

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
SOTERIOLOGY
THE STUDY OF SALVATION
PART 2

This morning we are in part 2 of our series on Soteriology or the study of salvation as we continue looking at our Foundation of Faith. And as I have said before, the reason we are doing this series on Foundation of Faith is because there is a very strong attack today against what we believe in. Many of these things are coming from outside the church, which we can understand. But it is not only from outside the church but from within we see pastors, leaders, teachers that are rising up and denying the very truths that our faith rests upon, truths from the Word of God!

Tragically, there are some today who see the cross of Calvary, the shed blood of Christ as crude and offensive, they see it as barbaric! They can't believe that a holy and righteous God, a good God would do something like that.

Liberal theologian and Pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick said the doctrine of the blood atonement was a slaughterhouse religion, and he said it was 'precivilized barbarity.' In his 1922 sermon Shall the Fundamentalists Win?, he stated:

“It is interesting to note where the Fundamentalists are driving in their stakes to mark out the deadline of doctrine around the church, across which no one is to pass except on terms of agreement. They insist that we must all believe in the historicity of certain special miracles, preeminently the virgin birth of our Lord; that we must believe in a special theory of inspiration that the original documents of the Scripture, which of course we no longer possess, were inerrantly dictated to men a good deal as a man might dictate to a stenographer; that we must believe in a special theory of the Atonement that the blood of our Lord, shed in a substitutionary death, placates an alienated Deity and makes possible welcome for the returning sinner; and that we must believe in the second coming of our Lord upon the clouds of heaven to set up a millennium here, as the only way in which God can bring history to a worthy denouement [conclusion]. Such are some of the stakes which are being driven to mark a deadline of doctrine around the church.”

What this line of thinking is saying is that while Jesus’ going to the Cross should be looked at as an example of perfect servanthood and sacrifice, the idea that God would send His Son to a violent death on the Cross is barbaric and would never happen. Thus, Fosdick (and those who adhere to this reasoning) rejects Christ as a substitute for our penalty.

And that doctrine of denying the sacrifice that Christ has made for us is sweeping across churches in America and around the world through the teachings in the Emergent Church movement.

Folks, I think G. Campbell Morgan had it right when he said, “There is nothing cruel and offensive I see in the cross with its blood – except your sin and mine.” He nailed that one for us and think about it, that is the reason God became flesh and dwelt among us, to pay in full the penalty for our sins, that perfect sacrifice, once for all and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, *NONE!* Thus, Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:21, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**”

Many of you have heard of Paul Young’s book, *The Shack*. I would not recommend this book unless you need to burn it to keep yourself warm. Sorry, but the doctrines this book puts forth is not according to the Scriptures but they are doctrines of demons! You may not like that but if they are not of God, if they contradict what the Scriptures are saying, then that is the only other option!

Listen to what we are told in this recent radio interview with the author of, *The Shack*, Paul Young. He told the interviewer that he did not hold to the traditional view of the atonement in that he does not believe Jesus Christ bore the punishment (i.e., penalty) for man’s sins when He died on the Cross.

He also stated, with regard to this topic: “I don’t know if you’re aware, but that’s a huge debate that’s going on in theology right now within the evangelical community.” That debate, to which Young refers, is the new theology (or as we call it the new spirituality) that is entering Christianity through contemplative and emerging figures such as Brennan Manning, Brian McLaren, and Marcus Borg.

This “huge debate” states that a loving Father would never send His Son to a violent death on behalf of the sins of others. And while they do not deny that Jesus did physically die on a Cross, they insist that His death was not to be a substitutionary act wherein He was punished for our sins. Rather, they say, He was killed by man, not for man. And he was a perfect model of sacrificial servanthood.

As Episcopal new spirituality author, Alan Jones, states, “Jesus’ sacrifice was to appease an angry God. Penal substitution was the name of this vile doctrine” (*Reimagining Christianity*, p. 168).

Contemplative proponent Brennan Manning, quoting Catholic mystic William Shannon, says: “[T]he god who exacts the last drop of blood from his Son so that his just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased . . . does not exist” (*Above All*, pp. 58-59). Mystic Marcus Borg has this exact same view. He opposes the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement and sees the Cross as merely a metaphor for transformation in the mystical sense. Brian McLaren shares this view (and indeed resonates with Borg) when he says that hell and the Cross are “false advertising for God.”

Folks, we need to earnestly contend for the faith that has been entrusted to us because the Church, in her prosperity, is turning away from God as we just saw with our examples and that is just one small example. That is why we are doing this series, Foundation of Faith. You see, apart from the cross, apart from the atonement, we are still dead in our sins and now they want to take away the work that Jesus has done for us because of His love for us and they are sending people to Hell in a basket or should I say casket!

Now I think we need to move on. Remember that last week we looked at the fall of man and we saw that when God created Adam and Eve they were perfect, no sin in them until they disobeyed the Lord. And keep in mind that no children were born to Adam and Eve before sin entered the world. And the minute Adam sinned and sin entered the world every descendent of Adam from that point on was infected with sin and thus, separated from God!

Remember what Paul said in Romans 5:12-14, **“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned - (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”**

So we inherit sin from Adam, we are born into sin and we have our own sin and all of this separates us from God. That is the problem and it is a serious one, it is a matter of life and death! And last time we dealt just a little in regards to the solution because I did not want to leave you dead in your trespasses and sins. This morning we are going to look at ***THE SALVATION OF MAN*** and go more in-depth to what this is all about, what God has done for us and what we need to do to receive this. Now before we go any further this morning, let me share this story with you because it will illustrate for you what we will be talking about this morning.

A long time ago Jesus and Satan were having an on-going argument about who was better on the computer. They had been going at it for days and, frankly, God was tired of hearing all the bickering.

Finally fed up, God said, “THAT’S IT! I have had enough. I am going to set up a test that will run for two hours and, from those results, I will judge who does the better job.”

So Satan and Jesus sat down at the keyboards and typed away. They moused. (I think that is a word!). They faxed. They e-mailed. They e-mailed with attachments. They downloaded. They did spreadsheets. They wrote reports. They created labels and cards. They created charts and graphs. They did genealogy reports. They did every job known to man.

Jesus worked with heavenly efficiency and Satan was faster than hell.

Ten minutes before their time was up lightning suddenly flashed across the sky, thunder rolled, rain poured, and the power went off. Pitch darkness filled the room!

Satan stared at his blank screen and screamed every curse word known in the underworld.

Jesus just sighed. Finally the electricity came back on and each of them restarted their computers. Satan started searching frantically, screaming, “It’s gone! It’s all GONE! I lost everything when the power went out!”

Meanwhile, Jesus quietly started printing out all of his files from the past two hours of work.

Satan observed this and became irate. “Wait!” he screamed. “That’s not fair! He cheated! How come he has all his work and I don’t have any?”

God just shrugged and said, “*JESUS SAVES.*”

Sorry about that but you did get the point, *JESUS SAVES* and Satan destroys lives! He loses everything! And today, when there is so much confusion about this idea of salvation and what role Jesus played and what role man plays that I felt we needed to look into this a little closer. You see, if Satan can cause you to mess up what salvation is all about, if you think God did His part and you need to do good works for your part, then you are not saved and Satan has destroyed another life. Again, if you doubt that, listen to what I have to say this morning and listen to the previous study, part 1 on Soteriology because we discussed this also in that study!

THE SALVATION OF MAN

As we look at the salvation of man or the rescue of mankind you might say, let's look at what Paul has to say in Romans 5:15-19. He wrote, "**But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.**"

These verses are very important to us because Paul has shown us that man is sinful and has no way to rectify that problem. He was born in sin. In fact, the way the book of Romans is laid out for us is a powerful statement on the sinfulness of man, all of mankind which then Paul points us to the Savior, to Jesus to redeem us from our sins.

Now I do admit that there are some out there that like to argue that because they were not in the Garden of Eden when Adam sinned, in fact they were not even born yet. So how in the world could the sin of Adam affect them?

Let's put this into perspective for a minute and think of it like this. None of you were there when Jesus was placed on the cross of Calvary as He died for our sins, but by faith we have been crucified with Him. You were not there when He was placed in the garden tomb and rose from the dead on the third day and yet, by faith we believe we were not only buried with Him but were also raised with Him. Thus, if this principle were not true, that in Adam all died in sin, then it would also not be true that in Christ all are made alive.

Of course that is wrong for as Paul said in I Corinthians 15:21-22, "**For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.**" Thus, Adam's sin has brought condemnation to all of mankind, and we have also seen the sacrifice of Christ has brought to us justification to all who believe!

Again, listen carefully to this, it is important. The power of sin, which is death, not only physical death but also spiritual death, can be broken by the free gift of God, by Jesus! On the other hand, the power of Christ, our salvation which is a free gift, can not be broken – we are secure in Him and thus sin has no power over our lives, we are set free from its power. It is as Paul said in II Timothy 1:10, “**but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.**” What assurance we have in Christ, we can rest in that!

Remember, as I have said, God placed Adam into the Garden of Eden with all its beauty and gave him only one rule, one law to follow, don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And what did Adam do? He ate of that tree, he disobeyed God, and through his disobedience the judgment of God came upon all of mankind, all were born sinners.

But, on the other end of the spectrum we have God sending His only begotten Son into the world to pay in full the penalty for our sins and the Son obeyed, and through His obedience He brought to us life. It is as Jesus said in John 17:4, “**I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.**” Yes, death reigned through Adam's sin but life reigns through Christ! Thus, through Jesus mankind has been rescued.

Now as we deal with this issue of the salvation of man or the rescue of man there are basically two ways to look at it. The first way is where man tries to rescue himself by doing good works, living a certain way. Let me give you one example that took place back in the year 2000. Listen carefully how they feel salvation is obtained:

This December 24, the Pope will declare the beginning of the Year of Jubilee, and four special “Holy Doors” will be opened in Rome with the most important being in St. Peter’s Basilica. People from all over the world – an expected 30 million or more – will make a pilgrimage to Rome during 2000 seeking forgiveness of all past sins by walking through the doorways, which are opened only during Jubilee years. Many will travel thousands of miles, sacrificing time and money, in an effort to obtain eternal life. For these seekers, Rome is the place to be in 2000.

The Jubilee occurs every 25 years, but the dawn of a new millennium is bringing much more attention to this particular Year of Jubilee and will bring a greater number of pilgrims.

- OM Indeed, Spring, 1999, p. 6

Folks, I am sorry to say that walking through a door does not take away your sins, that is not how you obtain salvation. But, walking through **THE DOOR**, Jesus Christ does! Let’s think about this for a minute. If I were to walk through the door of Donald Trump’s house does that make me an heir to his fortune? Absolutely not, but I will be arrested and be taken care by the state! And they even have the Jubilee year messed up, it is not every 25 years but the Bible says it is every 50 years and it is not speaking of going through a door to be freed from your sin. You see, it is the shedding of blood that makes atonement for your sins not a man-made door that you walk through!

But again, the Scriptures teach us that Jesus is *THE DOOR* and we must go through Him to get to the Father, to get to Heaven. In John 14:6 Jesus said, “. . . ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” Also, in John 8:24 Jesus said, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am [He], you will die in your sins.” You see, salvation is not obtained by our good works, it is not obtained by us reaching up to God, but God reaching down and saving sinful man, it is by what He has done and not by what we have done!

Here in Romans Paul tells us that that the rescue of man is a free gift given to us by Christ through faith! Yes, through one man’s sin all were condemned to death, but through Christ all of our sins have been paid in full and we are declared justified before God, innocent!

Let me illustrate this by sharing this true story with you for it drives home the point of what God has done and what we must do. The story goes like this:

About 1830, a man named George Wilson killed a government employee who caught him in the act of robbing the mails. Wilson was tried and sentenced to be hanged. The President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, sent Wilson a pardon. But, Wilson did a strange thing: he refused to accept the pardon.

No one seemed to know what to do because of this, so Wilson’s case was sent to the U. S. Supreme Court. Chief Justice Marshall wrote the opinion: “A pardon is a slip of paper, the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged.” And he was.

The cross of Christ is a revelation of God's love for all people. We may do cowardly and disappointing things and bring deep pain to the Father's heart, but in the cross we see that He never gives up on us. Something happened that day on Calvary that forever makes a difference in the relationship between people and God. Even when the love of Jesus was thrown in His face with spitting, mocking and cursing, it remained unbroken.

The death of Christ on the cross is the pardon God sent. But before it becomes a pardon, we must accept it in faith and obedience. It is through the cross, and only through the cross that we can be saved from sin and its consequence of eternal separation from God in hell.

Have you accepted God's pardon in Christ Jesus? If not, will you?

- Morning Glory, July 29, 1995, p. 35

The thing is this. What Christ has done for us goes way beyond a pardon. We are declared innocent, declared justified by grace through faith in Jesus, and like this story, we must receive Him into our lives! That free gift is out there for all to receive, Jesus died for us all. The thing is not all will receive that free gift and thus, as Paul said in Romans 6:23, "**For the wages of sin is death, but the [free] gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"

How much does it cost us to purchase this free gift of salvation? Nothing, it is a free gift! How many good works do we have to do so that we might obtain this free gift of salvation? Good works don't save us; it is a free gift that God has given to us. It cost Him; all we must do is receive that gift by faith! And if you want to try to work your way into heaven, God will allow it but the wages, what you get in return is death, eternal separation from God!

Paul, in Ephesians 2:8-10 makes this very point in regards to our salvation being a free gift and not of works. Paul wrote, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

For those of you who did not get that, I will turn up the volume and listen to how The Amplified Bible puts these verses for us, **“For it is by free grace (God’s unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ’s salvation) through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [of your own doing, it came not through your own striving], but it is the gift of God; Not because of works [not the fulfillment of the Law’s demands], lest any man should boast. [It is not the result of what anyone can possibly do, so no one can pride himself in it or take glory to himself.] For we are God’s [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].”**

The big question for many and we have answered it already, but here it is again, “How are we saved?” Some would say through baptism, or confirmation, or church membership, or keeping the Law, or being good, or living by the Sermon on the Mount, or giving to those in need, or communion and the list can go on! And they will fight and argue with you that this is true, this is how you are saved. And even when you show them the Scriptures that refute their idea of salvation, they usually say, “I don’t care, my church says . . .” In other words the church or the church traditions supersede what the Bible has to say as if man knows more than God does.

No, that is not how you are saved. Let me put this into perspective for you and hopefully this will drive home the point. The biggest issue is that dead men, spiritually dead men can’t have faith, they are dead. They can’t even do anything to save themselves, they are dead. Have you ever seen a dead person dress himself? If you have, see me after study, we need to talk!

And yes, you can dress dead people up and make them look good, but the reality is, they are still dead. And people do that all the time today. They are spiritually dead and they dress themselves up with this kind of religiosity to look good and apart from Christ, they are dead in their sins! It doesn’t matter how good you look, you are dead!

And I love the way that Paul puts it in Ephesians 2:1-7, “**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. 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.**”

You see, “**But God.**” It is not by our own efforts but the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary that saved us from our sins! Make no mistake about it; it is only by God’s grace or unmerited favor that He bestows upon us. The only thing we have added to the work of salvation is sin, God did the rest by saving us and our salvation is only found in Christ and it is through Christ’s finished work that grace is given to us! Remember what Paul said in Romans 6:23, “**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” Thus, the basis is grace, the means is faith and it is a work of God!

Now if salvation was of works then we could boast about what we have done to be saved, and that would be ugly. But it is a work of God and all we can do is boast in what He has done in our lives! And think about what the Bible tells us, that God is a debtor to no man. (See Romans 4:1-5).

If works don't play a part in our salvation then why did James tell us, "**Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**" James 2:17. Works don't save us but they are the fruit of our salvation, they show that we are saved! And I love this; Paul says that we are God's "**workmanship**" or POIEMA (poy'-ay'mah) in the Greek which can speak of a poem or of a tapestry, a masterpiece. When you look at the back of a tapestry it is a mess, it is ugly with threads going in all directions, you can't tell what you are looking at. But, when you look at the other side it is a beautiful picture, a masterpiece. God is making us into a beautiful masterpiece and when we look at it through this side of heaven it may look like a mess, but when we get a heavenly perspective we see that God has made our lives into His beautiful masterpiece, what He began in us He will complete!

Now here's the thing. God has created good works for us to do in this life, He has prepared the works for us and then He has prepared us for the work and He tells us to then walk in them, do them. But it is our choice to walk or make excuses why we aren't walking like, "I'm too tired!" or "I don't have the time!" or "I am not called into that ministry!" or whatever! God prepared the work and thus, we are to walk accordingly as Paul says in Philippians 2:13, "**for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**" If you don't God will use someone else but you will miss out on the blessings of serving the Lord!

Now I want to spend a little time here showing you who this salvation is for, who God came to save and there are some weird ideas out there but let's look at what the Scriptures have to say regarding this.

The one that most if not all of you know is from John 3:16, where Jesus said, **“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.”** Notice that God’s love is for the people of this world. Now here’s the thing. When Jesus was speaking of the **“world”** He was not speaking of the physical world, the dirt and rocks and-so-on. This word is a nonspecific term for the humanity in a general sense. And notice that there was nothing that caused Him to love us, He just does and He sent His Son to pay in full the penalty for our sins! And notice that when Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary His arms were open wide, ready to receive all who would come to Him!

So this salvation is extended to all? Does that then mean all are saved, a sort of universal salvation? Absolutely not and Jesus tells us, **“. . . that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”** John 3:16.

You see, it is extended to all but not all receive that free gift into their lives because they refuse to believe that Jesus is the Savior, their Savior. Not a universal salvation or a limited atonement salvation that is only for a select few. It is for all and rests upon belief! It is as John said, **“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”** I John 2:2.

Paul tells us in Romans 5:18, **“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”** Who is this free gift of salvation for? It is for all men and that is a term speaking of all mankind, men and women! You see, God did not send His Son for a select few, all the sins of the world He bore for us so that we may live with Him!

In I Timothy 2:3-4 Paul tells us, “**For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**” Who does God desire to be saved? Paul tells us that He desires all to be saved, to come to know Him! Again, here is that question that many struggle with, “Does this then mean that all are going to be saved in the end, a kind of universalism in regards to salvation, a kind of all dogs go to heaven mentality?” No, God desires all to be saved and He could accomplish that if He took away our free will, but then it would not be a love relationship on our part if we didn’t have a choice. God has given to us a free will to choose and thus, God does not send anyone to Hell, they go there because that is where they want to go, they refuse to accept the free gift of God in Jesus and they will die in their sins outside of Him! But God desires all to be saved!

In I Timothy 4:10 we see Paul tell Timothy, “**For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.**” Now don’t be confused by what Paul is saying here. Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts this verse, “**With a view to this we toil and strive, [yes and] suffer reproach, because we have [fixed our] hope on the living God, Who is the Savior (Preserver, Maintainer, Deliverer) of all men, especially of those who believe (trust in, rely on, and adhere to Him).**”

Now for those that want to teach that all people will go to heaven, there is no hell, they like this verse, believing that is what Paul is teaching here, that all men will be saved. The only problem with that is then we have a major contradiction in Scripture, and we know that can’t happen. Thus, we must be looking at this wrong because the Scripture does not contradict itself!

You see, check it out for yourself. In Revelation 20:11-15 we see that there is a hell and all those that reject Jesus will go there. In Matthew 25:41, 46 we see that the duration is eternal; it is everlasting for those that have rejected Jesus. In II Thessalonians 1:8-9 Paul tells us that those who refuse the Gospel will suffer eternal punishment, they will be separated from God. And yet, as some teach, Paul is saying that all will go to heaven. That is not what Paul is saying as I have said.

This is what Paul is telling us. Jesus' work on the cross of Calvary for us is adequate to save all, but only effective in saving those who come to Him by faith. It is there for all but not all receive it and it flows with the rest of the Scriptures. We can't make the Scriptures say what we want; we must let the God speak to us through His Word, what He is saying to us. Think of it this way and forgive me, it is kind of a crude example but I think you will see what I mean. Imagine winning \$100 in the Lottery, you got the winning number. Is that money yours? Absolutely it is. What do you have to do to receive it? Do you have to do some good works, walk a little old lady across the street or whatever? No, all you must do is bring in your Lottery ticket to receive the gift. Again, it is a crude illustration but I think you get the idea.

It is as Clarke wrote, "What God intends for ALL, he actually gives to *them* that believe in Christ, who died for the sins of the world, and tasted death for every man. As *all* have been purchased by his blood so all may believe; and consequently all may be saved. Those that perish, perish through their own fault."

In Titus 2:11 Paul wrote, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.”** This grace of God that has brought to us salvation, who is it for? Paul clearly shows us that it is available **“to all men.”** Notice that it doesn’t say, “The works of man that brings salvation.” It also doesn’t say, “The self-justification of man that brings salvation.” Nor does it say, “The good deeds of man that brings salvation.”

It says very clearly, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.”** Or as The Amplified Bible puts it, **“For the grace of God (His unmerited favor and blessing) has come forward (appeared) for the deliverance from sin and the eternal salvation for all mankind.”** You see, we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and not by the Law through works. And this free gift of God is extended to all, but not all will receive it.

And lastly, and there are many more, but in II Peter 3:9-10 Peter tells us, **“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”**

This truly is the heart of God. He is not willing that any should perish and thus, we see that He is longsuffering towards us that many will enter into that relationship with Him. But make no mistake about it, if you refuse, judgment will come and you will be eternally separated from God. It is not that God didn’t extend this free gift to you, you have just refused it!

Listen to how Dr. Norman Geisler sums this up for us and keep in mind that there are those who believe in a limited atonement and others in a universal salvation and both are wrong as we have seen and will see with what Dr. Geisler tells us here. He wrote,

God willed from all eternity, then, to provide salvation for all human-kind. Hence, Christ is “the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Rev. 13:8; cf. Eph. 1:4).

However, while salvation was *provided* for all, it is *applied* only to those who believe. Some ask the question, “For whom was the Atonement *designed*?” Strong Calvinists respond by asking why, if the Atonement was intended for all, all are not saved. How can a sovereign God’s intention be thwarted? . . .

If, as strong Calvinists argue, the Atonement was intended only for some (the elect), then limited atonement follows. This leads to the apparent dilemma that either (1) the Atonement was intended for all or (2) the Atonement was intended only for some (the elect). If it *was* intended for all, then all will be saved (since God’s sovereign intentions must come to pass), and if it was *not* intended for all, then it was intended only for some (the elect). Therefore, it would appear that either universalism is true or else limited atonement is true . . .

Of course, both moderate Calvinists and traditional Arminians deny universalism. Hence, in response to the supposed problem, it is only necessary to point out that the argument contains a false dilemma. There is a third alternative: The Atonement was intended to *provide* (offer) salvation for all as well as to *procure* (apply) salvation for those who believe.

I hope that clears this issue up for you. The gift of salvation is extended to all men because Christ died for all of us but it is not received by all men because man has a choice to make, either to receive Jesus or reject Him! In other words, salvation is available to all; it is unlimited in that sense. But it is effectively limited by man's rejection of it. That is just what the Scriptures teach us.

Again Dr. Geisler puts it like this,

Salvation originates with God, being based in an unconditional act of His boundless love and unmerited favor (grace). Nonetheless, once again, while there are no conditions for God's *giving* salvation, there is one condition for our *receiving* it: faith. God has sovereignly willed it this way; salvation is by grace but comes *through* our belief. Faith is a free act on the part of the recipient, for an omnibenevolent [all-caring] God must not only love all, but He must respect the freedom He freely gave to His creatures. It is necessary for God to act in accordance with His own perfect nature, and love is of this very essence.

- Dr. Norman Geisler, Systematic Theology,
Volume Three, Sin Salvation, p. 200

Next week I want to continue looking at this topic of the salvation of man and focus in on three areas. We will look at: *We are saved from the past penalty of sin – Justification. We are saved from the present power of sin – sanctification. And we are saved from the presence of sin – glorification!* Again, I believe it is important to understand what God is doing because if you get this wrong, your view of security in your salvation will be messed up. So we have seen the ruin of mankind, that we are all sinners, have that sin nature from Adam with no way out on our own. That then leads to the rescue of mankind, not by our own efforts, but by Jesus as He pulls us up out of the mire of sin we are drowning in.

Let me close this morning with this story that will help put this all into perspective for us. If you have not received Jesus as your Lord and Savior I pray that you will receive this free gift of life that is given to us through Jesus. May this story open your eyes to what God has done for you and by rejecting Jesus, what you are saying to Him! If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, may you not loose sight of what God has done for you and I think this story will help to illustrate that for you. The story goes like this:

My Son Died, Don't you Care

The day is over, you are driving home. You tune in your radio. You hear a little blurb about a little village in India where some villagers have died suddenly, strangely, of a flu that has never been seen before.

It's not influenza, but three or four fellows are dead, and it's kind of interesting. They're sending some doctors over there to investigate it. You don't think much about it, but on Sunday, coming home from church you hear another radio spot. Only they say it's not three villagers, its 30,000 villagers in the back hills of this particular area of India, and it's on TV that night.

CNN runs a little blurb: people are heading there from the disease center in Atlanta because this disease strain has never been seen before.

By Monday morning when you get up, it's the lead story. For it's not just India; it's Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and before you know it, you're hearing this story everywhere and they have coined it now as "the mystery flu."

The President has made some comment that he and everyone are praying and hoping that all will go well over there.

But everyone is wondering, "How are we going to contain it?" That's when the President of France makes an announcement that shocks Europe. He is closing their borders. No flights from India, Pakistan, or any of the countries where this thing has been seen.

That night you are watching a little bit of CNN before going to bed. Your jaw hits your chest, when a weeping woman is translated from a French news program into English: "There's a man lying in a hospital in Paris dying of the mystery flu. It has come to Europe." Panic strikes.

As best they can tell, once you get it, you have it for a week and you don't know it. Then you have four days of unbelievable symptoms. Then you die.

Britain closes its borders, but it's too late. Southampton, Liverpool, Northampton, and its Tuesday morning when the President of the United States makes the following announcement: "Due to a national security risk, all flights to and from Europe and Asia have been canceled. If your loved ones are overseas, I'm sorry. They cannot come back until we find a cure for this thing."

Within four days our nation has been plunged into an unbelievable fear. People are selling little masks for your face. Some are talking about what if it comes to this country, and preachers on Tuesday are saying, "It's the scourge of God." It's Wednesday night and you are at a church prayer meeting when somebody runs in from the parking lot and says, "Turn on a radio, turn on a radio." While the church listens to a little transistor radio with a microphone stuck up to it, the announcement is made, "Two women are lying in a Long Island hospital dying from the mystery flu." Within hours it seems, this thing just sweeps across the country.

People are working around the clock trying to find an antidote. Nothing is working. California, Oregon, Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts. It's as though it's just sweeping in from the borders.

Then, all of a sudden the news comes out. The code has been broken. A cure can be found. A vaccine can be made. It's going to take the blood of somebody who hasn't been infected, and so, sure enough, all through the Midwest, through all those channels of emergency broadcasting, everyone is asked to do one simple thing: "Go to your downtown hospital and have your blood type taken. That's all we ask of you. When you hear the sirens go off in your neighborhood, please make your way quickly, quietly, and safely to the hospitals."

Sure enough, when you and your family get down there late on that Friday night, there is a long line, and they've got nurses and doctors coming out and pricking fingers and taking blood and putting labels on it.

Your spouse and your kids are out there, and they take your blood type and they say, "Wait here in the parking lot and if we call your name, you can be dismissed and go home."

You stand around scared with your neighbors, wondering what in the world is going on, and that this is the end of the world. Suddenly a young man comes running out of the hospital screaming. He's yelling a name and waving a clipboard. What? He yells it again! And your son tugs on your jacket and says with a grin, "Daddy, that's me."

Before you know it, they have grabbed your boy. "Wait a minute, hold it!" And they say, "It's okay, his blood is clean. His blood is pure. We want to make sure he doesn't have the disease. We think he has got the right type."

Five tense minutes later, out come the doctors and nurses, crying and hugging one another – some are even laughing. It's the first time you have seen anybody laugh in a week, and an old doctor walks up to you and says, "Thank you, sir. Your son's blood type is perfect. It's clean, it is pure, and we can make the vaccine."

As the word begins to spread all across the parking lot full of folks, people are screaming and praying and laughing and crying. But then the gray-haired doctor pulls you and your wife aside and says, "May we see you for a moment? We didn't realize that the donor would be a minor and we need . . . we need you to sign a consent form."

You begin to sign and then you see that the number of pints of blood to be taken is empty. “H-h-h-how many pints?” you ask. And that is when the old doctor’s smile fades and he says, “We had no idea it would be a little child. We weren’t prepared. We need it all!”

“But-but . . .” “You don’t understand. We are talking about the world here. Please sign. We – we need it all – we need it all!”

“But can’t you give him a transfusion?”

“If we had clean blood we would. Can you sign? Would you sign?”

In numb silence you do. Then they say, “Would you like to have a moment with your son?” You go into that room where he sits on a table saying, “Daddy? Mommy? What’s going on?”

Can you take his hands and say, “Son, we love you, and we would never ever let anything happen to you that didn’t just have to be. Do you understand that?”

When that old doctor comes back in and says, “I’m sorry, we’ve –we’ve got to get started. People all over the world are dying.” Can you leave? Can you walk out while he is saying, “Dad? Mom? Why –why have you forsaken me?”

And then next week, when they have the ceremony to honor your son, some folks sleep through it, and some folks don’t even come because they go to the lake, and some folks come with a pretentious attitude.

“MY SON DIED! DON’T YOU CARE?”

Is that what God may be saying? “MY SON DIED. DON’T YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I CARE?”

“Father, seeing it from your eyes breaks our hearts. Maybe now we can begin to comprehend the great love you have for us. Amen.”

- Source Unknown