?” Remember what God’s will is for your life? To make you like Jesus. That means you ought to live redemptively toward other people. It means that you ought to live being willing to forgive other people. You

ought to live with an attitude of graciousness and grace toward other people. Jesus is living that kind of life and he wants to live it through you and you ought to become more like that. You are going to have an opportunity to forgive somebody who doesn't deserve to be forgiven this week. They need it, but they don't deserve it. Are you going to be like Jesus? This week you will have the opportunity to demonstrate grace to somebody. To show them love and kindness when they do not deserve it are you going to be like Jesus?

CONCLUSION

Corey Tenboom was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II, because she and her family harbored Jews people from the Nazis. She was subjected to terrible torture and shame in that concentration camp. Her older sister died in there. But, Corey Tenboom was—and even after that—a committed Christian who went around speaking. Several years after the war, she was in Munich, Germany, speaking in a little church about God's grace and forgiveness. After the service she says people were talking and fellowshiping when she felt a tap on her shoulder. She turned around and a large, old man stood there and he put out his hand. He said, “Ja, fräulein. The grace of God is marvelous isn't it?” She started to shake his hand until she looked up into his face and immediately recognized him as one of the cruelest guards in the concentration camp, one who had treated her with abuse and shame, but had since become a Christian. She said her hand was locked at her side. She could not raise her hand to shake his hand, but then she said, “Dear God. Give me grace. Give me grace. Give me grace.” She reached out and took the hand of that guard who had abused her and said, “Ja wohl, God's grace is so marvelous!”

It is only the grace of God that can give you the power to forgive people who have hurt you and mistreated you. But, I promise you, no one has ever done anything as bad to you as we all did to Jesus Christ. Because he has forgiven us and shown us grace, he wants us to be forgiving and show grace to others.

OUTLINE

I. OUR SALVATION WAS PLANNED BY THE FATHER

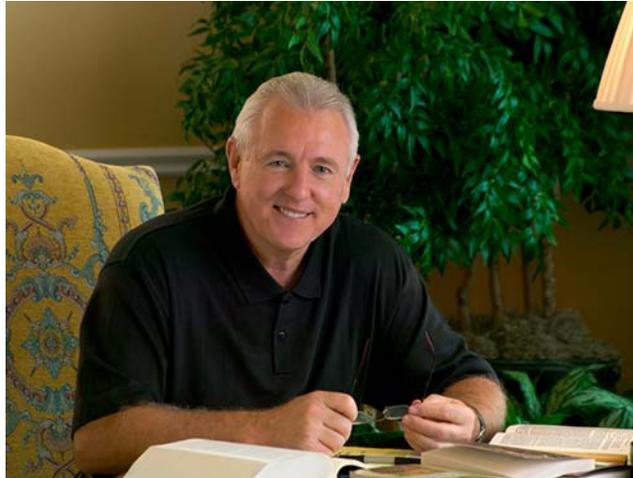
1. He chose us in the past
2. He changes us for the future

II. OUR SALVATION WAS PURCHASED BY THE SON

Blessing #1: Redemption

Blessing #2: Forgiveness

Blessing #3: Grace



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes