

*** An In Depth Look at PERSONAL SALVATION

Part 3 - Love, Grace and Faith Based Salvation ***

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[0 : 00] The message this morning is love, grace, and faith-based salvation. And this morning we'll be looking in the Bible at the book of Ephesians.

And we will be in chapter 1, looking at verses 3 through 11. Ephesians 1.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished on us.

[1 : 46] In all wisdom and insight, he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his kind intention, which he proposed in him with a view to the administration suitable to the fullness of the times.

That is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

In him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to his purpose, who works all things after the counsel of his will.

We have been striving for simplicity in profundity as we discuss the gospel or the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And suffice it to say at the outset that there is nothing that is more simple than the gospel that Christ died for our sins. At the same time, there is no theme that is so profound as the substitutionary death of Christ on behalf of a fallen world.

[3 : 17] So we are going to conclude our brief examination of the singular most critical event to our entire personhood.

That event has to do with the continuation of our very being as humans. We know this present life will end in our physical death.

There may be a tendency of those younger to deny the reality of their mortality. And that's perfectly understandable.

I think most of us do as youth. But let me tell you, once you are seasoned and have enough decades of time added to your being and enough aches and pains added to your joints, you begin coming more into grips with the reality that this thing called life on this earth is not going to continue forever.

That there is an end. And we see those loved ones, friends, and strangers all around us. We read their obituaries in the newspaper and we know that humanity is going to another place.

[4 : 35] And even as the new generation is coming on with birth, the older is dying off. So, we have seen it happen to everyone as much with others as who have passed on.

And reasonableness tells us it will happen to us also. And the issue then, of course, becomes and the only issue. What then? Is there a continuation?

And if so, on what terms? Or, as some suggest, death just ends it all. When you die, you die like a dog and you're buried and that's the end of it and there is no heaven and there is no hell and there is no anything hereafter.

It's all over. That's it. That is a rather popular view in some circles today. And it is also that misconception that prompts many people to end their life, which they consider to be one of unbearable pain, by suicide.

Because their thinking is an obliteration and an entrance into absolute nothingness would be better than what I'm experiencing now.

[5 : 52] So I will just end it all. And there are a number of people who actually operate on that premise and they succeed in taking their own lives. Tragedy of tragedies is that there has been a very concerning uptick in the lives of young people who have scarcely gotten underway in their life who have decided to end it all.

And each one that does is publicity and impetus for others to do the same thing. and that in part is due to the general falling away of spiritual truth and eternal realities in this nation by this generation and we are paying a terrible, terrible price.

So this all boils down to what provision has been made, if any, for our continuation beyond this life. And here is where one called Jesus Christ enters the picture.

Who is he? What was he about? What was his tenure on earth all about some 2,000 years ago? Why did he come to earth? Who sent him?

Why? What did he accomplish? How did he do it? What difference does it make to me or to you? And why should we even care? So we are going to begin before the beginning and you are aware that the beginning as far as we mortals are concerned is Genesis 1.1 which says in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

[7 : 29] However, that was not in the beginning of God but it was just in the beginning of the heavens and the earth. So I want you to think in terms of some simple logic that we have adopted just by virtue of living in this world and learning a few things and that is simple logic compels our commitment to the principle of causation and all I mean by that is nothing happens without being caused.

That's one of the premier laws of logic. Everything that has a beginning must have a cause but Christian position is God had no beginning therefore was not cause.

God is the uncaused first cause. God is the being that transcends everything and he is the only being that does.

I'm just giving you some basic propositions here and we'll be launching into a couple of different passages of scripture momentarily. This eternal uncaused first cause is declared to have existed as a three person being constituting one divine entity referred to as God a being without limitations.

His subsistence as one God comprised of three distinct beings designated as Father Son and Spirit yet comprising one God and this transcends our ability to comprehend his being and nature.

[9 : 25] This three in one and one in three arrangement reveals this God to be an entirely other than what our finite minds can entertain.

suggesting the deity is of an entirely different order from our humanness. One of the great difficulties that we have in dealing with spiritual values is that we insist on humanizing the deity and we really get off track in a hurry when we do that.

We try to evaluate and understand God on the basis of our own humanity and let me emphasize with as much as I can emphasis that is an entirely inappropriate kind of comparison.

God is the ultimate otherness. He is not to be confounded or confused with us in our humanness at all and perhaps the single reason why some think that that is a possibility is because of the incarnation because in the incarnation God became man.

The word became flesh and dwelt upon us and he took unto himself humanity. That erroneously leads some to think that therefore the deity is much like we are as people.

[10 : 59] No he isn't. God is utterly other and only in the aspect of the second person of the triune Godhead who took upon him humanity was enfleshed as a human being.

That was to communicate with us and to identify with us and to be able to make that ultimate payment that he made as a human and he made it in a human body.

But don't allow that to make you think God is altogether such and one as us because he is not. In Jesus he took a humanity upon him and he did become like unto his brethren but that is a far different cry than assessing the deity the triune God in that fashion.

There are so many things connected with him that we in our humanity just simply cannot accept. But once you realize that God represents that God is that ultimate otherness far removed from our human frame or our human brain then perhaps you are thinking more along the right line.

The record of all that we have declared this uncaused first cause to be is confined to the only source providing this information and it is our Bible graciously provided to us by this uncaused first cause who is self-revealing and had God not chosen to reveal himself in what we call particular revelation or special revelation as his bound up in the scriptures we would not begin to know anything about him other than the fact that he is a creator and this we can learn by virtue of the created world we know that this came from someone someone had to make it someone had to originate it and the Bible the general creation the oceans the mountains the trees the plants and everything can reveal to us that there is a God that is but beyond knowing his existence you cannot know this God apart from self-revelation and that's what we have in the Bible it is a self-revelation it is this book alone that provides this information and in it we have a clue as to what God was about and in Revelation chapter 13 and verse 8 and if you will turn to that we will give you some brief explanation as to what was before anything was and the divine intention that was behind it and Revelation 13 8 reveals something about this it just kind of sets the stage for realizing we're going beyond

[13 : 51] Genesis 1 and verse 1 and verse 8 says and all who dwell on the earth will worship him everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world and the book of life of the Lamb who was slain and I think it is the King James Revelation scripture that says refers to Christ as being the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world well that of course automatically presupposes that there was a time if we can use that word and I use it probably ill advised because when we talk about time we are stepping into a different sphere than that in which God dwells Isaiah reminds us that God is one who inhabits eternity he does not dwell in time and time and space did not even come into being until

Genesis 1-1 when God created both time and space because he's going to put physical objects in it including human beings and human beings need time and space in which to dwell and function God does not dwell and inhabits eternity he does not occupy time and space God is a spirit being and this of course is something that just tends to escape us but the revelation refers to him as slain before the foundation of the world well how can that be how can Christ be spoken of as having been slain virtually put on the cross if you will before the foundation of the world how could he how could you think in terms of that before there was a world with a foundation to place a cross upon upon which you could be crucified well all of this is simply looking at the reality from God's perspective and in the eternal plan and purpose of God there was no time and I hate using that word when we're talking about this concept but I have to there was no time when Christ was not the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world this was in the mind and heart of the deity before

Genesis 1 1 was ever brought into being so we are looking back before there was any people any creation any anything to what had to have existed in the mind of God when there was nothing and no one that existed but himself subsisting in three persons as father son and spirit no angels no stars no planets no space no anything no nothing yet there was this eternal uncaused first cause if you understand that please explain it to me afterwards because I certainly don't but I just know that this is the way it has to be for the uncaused first cause if you will come to

Revelation chapter 4 we will give a little bit more insight into why there is something rather than nothing and the purpose of it all and this is the only place in my estimation at least that I've ever been able to discover that it is ever found anywhere in scripture as to why there is something rather than nothing and we'll begin if you will in Revelation chapter 4 and verse 10 these are the 24 elders who remain unidentified I really wish I knew who they were but they are not identified other than saying 24 elders they do they do have to have a humanity they do have to be human beings because they are objects of redemption and that is limited to humanity so who they are we still do not know I'm sure we'll find out one day but the text says in verse 10 the 24 elders will fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever and will cast their crowns before the throne saying by the way you understand this has never happened this is prophetic this is a picture of what is going to take place

John is describing it because God is giving John this panoramic vision of what is to come and he tells John write the things which you have seen and heard and that's what John is doing he is giving the writer John a panoramic view of what is going to transpire upon the earth in the future and he is telling John to put it in a book and John did that and this is the book he put it in this is the content this is what is going to transpire they will cast down their crowns before the throne saying worthy art thou our lord our lord and our god to receive glory and honor and power recognition if you will acknowledgement and the reason being for or because thou didst create all things and because of thy will they existed and were created

[20 : 00] I think the king James renders it and because of your good pleasure it pleased god to create that's the only reason we're given why is there something rather than nothing because there was a time when there was nothing and into this nothingness something came why because it pleased god the question is why did it please him that we are not told we do not have a clue I've suggested in time past and I would reiterate it again god never created anything and god never did anything out of a sense of any kind of need because god has no needs that he does not and cannot perfectly meet within his own character and nature he need not go outside himself to meet anything that he considers himself as needing he is a self contained being so all we can say is it pleased him to create why it pleased him we are not told but that was his entire motive it was pleasing to him to do so and then if you will look at 5 14 we have the counterpart to this having creation because in between something is going to happen and what is going to happen is chapter 5 and that becomes the basis for the weeping that

John expresses in chapter 5 he began to weep greatly there was this little book and this book was a book was sealed with seven seals and I am of the opinion as are a number of Bible scholars that this represented the title deed to the earth and it's a remarkable concept the title deed to the earth and what happened was when God created our first parents he gave them dominion that means he made them the boss he put them in charge Adam and Eve all of the animals that have been created and all of the vegetation all of it is completely under your authority you are to exercise dominion over the whole earth and everything upon it you're the boss you're in charge and when you get into Genesis chapter 3 it is then that the consummate con man comes on the scene and his name is Satan the adversary he is a deceiver and a murderer and he literally conned our first parents he deceived

Eve into thinking that she could be greater than she was and that she could become like God etc and in her innocence and in her naivete she bought into it which simply means she transferred her loyalty from the God who created her to another creature which of course was Satan and she gave to Adam and he did eat and they too having taken upon them a kind of nature that God did not put in them because they are now imbued with a disobedient spirit they are exercising the volition that God gave them they could obey him they could disobey him in this case they chose to obey Romans 1 says they obeyed the creature more than the creator and their foolish hearts were darkened and that has been passed on to every succeeding generation and all foolish hearts all human foolish hearts are darkened and Satan adds to that darkenedness by deceiving those 2 Corinthians 4 blinding the minds of those that believe not this is why we reason with a warped intellect this is why we come to such harebrained conclusions that we do as human beings when we assess situations and devise a plan of action that others might look upon as being so absolutely stupid where did you ever come up with something like that well it isn't hard for us to do that we can come up with some really foolish ideas look at the world of politics today

I rest my case do you see the skewed kind of thinking that I'm talking about people get a national stage and they say things and at least people out there in the in the hinterland saying to themselves where in the world are they coming from what why are they thinking did you hear what he said and on and on and on and on and politics is an excellent example of some pretty harebrained ideas and they apply to every area of life so having forfeited this dominion they turned it over to satan and he's in charge he's in charge and I've told you before our one great consolation is god does put the brakes on him but he allows him pretty much free reign he puts stipulations on his treatment of of job when he wouldn't allow job to take his life and

I've likened Satan to a mad dog on the leash and god is controlling the leash and he can yank on his leash anytime he wants but satan has a great deal of latitude and for people who think that god is in charge of this world how do you explain what is happening listen when god is in charge of this world the whole world is going to know it and they sure don't know it now so it is satan who is in charge of this world he has the title deed to the planet and he tricked our first parents out of it he still holds it and this in revelation chapter five this book no one was able to open the book or to look into it sealed with the seven seals and verse five says one of the elders said to me that is to

[26 : 47] John stop weeping behold the lion that is from the tribe of Judah the root of David that's Yeshua Mashiach that's Jesus that's the Messiah he has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals and how did he overcome what did he do to overcome what did he mean when he said to his disciples in the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer I have overcome the world what did he mean by that he was talking about the cross and the payment that he was going to make on that cross to reverse the whole process and recapture the earth that was lost the dominion that was lost to open the book and the seven seals and I saw between the throne with the four living creatures and the elders the lamb this is the lamb of whom John is speaking in chapter one behold the lamb of

God that takes away the sin of the world and here he is saying he sees the vision slain having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth I wish I understood that better than I do and he came this lamb came and he took it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne and when he had taken the book the four living creatures and the twenty four elders still unidentified fell down and they're historic thing but it's prophetic as far as God is concerned it is past it's over and done with but as far as we are concerned we are marching through eternity years at a time and time and space year at a time the four and twenty elders fell down before the lamb having each a harp golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints and they sang a new song and here is the essence of the song worthy art thou to take the book and to break its seals why why is he worthy because thou wast slain and didst purchase for

God with thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation this is redemption in chapter 4 it's creation via God's pleasure in chapter 5 it is the redemption of that which was forfeited from the original creation this is nothing more than Jesus Christ taking back you see scripture speaks of in 1st Corinthians 15 scripture speaks of Jesus Christ as being not only the lion of the tribe of Judah but he's referred to as the last Adam think of that the first Adam brought the whole thing crashing down and the last Adam restores and redeems that which was lost and apart from that there is no occasion and no justification for anything but weeping and sorrow and the writer says and

I wept greatly because there was no one able to open the book no one could claim taking the title deed of the earth until this lamb stepped forward and the reason he could was because he bought it and paid for it and now it is his rightful possession and he is going to take back that which the first Adam forfeited and if you want to know the end of the adversary who was responsible for it all you can read that in Revelation 19 which will not take time to go to but that is the upshot of it and the demise of Satan so how was this redemption this buying back to be accomplished it was through the slaying of the lamb the lamb that was slain identified by John in chapter 1 this lamb is the eternal son of God who subsisted with his eternal father and eternal spirit as the uncaused first cause and the divine rationale for all of this is not disclosed anywhere to our knowledge other than that

God was pleased to do so that was the only reason for your existence today we are here by his good pleasure here in this divine rationality of being was pleased to create the most incomprehensible drama drama never capable of humans to imagine it began to be played out it is the drama of creation its forfeiture and its redemption Ephesians 1 which Gary read earlier if you will turn back to it please we will use that as our kind of capstone for this whole creation redemption thing because this explains to us where it is all going in verse 9 the apostle says that he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his kind intention which he purposed in him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times that is the summing up of all things in

[32 : 42] Christ things in the heavens and things upon the earth in him also we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will and he might add that also to the praise of his good pleasure and to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of his glory so your redemption or salvation to eternal life is based on the divinely established vehicle called justification by faith and what had to have taken place and I said had to have taken place because I can see no other possibility before there was a heaven before there was an earth before anything was created before any planets were made before any stars were formed before anything there was the father the son and the spirit who obviously in concurrence among them devised what we call redemption's plan creation's plan and it was for the creation of all things it took into consideration that this was going to result in man exercising the volition that God gave him in a negative way angels would do likewise but it was imperative that God give humans and angels volition otherwise they're going to be nothing but robots and that

God did not want so he made them with volition they rebelled against him and they brought everything to wreck and ruin as a result of that and Jesus Christ the Lamb of God has been agreed with agreed with the father with the spirit in that eternal before everything that this was the way it's going to be this is the only reason you're here this is the only reason any of us are here this plan was put into into concept between these beings and we are told that it was kept secret from before the world began this whole thing was contrived within these three eternal beings as to what would be how it would be lost why it would be lost how it would be regained and what would be the basis for it being regained so that all those who come in line with that program can enjoy the presence of the creator throughout eternity there we have the whole thing in a nutshell this is why there is anything this is where it is going and we have a concept whereby this infinitely holy righteous

God is forced to deal with an issue that would sully his holiness and his righteousness through disobedience this brought something unholy into God's universe that did not exist before and it all started with his giving angels volition Lucifer exercised his became Satan Adam and Eve exercised theirs became fallen creatures setting up the need for redemption this whole thing this whole Bible all of it from Genesis to Revelation is one single story it's a story the theme of which is redemption and it focuses upon the redeemer this one person and all who come in line with the accomplishments of this one person enjoy being restored from a position of fallenness to a position of complete acceptance with the beloved and this is called justification by faith and that means we become justified or declared righteous despite the sin of our first parents despite our own sin as a result of being born of sinful parents we are brought into a position of right relationship and acceptance and acceptance with an utterly holy

God based upon nothing more than your trust commitment to and belief in this plan and program of God whereby Jesus died for your sins God this is a concept that no novelist could ever come up with no matter how much they tried this is something that is so foreign from humanity and human thinking that it required God himself to come up with it and that's what he did what we have to present to the world that is called the gospel good news is something that is so utterly foreign so far removed from human thinking and human comprehension that were it not clearly spelled out in this book the Bible we never ever imagine it think of it know it or be able to respond to it this is what everything is all about this is where it's all going this is what will have been accomplished when the end comes and it is all through this one grand scheme called redemption and when someone hears this gospel this explanation of the good news that we are lost and apart from

God and his righteousness we are condemned and that someone came to our rescue and did for us what we could not do for ourselves and that's why it's called the good news it is God's gracious deliverance for sinful human beings through the payment that was made by another and this is something generally that the world tends to scoff at and the apostle Paul told us they would he said the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who do not believe but to those who believe it is the power of God through faith unto salvation this is the kind of thing that is so foreign so far removed from anything that mankind could devise that's one reason that he finds it difficult to accept it it sounds so otherworldly because it is otherworldly it began for the scriptures say it began and it is played out in history and you are a part of it granted we're all bit players but we're all players in this great unfolding drama called redemption so the only issue that remains and the only question that you really need to deal with is are you one of the redeemed are you an in or an out are you a saved or lost are you a regenerated or an unregenerated are you a bound for heaven or are you bound for separation from God forever because of your sin this is this is this is mind boggling it is it's supposed to be it's a God thing that's why so what's your response to it what do you think of it what do you make of it what are you going to do about it that's the only question that remains to be answered and there isn't anybody that can answer it but you so let's pray together our father we recognize that there are still so many things about this incredible transaction that we just cannot wrap our minds around but to the extent that we are able to understand what we are we see it as a thoroughly amazing arrangement that only a creative mind like yourself would ever devise and we are just so grateful that you did we see ourselves as unworthy of this great love and of this enormous sacrifice that was made but we also see ourselves as available to take advantage of what you provided and our prayer today is that everyone within the hearing of my voice would be willing and able to do that and father our prayer is for any who are considering this might they be honest and willing to ask themselves if not this what what else is there what else would they propose what grand scheme could they suggest have they an alternate plan can it provide any assurance any peace any certainty all must

[42 : 47] answer negatively because only in you do we have those things provided and we are so grateful beyond all of this divine scheme and plan of the universe we see an incredible love whereby you in your own person as the eternal uncaused first cause was willing for that holy relationship between father son and spirit to be ruptured in a way that we can't explain because Jesus your son was made to be sin for us causing your abandonment of him another concept that we cannot imagine apparently a concept that Jesus himself could not imagine for he prayed if there was any other way to accomplish the end but nevertheless not his will but yours be done so with all of our questions that still remain and our doubts we know enough to respond and our prayer is that anyone here who has never really realized what is involved may be able to connect those dots now and say Lord

Jesus there's still a whole lot about this that I don't understand and that's just part of my being a human being but I understand enough to know I want to respond and as best as I know how I want to place myself in the trust and in the care of this Savior who loved me and gave himself for me so here I am I want to put my trust in the Lord Jesus I'm looking to him for his salvation and his forgiveness thank you for being my substitute on that cross the very least I can do is put my faith in him and that's what I do right now dear friend if that has been your decision let someone else know about it so that they can rejoice with you and encourage you thank you father for this time that we've shared together this morning thank you for the simplicity of it and for the great profundity of it only you could put together something like this and then reveal it to us we're so glad you did in Christ's wonderful name amen