

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor David Bennett
24 February 2013

“Salvation”

Good morning Fil-Am, it is so good to see so many here this morning. Ok let's get started, let's get into the Word of God, but more importantly let's get the Word of God into you!

We are continuing our Foundations Study today, Last week we talked about the Topic of Mankind, today we are going to get into the Subject of “Salvation”

Please don't miss this message; it could have some drastic consequences in the long run.

Let us start by looking at the metamorphosis of language, and how the meaning of words or terms has changed over the years.

A hundred years ago “**GAY**” meant to be happy or light hearted,

“**COOL**” meant to have a slight chill or to be cold and “**HIP**” was a part of the body above which the belt was fastened.

You can see that you don't have to go that far back to see the effects of changing language, if you have a teenager at home you know **exactly** what I'm talking about.

When I was growing up if something was extraordinary or exceeded the normal standards of expectation, we said that it was "**far out,**" or "**cool.**" Today if something exceeds the normal standards it is said to be "**sick,**" or to be, "**the Bomb, or Dope.**" I mention this to highlight

the reality that as language changes and precise communication becomes more complicated, words have a tendency to lose their impact and meaning.

Nowhere has this been more pronounced than in the church. When I was growing up terms like, "**Giving your heart to Jesus,**" or "**being born again,**" were often used to speak about Salvation but over time, like a lot of other language, in the minds of many these terms have tended to lose some of their impact and the need for more specific language has become evident.

It is to that end that we as Christians need to be clear and unambiguous as we present the gospel of Jesus Christ to others.

Part of the reason we are preaching the Foundations series is to help us, as a body of believers, to become more theologically precise; to once again reassign meaning to terms like, "**being born again,**" so that when we use these terms there is a common understanding as to what it is we are referring.

We come today to the doctrine of salvation, which, in theological jargon is called, "**Soteriology,**" coming from the two Greek words, "**Soter,**" to save or deliver, and "**Logos,**" which simply means word. Thus, Soteriology is simply a word about salvation.

Of all the doctrines of the Bible, the doctrine of Salvation is one with which every Christian should be familiar. Not only because our **Salvation depends upon it,** but because it is the one message which we as God's people have been commissioned to share with the world around us and it is the only message whereby lost people can come into a **Personal** and **Saving** relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son.

For the purpose of our study this morning, we are going to keep it simple and discuss salvation within the context of three simple points. We will begin with our need, then move to God's provision and then conclude with our response.

1. Our Need

As we studied last week, when we considered the doctrine of man, in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve sinned against God and because of their sin all of us are born with a sinful nature. That is, by our very nature we are predestined to sin.

The Bible makes it clear in Romans 3:23 that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all men, because all sinned."

So you see sin is universal. Everyone is born a sinner. As we noted in our study of anthropology: We sin primarily because we are sinners; we are not merely sinners because we sin.

Understanding the universal nature of sin, we should consider some of the consequences or realities of sin.

Sin does several things. First of all, sin separates us from God.

✓ *Separation*

The just and gracious God of the universe looked upon hopelessly sinful people and sent his son, Jesus Christ in the flesh, to bear his wrath against sin on the cross to show his power over sin and the resurrection so that all who have faith in him will be **reconciled** to God forever.

✓ God is the **Creator**

✓ God is **Just**

✓ God is **Gracious**

He looked upon hopeless sinful people...

✓ We have **Rebelled** against God

✓ We are **Separated** from God

✓ We are Dead without God

But God sent his only begotten.....

✓ Jesus life displayed the **Righteousness** of God

✓ Jesus death satisfied the **Wrath** of God

✓ Jesus resurrection demonstrated the **Power** of God

So that all that have faith in him will be reconciled to God

✓ God is the **Giver** of the Gospel

✓ God is the **Gift** of the Gospel

✓ God is the **Goal** of the Gospel

Isaiah 50:1-2 assures us that our sin separates us from God. It says, "*Indeed, the Lord's hand is not too short to save, and His ear is not too deaf to hear. But your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God, and your sins have made Him hid His face from you so that He does not listen.*"

In the Garden of Eden, before the fall, Adam and Eve had fellowship with God, but after the fall, their fellowship with God is broken.

The result is that all of us are born **out of fellowship** with God.

The Bible tells us that our problem is one which we cannot solve. That means that there is **NOTHING** we can do within our own ability to get back to where Adam was before the fall.

When confronted with these biblical truths, people have come up with different ways of dealing with man's problem.

One popular philosophy is that if you are just good enough, if you do enough good deeds while you are on earth, that someday, when you stand before God He will put all of your good deeds on one side of the scale and all of your bad deeds on the other side of the scale and if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds then you'll get into heaven.

The only problem with that philosophy is that it is **NOT BIBLICAL**. The bible tells us that we cannot be saved by works.

Titus 3:5 tells us that we cannot be saved by works and Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved by **Grace through Faith**, and not by our own doing, our salvation is a gift of God, not of works so that no one can boast about how good they have been.

Our problem is not lack of self-esteem, as some would have us believe. Our problem is not ignorance or lack of knowledge; if man has anything today he has intelligence and information.

Our problem is that we are **Sinners** and that our sin **Separates** us from God.

✓ *Condemnation*

But not only does it separate us from God, it **Condemns** us before God. The scripture is clear is in Romans 6:23 which says that the penalty for sin, or God's just punishment for sin, is **DEATH**.

That means He must **PUNISH** sin. To do anything less would not be in keeping with His character. He is a just God and His justice demands full payment for our sin.

Ezekiel 18:4 says that the soul that sins shall die.

Therefore our understanding of **How** and **Why** God saves us must in context with proper Theology and what God has revealed to us about Himself.

You see, because God is righteous and just, He must punish sin and because we are all sinners, we are condemned before God. And knowing that we cannot do anything in and of ourselves to escape our just punishment, our plight is really rather desperate.

That's why the Bible tells us that salvation is rooted and grounded in the character of God Himself. Not only is God **Just**, but God is **Loving** and as a loving God He wants to **Save** sinners.

It is important to remember that when we talk about any one doctrine, we must remember to be consistent with all the other doctrines of the bible.

For instance, when talking about the doctrine of salvation, we must be consistent with the doctrine of God. We know God is righteous and perfectly just according to his **Holy Law**.

The Law's purpose was to **reveal** the Holiness of God and the Sinfulness of Man. The Law's main focus was **not to cleanse** people; it was to point to **our need** to be cleansed.

You have a mirror in your bathroom, which is a picture of the Law and there is a basin underneath the mirror. You do not wash yourself with the mirror, it only reveals the dirt. Just so the Law is the mirror that reveals our Sin. Beneath the Mirror is a wash basin where the dirt is removed from our lives.

This brings us to God's provision.

2. God's Provision

Remember that God created us for His **Glory** and for **Fellowship**.

As long as we remain in our sin we can neither be in fellowship with Him, nor can our lives give Him glory.

In order for us to live for our created purpose we must somehow be **Reconciled** to God. This is the great story of salvation. The Bible states this very clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:19 when it says, "*...in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and has committed the message of reconciliation to us.*"

The Bible tells us that **Salvation** is from the Lord. That is, if it were left to us we would forever be lost.

God is the one who **Initiates** and **Consummates** our salvation. It is His work alone. There are several things about salvation every Christian should understand.

✓ *Why?*

First we need to consider the **WHY** of our salvation. Why did God save us?

The reason God saved us has more to do with who God is than it does with who we are.

The Bible tells us that God is merciful - Psalm 103:17 says, "*But from eternity to eternity the Lord's faithful love is toward those who fear Him.*"

Lamentations 3:22-23 says, "*Because of the Lord's faithful love we do not perish, for His mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!*"

Not only is God merciful, but He is gracious. God's grace is simply God's **Unmerited** favor towards us.

We do not deserve it; we did nothing to merit it or to earn it; again, it is grounded in God's character.

Because God is merciful and loving and gracious, He offers us salvation. He does not offer us His salvation because of who **we are**; He offers it to us because of Who **He is**. That means that because of God's mercy He does not punish us the minute we sin, and because of His grace, He offers us forgiveness of sins, salvation from the penalty of sin and eternal life.

✓ *How?*

But secondly we consider the **HOW** of our salvation. How did God make it possible for us to be saved? This is where we want to talk about the **Atoning** work of Christ, or the doctrine of the atonement.

There are many today who don't like to talk about the cross or the shed blood of Jesus. They say it is bloody, violent and barbaric. Instead they like to talk about the example Jesus set or the love that He wanted us to share with each other. But folks without the **blood atonement** we have no hope of salvation.

The Bible story is this: since we are all sinners and thus under the condemnation of sin, and since we could not do anything to bring about our own salvation, It was only through God's only Son, Christ that we have atonement.

You see God's justice **demanded** a sacrifice which would pay the price for our sins. Our own lives were already forfeit because we were under the condemnation of our own sins.

Only a sinless person could pay the price and be an acceptable substitute for us. That's why God sent Jesus to die on the cross for us. Because Jesus was sinless, He was an **acceptable sacrifice** for our sins.

Jesus was **THE** sacrifice that turned away the **wrath** of God.

And when He died on the cross, He did so in our place. In ancient Israel each year the high priest would take a spotless lamb and would sacrifice that lamb, taking its blood and sprinkling it on the Ark of the Covenant to cover or atone for the sins of the people for that year.

This was a picture which pointed to what Jesus would do. His blood would not merely cover our sins; instead it would **wash** our sins away, making us right before God.

When Jesus died on the cross He took our place and paid the penalty for our sins. That's why the cross is central to our understanding of salvation.

Hebrews 9:22 says that **without** the shedding of blood our sins cannot be forgiven. On the cross Jesus, the Lamb of God who **takes away** the sins of the world, shed His blood to atone for our sins.

It was absolutely necessary for Jesus to shed His blood on the cross, otherwise the just demands of a holy God could not have been met and we would have **no hope** of salvation.

Jesus says the same thing in Matthew 26:28 at the last supper table. He told His disciples, *"For this is my blood that establishes the covenant; it is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

Revelation 1:5 says, *"And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has set us free from our sins by His blood..."*

The hymns of our faith give witness to our understanding of this truth.

What can wash away my sins? **Nothing but the blood of Jesus.** What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

You see because the blood of Jesus was shed for you and me, for our sins on Calvary's cross, there is no other way for us to be rid of our sins except through Jesus.

Jesus said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, except through Me."*

One of the foundational truths of our doctrine of salvation is that there is **no other** way to get saved except through Jesus.

There are many who have a problem with that truth. Some, known as **Pluralists**, say that there are many roads to God. After all, they reason, how could God love the world and yet allow so many people to live and die without having a chance to accept the free gift of eternal life in Jesus? Their problem, of course, is that their theology is not **biblically based** but is rooted and grounded more in their fallen sense of what they deem to be right and wrong.

God would have been justified in sending us all to hell. None of us deserved to be saved. The love of God is seen in that He has made it possible for any of us to be saved. But at the end of the day we cannot escape the words of Jesus Himself Who said that He is the only way to God the father.

That means the **Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus** and all others who fail to put their faith in Jesus Christ alone, have no hope of heaven.

Jesus Himself claimed to be the only way. But let's not forget what Romans 10:13 says, *"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

You see, salvation is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. But Jesus Himself says in John 3:18, *"Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God."*

So there you have it. God saves us because of Who He is and He did it through the **finished** work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus died in our place. Because He was sinless He was an acceptable sacrifice to satisfy the just demands of a righteous God.

But **How** do we receive this gift of salvation? While it is freely offered to all who will believe, what is the process whereby we become recipients of His grace and become Christians?

3. Our Response

Perhaps you've heard a preacher or two talk about giving your heart to Jesus, or being born again, and you've wondered what exactly they were talking about. When it comes to our response the Bible gives us some clear instruction.

✓ *Repentance*

The first thing the Bible says is that we must repent of our sins. Preaching at Pentecost Peter called upon the crowd to *“Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins.”*

Repentance simply means to stop going one way, to turn around and to go another way. Repentance is not popular these days. Many people want to get to heaven without having to change who they are. They want to add Jesus to the many other things in their lives.

I often use the illustration that we don't need to use Jesus as a **spare tire** but as a **steering wheel**. Well the other night during the Woodbridge Home Group Christine told me another illustration about Jesus that just like that spare tire many people treat him like a **Hitchhiker**. He's just along for the ride and makes no decisions on where we go!

But Jesus tells us that we cannot come to Him that way. We must take up our **OWN CROSS** and follow Him.

- ✓ In repentance we **turn away** from sin, and...
- ✓ In faith we **turn to** Jesus Christ as our Savior.

That brings us to the subject of faith.

Faith

A poem called Faith & Doubt

Doubt sees the Obstacles,

Faith sees the way!

Doubt sees the darkest night,

Faith sees the Day!

Doubt dreads to take a step,

Faith soars on High!

Doubt questions, Who believes?

Faith answers, "I"

by Ruth Morgan

The Bible tells us in Ephesians 2:8-9 that "*Salvation comes by grace through faith.*" That is, God's grace makes it available, and we must accept it by faith.

Salvation comes to us by the **grace of God**, but faith **enables us** to reach out and receive it.

Faith means to believe. It means to put your trust or confidence in someone or something. Many times in the Bible the command is to believe, this is referring to faith. In order for us to receive the salvation offered in Christ Jesus, we must **abandon** any hope we might have in our own goodness, or in our ability to get to heaven on our own merit, and we must put our faith, our confidence, and our trust, in Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross.

- ✓ Faith sees the **invisible**,
- ✓ Believes the **incredible**,

- ✓ And receives the **impossible**.

Faith like a muscle **grows stronger** only when stretched and exercised.

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, "Why is faith so essential? It is because of its receptive power.

- ✓ A purse will not make a man rich, and yet without some place for his money, how could a man acquire wealth?
- ✓ Faith of itself could not contribute a penny to salvation, but it is the purse which holds a precious Christ within itself. It holds all the treasures of divine love.
- ✓ If a man is thirsty, a rope and a bucket are not in themselves of much use to him. But yet if there is a well near at hand, the very thing that is needed is a bucket and a rope, by means of which a man may draw water out of the wells of salvation and drink to his heart's content."

Faith does not simply know that Jesus died for your sins; it does not merely mean agreeing that Jesus died for your sins; **many** people have religious knowledge (**Head Knowledge**) but do not have a personal relationship (**Heart Knowledge**) with Jesus.

Faith means making a personal decision and commitment to surrender control of your life to the **Lordship of Jesus** and to trust Him and Him alone to save you.

This is what we are talking about when we ask if someone wants to give their heart to Jesus, or to ask Him into their heart. That's what it means to exercise faith.

A little faith will bring your soul to heaven, a great faith will bring heaven to your soul.

-Spurgeon

Faith is not believing that God can, but that God will!

Which brings us to what happens when you trust Him?

✓ **Regeneration**

By repenting of your sins and placing your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the instant that takes place, the Bible says you become **a new creation**, you are given spiritual life, or you are born again. The theological term is regeneration, which simply means that you are made new in Christ.

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come."*

When you ask Jesus to forgive your sins and place your trust in Him, not only does He create in you a new person, as we have studied in weeks past, He places His Spirit within you and He will **never leave you** nor forsake you.

He will **ALWAYS** be with you. He writes your name in the Lamb's book of life and when the roll is called in Heaven, you'll be there. But till then He will work in your heart and your life to grow you in your spiritual life to a greater maturity. This is what we call, sanctification.

Conclusion

So **there you have it**, it's really rather simple.

- ✓ We are sinners;
- ✓ Our sin Separates us from God and
- ✓ Condemns us to eternity in hell.
- ✓ God loves us and sends His only Son Jesus to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.
- ✓ Through His death, burial and resurrection

- ✓ He defeated sin and death and made it possible for all who will place their trust in Him to have their sins washed away and
- ✓ Receive eternal life.

All you have to do is **believe**; to place your **trust** in Him today.