

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 30/05/2021

Series – Jonah, the runaway servant

Part 5 – “Salvation belongs to our God”

Text: Ephesians 1 verses 3-14

All scripture references are from the ESV

Ephesians 1:3-14 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Everything God does, he does to put his glory on display for the praise of his name and the delight of his people.

As an example: **Psalm 19:1** The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

God created billions of stars, every one of them different, and fixed them in their places, where we can use them to navigate by, and enjoy their stunning beauty. **God did that to put his own glory on display, for the sake of our joy.** We are meant to look at the universe and with joy-filled hearts say ‘Wow, what an amazing God we have!’

That is especially true with regard to our salvation. **Ephesians 1:3-14** (above)

celebrates all that God has done to save us. He

- Chose us, predestined us and redeemed us
- Made known the mystery of his will

- has laid up for us a glorious inheritance, giving assurance of this through the work of his Spirit in our hearts

What was the purpose of this and what is the solid foundation under these great spiritual blessings?

God's greatest ever work, that of saving sinful humanity through the death of his Son, was to put the glory of his grace on display (vv 6,12,14 above) for the sake of our joy in him – joy that is to be expressed in praise to him.

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In the belly of the fish (Jonah 1:17 see p4), Jonah is in a helpless situation both physically and spiritually. Unless God rescues him, he will die in the physical sense. Running from God, he will also suffer death as a sinner in the storm of God's wrath, unless God shows mercy. In despair, he cries to God (Jonah 2:4 see p4). He can do nothing to save himself either physically or spiritually. He needs God to act, and he prays in faith to a God he knows to be gracious:

- A God who will forgive him
- A God who will accept him
- A God who will show steadfast love

In response, God hears and answers Jonah (Jonah 2:1 see p4), bringing him up from the watery pit (v6 p4), and speaking to the fish (v10 p4) so that it vomits Jonah out on to dry land. God does for Jonah what Jonah doesn't deserve – **he saves him**. Jonah's response is to praise God for his salvation declaring (v9)

Salvation belongs to the Lord

God brings Jonah into an impossible situation to show him that God is a God who graciously does for his people what

they don't deserve and can't do for themselves. **He is the God who saves them.**

Jonah's response is to praise God

not just for saving him but for his character as the God who saves. This is an Old Testament example of Eph 1:3-14 .

God saves Jonah to the praise of his glorious grace. Salvation is all of God so God gets the glory.

Jonah's understanding of this was limited, because Christ hadn't yet come. We know that the ultimate and final display of God's glory in salvation would be seen in his own Son, Jesus Christ, coming into the world to:

- be born as a man and live a life of perfect obedience
- die in the place of sinners on a cross, rising to life three days later

He did this to secure the salvation of his people from sin to the praise of his glorious grace

God's plan for salvation is revealed throughout the Old and New Testaments, showing us that it truly belongs to him.

1. It is God who planned this salvation

God is just and must punish all sin, but he is also love and wishes to show mercy to sinners. This dilemma is resolved through his own Son, Jesus Christ. In Christ, God is able to show mercy and forgive sinners, whilst also satisfying his own justice (**Romans 3:25-26** see p4). Crucially, it was God who solved this dilemma, not humanity. God had a plan before he even created the world. (**Ephesians 1:4** above), consulting with himself to make a way to rescue sinners.

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2. It is God who provided the sacrifice

All through the Bible, we see that a person is put right with God through sacrifice.

- When Adam and Eve sinned, they felt shame for the first time and tried to cover their nakedness, but couldn't. **God** provided a covering for them from animal skins, which meant an animal had to die.
- When God established Israel as his covenant people, every year a priest had to go into the most holy place to meet with God, and sprinkle the blood of an animal on the mercy seat to atone for the sin of the people. As the author of life, **God** provided both the plan for this and the animals for the sacrifice.

These sacrifices were necessary until the final sacrifice for sin took place – the death of Jesus.

It was God who provided Jesus as a sacrifice, causing him to be born in a miraculous way so that he didn't inherit the sin of his father. **It was God** who protected his life

through infancy and adulthood, and then providentially governed the responses of those who eventually sent him to his death on a cross. Scripture tells us, both through Paul and through the words of the Lord Jesus himself, that **it is God who does all this (Romans 3:25, John 3:16 p4)**. There are many other expressions of this. We cannot and have not provided anything to atone for our sins.

Salvation belongs to the Lord

3. It is God who chooses his people. (Ephesians 1:3-6 above)

God chose those who would receive these spiritual blessings **before the foundation of the world**. We had not lived, let alone done anything good that would merit God's favour, or anything bad that would earn God's wrath. **Romans 9:11-13** (see p4) shows us this in what was foretold about the lives of Jacob and Esau. We want to be masters of our own destiny so we struggle with the message that **it is God who chooses us**, and try to explain it away, thinking it shows a God who is unjust. **Romans 9:14-16** (p4) is the answer to this.

Salvation belongs to the Lord

4. It is God who pursues sinners

God is pursuing Jonah, but he has also pursued the pagan sailors and brought them to fear and worship him, through their experience of God's grace. This was not an accident that happened as a result of Jonah's disobedience, but the providential outworking of God's purpose and plan. God is also pursuing the Ninevites to bring them to repentance. Jonah may be acting sinfully, and he has to face the consequences of that, but **what Jonah means for evil, God means for good**.

When Jesus was on earth, he taught that God is the one who does the seeking. The story of Zacchaeus shows this clearly. (**Luke 19:1-10 p4**). Jesus intentionally met with Zacchaeus, though Zacchaeus wasn't expecting him to do so, and his life was changed as a result. If you have any interest in Christian things, it is because God has pursued you and continues to do so.

Salvation belongs to the Lord

5. It is God who causes us to come alive to him.

The Bible is clear about the absolute necessity of being born again in order to be saved from sin. (e.g **John 3:3** p4). The kingdom of God won't make sense to you unless you have been born again. Both Peter and John show us that God causes this to happen (**1Peter 1:3, John 1:13** p4). It is not something we can do, any more than our original birth was brought about by our own actions.

Salvation really does belong to the Lord

What can we do in response?

- a) **We are to depend on God's grace to save us** – we can't save ourselves or those around us, but God can, so

We need to depend on him to do what we can't

- **If you are not a Christian** – come to him and cry out to him for the salvation he offers. Bank everything on the fact that he is a God who saves. Don't stop to wonder if God has chosen you. Ask him to save you.
- **If you are a Christian but have loved ones who are not** – trust those loved ones to God, knowing he is in the business of saving. They may appear to be far from God but he can sovereignly work in their lives. Don't spend time wondering if they are among the chosen, but pray for them tirelessly.
- **If you are a Christian and are battling persistent sins** – you know God has saved and forgiven you but you cannot get the victory. As you come to him and confess your sin, bringing it into the light and waging war against it, he will give you the victory because he is the God who saves.

- b) **We are to be a channel of God's grace** – If you have experienced God's grace then you need to be gracious with others. There is no room for pride in the kingdom of God because God has done it all. We are not saved because we are good but because of God's grace. That grace needs to be seen in our lives, in the way we treat one another, and to be spoken of to those who have not yet experienced it.

- c) **We are to praise God for his grace**

Everything God does, he does to put his glory on display for the praise of his name and the delight of his people.

He blessed us with every spiritual blessing to the praise of his glorious grace (v6 above). When time is over, we will find ourselves standing before the throne of God, singing the praises of God's grace.

Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb (Rev 7:10
see p4 for full text)

We are meant to practice that song while we're here on earth. As God opens our hearts to his salvation through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we see the wonder of God's grace to do what we couldn't do for ourselves so praise rises in our hearts to God. We are meant to express that heartfelt joy-filled praise to him.

Paul ends his teaching on salvation for sinners with praise because his heart filled with joy (Romans 11: 33-36)

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?"³⁵ "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?". For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Jonah 1:17 And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah 2 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, ² saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.³ For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. ⁴ Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' ⁵ The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head ⁶ at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. ⁷ When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. ⁸ Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.⁹ But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. **Salvation belongs to the LORD!**"¹⁰ And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

Romans 3:25-26 Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 9:11-13 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—¹² she was told, "The older will serve the younger."¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Romans 9:14-16 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

Luke 19:1-10 He entered Jericho and was passing through.² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

1Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

John 1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Revelation 7:9-10⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice,

"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

