8-5-18

Ephesians 2:7

It is absolutely necessary, as a Christian, to understand that God has offered us salvation, and that He has offered it only through Jesus Christ. Not only salvation, but as we are told back in 1:10, God is working to sum up all things in heaven and earth in Jesus Christ. Now, when we consider everything that Paul wrote about us in the first three verses of this chapter, all the true things he wrote about us, the question becomes “Why did God provide salvation for us?”

When we look back at these last couple of verses, we see some things that are part of God’s character, part of His very being, that might lead Him to provide salvation for us. First off is His mercy; God is rich in mercy. Mercy involves having compassion for someone who is in a bad way, and we are in a bad way. Mercy leads to acting on someone’s behalf who needs help.

God is kind. His nature is to be tender toward us. His desire is to do good things for us and give us gifts. He loves us. As we are told in 1 John 4:8, “God is love”. He loves us with a great love, beyond what we are capable of understanding. We see this love in what He was willing to do to bring us salvation. It is God’s character to have grace. He is willing to give unmerited favor. Again, when we consider our own character and our own nature, we become painfully aware that we deserve nothing good from God; we don’t deserve to have any of these good attributes showered upon us as they are.

In addition to these attributes of God that we like to consider, there are some that we don’t like to think about. God is righteous. He requires righteousness from any who might associate with Him. God is just. His justice requires that any unrighteousness must be punished. These two things together bring about God’s wrath. God’s wrath is His righteous response to sin to ensure justice. We don’t like to think about these attributes as much because we are unrighteous and, by our nature, we are under God’s wrath.

All these attributes of God are good. There is nothing in God that is evil or wrong in any way. And God made a way for us to have salvation without going against any part of His nature. All these parts of His nature play a part in why God saved us, but here in verse 7, we see the underlying reason for everything that God has done.

So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Let’s consider the words “He might show”. In these words, we find the ultimate reason for what God is doing; the ultimate reason for Him providing us with a means of salvation. It is for His glory. God’s glory is in the brightness of the light and the radiance of the colors that radiates from Him. His glory is in the majesty of His very presence. It is His almighty power and His creativity that shows in everything He has made. He is glorious in His wisdom. It is for His glory that He provides salvation for us and defeats the devil in all he has done.

God does seek His own glory. Now for us to do that would be arrogance and selfish pride. But that is not the case for God. He has none of the fallen characteristics that we have. Moreover, He deserves it. He is glorious and He deserve to be given more glory. He deserves to be worshiped, revered, feared, praised, and thanked. He is truly God in every sense of the word. It is important for us as Christians, to understand what this means.

Because we are fallen human-beings, it is our nature to start with ourselves and look to God to see what He can do for us. Now in saying that, I am not saying that it is wrong to look to God for our needs and desires; He wants us to do that, He wants us to depend on Him. But part of our sanctification is to learn that we must start with God. He created us for Himself. It is for us to seek ways to please Him and glorify Him. We are to live our lives for the purpose of giving Him glory. That is why, no matter what happens to us, we must thank Him and remain true to Him.

Once again, because of our fallen nature, rebellion rises up within us. We want to live our lives for ourselves. We don’t like the idea of being submissive to anyone, not even God. But that is what all humanity ought to do; that is what the Christian does once he understands. God created us; we are his. Once we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit teaches us our place with respect to God and gives us the ability to submit to Him and to do so joyously.

How does the salvation that God provides for us lead to His glory? Back we go to the beginning. We know that God created satan and he was the most beautiful of all His creation. But he wanted to be at least equal to God if not above Him.

Isaiah 14:12-15

How you have fallen from heaven,  
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!  
You have been cut down to the earth,  
You who have weakened the nations!  
“But you said in your heart,  
‘I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,  
And I will sit on the mount of assembly  
In the recesses of the north.  
‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.’  
“Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,  
To the recesses of the pit.

Because satan couldn’t have God’s glory, he tried to ruin it; satan works to detract from God’s glory. The way he did this was to ruin God’s creation. Satan went directly after Adam and Eve. These two were made in the image of God, so this is where he focused his attack. Satan didn’t care at all about Adam and Eve; he doesn’t care about us. He is happy to kill us and lead us away from God and use us to bring about discord; but he is simply using us. He is using us to try to detract from God’s glory. God made something very good, and satan tries to make God seem like less than He is by turning it bad.

But God was not taken by surprise. He didn’t have to suddenly try to think of a plan B. He was aware of what would take place long before He began creation; He already had satan’s defeat in mind; and He already had man’s redemption underway. Ultimately, in the end, our salvation will show how ineffective satan’s plan was; God will be glorified even more by what He has done for us; and satan will be crushed by having to face how futile his plans were. Even more, once God’s power is shown in our salvation, satan will be forced to bow before Jesus to give God glory.

We as Christians are called to be obedient to God, we are called to follow the commands of Jesus. Recall what Jesus said was the greatest commandment.

Mark 12:29-30

Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

I think that we all fail miserably in trying to follow this command. That is no excuse to not try. It also shows the necessity of depending on the Holy Spirit. The thing is, when we try to do this, we are giving God glory. We are turning our backs on all of satan’s enticements and proving God right in creating us.

With this life comes suffering and that is especially true in the Christian life. When we suffer and continue to cling to God, we again give glory to God at the expense of satan. Suffering is an especially powerful testimony to God. It can be confusing; satan wants us to suffer and God allows us to suffer. Satan wants us to suffer to take glory from God. God allows us to suffer to bring Him glory. We wonder why we have to deal with this suffering. Remember that satan hates you; but God loves you.

Consider this: what do we actually deserve? I think we all know that the answer is eternal suffering due to our rebellion against God and our sin. But God has taken that away from us through Christ. So, what is a little suffering in our lifetime if it brings God glory. Bear in mind what Paul said:

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

This is what we need to keep in mind. We might suffer and we might devote our lives to bringing God glory, but God loves us. All these things will end up being great benefit to us. In the end, all of God’s love, kindness, mercy, and grace will be on display; all those who have received salvation will be before the throne. God’s great wisdom will be demonstrated in His creation’s salvation. All through Jesus Christ, all to His glory, all to the shame of satan and those who followed him.

What better purpose could we have in life? It doesn’t matter what we gain here; how much money or the number of our possessions. We lose it all when we die. It doesn’t matter the amount of power we have here on earth, in the grand scheme of things it’s not real anyway. But to bring God glory? That is being used for true and good purpose. That is heaping eternal shame on satan, the one who caused us all these problems in the first place. And as an added bonus, we are storing up treasure in heaven that will be waiting for us and be ours forever.

In verse 7, Paul mentions “ages to come”. The idea this brings to mind is waves coming into shore, one after another, continuously. We can picture the almost 2000 years since Paul wrote this as a series of ages. During that time, Christianity has had times of great expansion and times of slowing and persecution. Waves coming in; yet all through them, Christianity has remained; the work of Christ on the cross has continued to bring salvation to countless souls. God has been glorified by the lives of His saints.

Who knows what ages are to come? However long the earth shall last, we know that people will be brought to Christ because that is the work of Christians and the Holy Spirit. And then we can think about eternity after the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. We can’t imagine how that might be; perhaps countless ages still coming about; and through all of them, God will be showing the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Considering all that, how can we help but want to bring glory to God and to His Son, Jesus Christ? We are urged to do this by Paul in Romans 12:1-2.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

If you are looking for purpose in life, this is it. If you are looking for God’s will in your life, this is it. Now it may be that at some time, God will lead you into some special work or ministry; but until then, we bring glory to God in the way Paul describes here in Romans. After the sacrifice Jesus made for us, what higher calling could we have?

Prayer

LORD, we know that it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, that we even have the desire to please You. But we thank You for giving us this desire. Increase it, that we may be more drawn to You, more hopeful of closer fellowship with You.

Make us like our Saviour, Jesus Christ. It was His purpose to do Your will while He was here on earth and He was successful. Make us like Him, that Your will can be determined and then become our purpose in life. We need Your guidance.

When You look upon Your servants, You see the righteousness of Your Son; that is the only way that we are acceptable to You. All this is due to Your grace; thank You LORD, for that grace that saves us and brings us close to You. Use us for Your glory and may we seek Your glory, with no other purpose in mind.

In Jesus’ name we pray

Amen