

INTRODUCTION

This is a message about life. I saw a Peanuts Cartoon where there was a conversation between Lucy and Charlie Brown. Lucy said, "Life is like a deck chair on a cruise ship. Some people place it so they can see where they are going. Others place the chair so they can see where they've been; and some place it so they can see where they are at present." Charlie Brown wrinkled his forehead and said, "And I can't even get mine unfolded." Do you ever feel that way?

Many people want to know if there is life after death. But a more important consideration is, "Is there life after birth?" We are all born dead in our trespasses and sins and we really don't start living until we receive Jesus who gives us real life. That's the theme of this section: How Jesus gives us life. In these few verses Jesus used the word life (*zoe*) twelve times. He's not talking about *bios*—physical life; He's offering a quality of life that we would call abundant, peaceful, purposeful, living." That's what *zoe* is.

John 6:35-46 CSB. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again. But as I told you, you've seen me, and yet you do not believe. Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. This is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me but should raise them up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Therefore the Jews started complaining about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They were saying, "Isn't this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

Jesus answered them, "Stop complaining among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'And they will all be taught by God.' [Isaiah 54:13] Everyone who has listened to and learned from the Father comes to me - not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He has seen the Father."

Since we looked at the verses about manna in the previous message, let's skip down to John 6:60-71 CSB.

"Therefore, when many of his disciples* heard this, they said, "This teaching is hard. Who can accept it?"

Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were complaining about this, asked them, "Does this offend you? Then what if you were to observe the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? The Spirit is the one who gives life. The flesh doesn't help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are

some among you who don't believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning those who did not believe and the one who would betray him.) He said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father."

From that moment, many of his disciples turned back and no longer accompanied him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, "You don't want to go away too, do you?"

Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Jesus replied to them, "Didn't I choose you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil." He was referring to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, one of the Twelve, because he was going to betray him."

* This refers to the large crowd of followers, not just the twelve disciples

We've been in John 6 for the past month. It starts with Jesus feeding the 5,000. Then He walked on water at night to calm the fears of the disciples. When the mob found Jesus wanting more free food He shared some powerful truth about salvation. That's why I'm calling this the Wonder of Salvation. I want us to examine four aspects of salvation in this message. Each subject begins with a "C." We'll consider God's call, God's choice, our confidence, and the reality of the counterfeit.

1. THE CALL: You must believe in Jesus to find LIFE.

Jesus said, "For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:40 CSB)

God has called each of us to come to Jesus for eternal life. Have you answered His call? So what is eternal life? If you ask most people and they say, "living forever, existing forever." The only thing wrong with that is that most people are so miserable right now that the idea of existing forever isn't very attractive, it would be eternal misery.

Because all human beings know we are aging, there has always been a quest to slow down the steady march of the years. I grew up on the Florida/Alabama state line and not too far from our town was a little town named Ponce de León. We used to compete against Ponce de León High School in sports. Ponce de León Springs is a state park where there is a huge natural pool that is supplied by two springs producing 14 million gallons of water a day. I swam in the crystal-clear water several times. The water is crystal clear and a cool 68 degrees.

Juan Ponce de León was a Spanish explorer. In 1513, he was the forty-year-old governor of Puerto Rico. Like everyone else, he was aging. His hair was graying, and wrinkles started appearing. He had heard a legend of a Fountain of Youth from the natives, so he sailed to Florida and landed at what is now St. Augustine. He trekked across the state. And the legend is that he found these amazing springs in Northwest Florida. He drank the water, and he swam in

the water. He was hoping this fountain would erase the wrinkles from his brow, and the stoop out of his shoulders. He wanted something to reverse the decay of his teeth and make his hair as black as a raven's wing. But only seven years later, a quick Indian with a dull tomahawk ended Ponce de León's life.

Jesus didn't come to add years to your life, but to add LIFE to your years! Eternal life is not a quantity of life, it is not how long it is, it's how deep it is, how wide, how wonderful it is, how good it is.

The world has an idea of what it means to really live. Think about a television commercial where a couple is sitting on lounge chairs on the beach under palm trees, and the surf is gently lapping the shore. They are relaxed and happy. And she turns and says, "Oh, this is the life." She's not talking about biological living. She's talking about a sense of satisfaction. That's what *zoe* is, but Jesus said life doesn't consist in the abundance of things you have. That couple will have to go back to the rat race soon. We get to enjoy eternal life 24/7. If you want to know what eternal life is, look at John 17:3 where Jesus says, "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ." Eternal life is knowing God; it is knowing Jesus Christ.

Do you want to know if you have eternal life or not? Here's the question: Do you know God? Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

Let me illustrate this in a simple way. I have a personal relationship with my grandchildren. I love them, and they love me. I talk to them and they talk to me. We hang out and tell jokes to each other and we share meals together. If someone asked Lizzie, Caroline, Ada, or Grant. Do you know about Pastor David? They will say, "Know about him? I know him. He's my DeeDee." We relate to each other. Do you relate to Jesus? If you believe in Jesus and speak to Him personally, you are relating to Him—and that's the basis of a relationship. Jesus said, "I've come that you might have LIFE (*zoe*) and have it in abundance!"

2. THE CHOSEN: You come to Jesus when the Father draws you.

Jesus said, "Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, the one who comes to me I will never cast out ... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:37,44)

Not only have we been called by God, but the Bible teaches us that we have been chosen by God. I can remember dividing up teams for kickball when I was in the first grade. It always felt good to be picked. The good news is the Creator of the Universe has picked you. He has chosen you. He does this by drawing us to Jesus. When you hear the Gospel, the Father will use the Holy Spirit to convict you of your sin and draw you to Jesus. In other words, none of us can just strut up to Jesus and say, "I've come on my own." No, the Father must draw us to Jesus.

But we live in a culture where the world, the devil and the flesh are doing everything possible to draw us away from Jesus. We can be drawn in two different directions. Have you ever been at

the ocean and you're in the surf near the shore? You have the waves that are pulling you one way, toward shore. And then there is the undertow that is pulling you in the other direction. On the surface, there is so much in our culture trying to distract you and draw you away from Jesus.

However, the Holy Spirit is like the heavenly undertow that keeps pulling us toward faith in Jesus. I can recall the very night when I was a nine-year old boy when the tugging of the Holy Spirit made me realize that my sin had sent Jesus to the cross. I was drawn to Jesus that night. Are you feeling the tug of the Holy Spirit right now?

This is part of the great wonder of salvation. For every person who comes to Jesus, that person has been given by the Father to Jesus. And then Jesus promised that He would never cast me away. And then He said that the only way I could ever come to Him was because the Father drew me to Jesus.

Now many people are confused about salvation. It's the old question about God's sovereignty or human responsibility. Does God choose us or do we choose Him? The answer is, "Yes." Those who are chosen, choose God. He chooses us before we choose Him.

I love what God did for us when He chose us. In Ephesians 1:3-4 we read, "Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him."

So let's break this down. Who chose us? God did. When did He choose us? Before the foundation of the world. How did He choose us? He chose us in Christ. Because He knew we would be in Christ, that's why He chose us. And why did He choose us? He chose us "in love." What is the result of this choice? That we would be holy and blameless in His sight.

All of this is true. God is absolutely sovereign in everything in the universe. He is aware of every blade of grass that bends in the wind. And He has numbered the hairs on your head. But the idea that God has chosen some people to be saved and He has chosen some to be eternally lost is never taught in the Bible.

God wants everyone to be saved. In 1 Timothy 2:3-4 NIV the Bible says, "This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." In 2 Peter 3:9 CSB we read, "God is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but everyone to come to repentance." In 1 John 2:2 we read that "Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for sins, and not our sins only, but the sins of the whole world."

God wants everyone to be saved, but yet not everyone is going to be saved. How do we explain that? Well, there are some people who willingly resist the drawing of the Father. They are offered the gift of eternal life and they reject it. They simply don't believe.

God's will isn't automatically done here on earth as it is in Heaven. That's why Jesus taught us to pray, "May your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." So when you feel the tug of the Father drawing you to Jesus, don't resist it. He wants you to be saved and know Him.

3. THE CONFIDENCE: When you have eternal life, you can never lose it.

Jesus said, "This is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me but should raise them up on the last day." (John 6:39 CSB) There are two different theologies that are often identified with salvation. There is Calvinism named after the French pastor and theologian, John Calvin, that leans more toward God's election and man has no choice in the matter. I'm not a Calvinist. There's another side called Arminianism, named after the Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius. This position leans toward the man's free will for salvation, but Arminius taught that you can lose your salvation. So I'm not an Arminian. I will always resist any theological label like Calvinist or Arminian. If you insist on giving me a label you can call me a Jesus Freak. That's what I was called in college and I'm more passionate about Jesus now than ever.

I firmly believe the Bible teaches that you cannot lose your salvation. Once you are born again, you can't be unborn. Once you are adopted into God's family, He will never kick you out. Jesus made this clear here when He said, "I will LOSE NONE of those that the Father has given me."

The devil is called the accuser of the brothers. He wants you to doubt your salvation because as long as you're struggling to have assurance, you're never going to make a mark in God's Kingdom.

Let me explain your assurance using the words fact, faith, and feeling. Sometimes people worry because they say, "I just don't feel saved." Well, let me remind you that you are saved by your emotions. You are saved from the fact of the Word of God and the faith that you place in the Word of Jesus. The Fact says, that if you have Jesus you have life. Your faith makes a commitment to believe that. Then there may or may not be feelings.

The Bible says salvation is like a marriage. Christ loves the church like a husband loves his wife. But the analogy isn't perfect because some marriages end in divorce, but God will never divorce us. I've done hundreds of weddings. And at most weddings, the bride often cries—and sometimes the groom does. And usually the mothers of both the bride and groom cry. Sometimes I cry.

My wife and I were married 45 years ago and we stood in front of a preacher and we both cried. And I like to joke and say that now after all these years Cindy knows why she cried that night!

There are times when I may not feel like I'm married, but I know I am because I am committed to my wife and she is committed to me. We love each other and we have both said, "If you leave, I'm coming with you. You're stuck with me."

So, if you ever asked us to prove that we are married, we wouldn't say, "We stood in front of a preacher one time and cried." No, we'd say, there is the FACT of our marriage that can be found in a signed marriage license at the courthouse in Montgomery, Alabama. But the best way is to just watch us. By faith we are committed to each other. We live together, we do things together, we share life together.

If someone asks me to tell them why I am confident that I'm saved, I won't say, "Because when I was nine years old I had an emotional experience." Instead I'll tell them about the fact of the God's Word: "whoever believes in Him will NOT perish but have eternal life." I'll tell them I have faith in that promise. There are often great feelings, but I'm not depending on my feelings for the assurance of my salvation. I belong to Jesus and Jesus will lose none of those given to Him. Do you have this Confidence?

4. THE COUNTERFEIT: Some people start following Jesus, but turn away.

Jesus said, "There are some among you who don't believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning those who don't believe and the one who would betray him.) (John 6:64 CSB)

Because there is so much I need to share about Judas and about what Jesus said about this, I am going to develop this important truth in the next message. However, I will finish with this illustration.

You may think you know someone who was a Christian who lost their salvation, but I believe they never were truly born again. They are like this fickle crowd who followed Jesus for a while but then they dropped out.

How many of you have ever seen a falling star? No. You saw a meteor burning up in our atmosphere. Stars are huge molten bodies of blistering fire. In fact, if you expose your skin to our nearest star, you'll be blistered too. So, what you saw, we call a falling star because it looked like a star. I could ask you how many of you have ever seen a fallen child of God? You might want to raise your hand, but true Children of God don't fall, they are kept by the Father.

CONCLUSION

The wonder of salvation is that the Creator of the Universe loves you so much that He sent His precious son to save you. There was a time in your life when you were dead in your sins. Then you heard the Good News. The Holy Spirit convicted you that you were lost, and the Father drew you to Jesus. When you believed and received Jesus, you received eternal life. You chose to follow Jesus and discovered that you were already chosen by God. And you can never lose that relationship with God. None of us are perfect. We're a work in progress. He who began a good work in you will keep on completing it until the day of Jesus Christ.

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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