

FCCreformation500

September 29, 2017

God's Single-Handed Salvation Luke 19:10

THIS IS WHAT THE SOVERIEGN LORD SAYS

Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

THE INTRODUCTION: Everyone **loves** to be saved! You do. I do. Everyone out there does!

Sox in '04 – Market Basket debacle settled – Patriot Nation – Hurricane/Earthquake victims – Lonely people – cash-strapped college students – high pressured sales and high pressured college students – those in falling apart marriages or relationships – us band of misfit sinners! EVERYONE longs for and loves rescue & relief! (SAVED)

There are many today, as there have been throughout church history, that may say “*God saves broken sinners*”, but under that veneer of the lips is a heart that rages to actually believe this. For many, God and me somehow combine to save me. God may get me “in” by **His** blood, sweat & tears, but then I must keep myself “in” His good graces by **my** blood, sweat & tears! In the classic words of Michael Horton, who rightly assesses the theology of the masses today: “*God has voted for you to be saved, the devil has voted you to be damned. It’s a tie! You cast the deciding vote!*”

Deep down in the heart’s fallen recesses many cry out in a prayer like this: “*Lord, please restore to us the comfort of merit and demerit. Show us that there is at least something we can do. Tell us that at the end of the day there will at least be one redeeming card of our very own. Lord, if it is not too much to ask, send us to bed with a few shreds of self-respect upon which we can congratulate ourselves. But whatever you do, do not preach grace. Give us something to do, anything; but spare us the indignity of this indiscriminate acceptance.*”
- Robert Capon

Well dear friends, this weekend, in our soul-rockin, heart-stirring, mind-clarifying celebration of the raw, sheer, life-transforming **graciousness of God**, recaptured once again at the Reformation, we want to be crystal-clear in our declaration about the Christian anthem . . . that:

God - Father, Son & Holy Spirit, **single-handedly saves**: justifies, sanctifies & glorifies **sinners**!

God saves sinners - J.I. Packer, Knowing God

God - the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father's will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of Father and Son by renewing. **Saves** - does everything, first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory: plans, achieves and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies. **Sinners** - men as God finds them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, blind, unable to lift a finger to do God's will or better their spiritual lot.

God saves sinners - and the force of this confession may not be weakened by disrupting the unity of the work of the Trinity, or by dividing the achievement of salvation between God and man and making the decisive part man's own, or by soft-pedaling the sinner's inability as to allow him to share the praise of his salvation with his Savior.

THE BIG IDEA: The one bullet I have this evening, and every Sunday is that **God** (Father, Son & Holy Spirit) *saves train-wreck people single-handedly*, all by Himself, with no aid from anyone or anything. And God's single-handed salvation:

- Brings Him glory alone
- Does us great good and brings us deep joy in Jesus
- Fuels us to further the unstoppable gospel of forgiveness of sin & declared righteousness!

Exodus 6:6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and ***I will bring you out*** from under the yoke of the Egyptians. ***I will free you*** from being slaves to them, and ***I will redeem you*** with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

Exodus 20:2 "I am the LORD your God, ***who brought you out*** of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Ezekiel 36 'For ***I will*** take you out of the nations; ***I will*** gather you from all the countries and ***I will*** bring you back into your own land. (25) ***I will*** sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; ***I will*** cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. (26) ***I will*** give you a new heart and ***I will*** put a new spirit in you; ***I will*** remove from you your heart of stone and ***I will*** give you a heart of flesh. (27) And ***I will*** put my Spirit in you and ***I will*** move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (28) You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and ***I will be your God.***

These "I will's" of God are the expression of His grace to undeserving people. It's His exhale of ***ONE WAY LOVE***, as Paul F.M. Zahl & Tullian Tchividjian put it:

"Grace is love that seeks you out when you have nothing to give in return. Grace is love coming at you that has nothing to do with you. Grace is being loved when you are unlovable. . . The cliché definition of grace is "unconditional love." It is a true cliché, for it is a good description of the thing. . .

*Let's go a little further, though. Grace is a love that has nothing to do with you, the beloved. It has **everything and only** to do with the lover. Grace is irrational in the sense that it has nothing to do with weights and measures. It has nothing to do with my intrinsic qualities or so-called "gifts" (whatever they may be). It reflects a decision on the part of the giver, the one who loves, in relation to the receiver, the one who is loved, that negates any qualifications the receiver may personally hold. . .*

Grace is one-way love."

"Grace doesn't make demands. It just gives. And from our vantage point, it always gives to the wrong person. We see this over and over again in the Gospels: Jesus is always giving to the wrong people—prostitutes, tax collectors, half-breeds. The most extravagant sinners of Jesus's day receive his most compassionate welcome. Grace is a divine vulgarity that stands caution on its head. It refuses to play it safe and lay it up. Grace is recklessly generous, uncomfortably promiscuous. It doesn't use sticks, carrots, or time cards. It doesn't keep score. As Robert Capon puts it, "Grace works without requiring anything on our part. It's not expensive. It's not even cheap. It's free." It refuses to be controlled by our innate sense of fairness, reciprocity, and evenhandedness. It defies logic. It has nothing to do with earning, merit, or deservedness. It is opposed to what is owed. It doesn't expect a return on investments. It is a liberating contradiction between what we deserve and what we get. Grace is unconditional acceptance given to an undeserving person by an unobligated giver. It is one-way love."

The path I'd like to take this evening to set the stage for tomorrow's track thru the 5 Sola's is:

1. God's single-handed salvation is set in stone right off the bat in Genesis chapter 3!
2. God's single-handed salvation is portrayed by 2 word pictures: BIRTH & CREATION!
3. God's single-handed salvation is substantiated by a sound hermeneutic: God before Man!

1. God's single-handed salvation is set in stone right off the bat in Genesis chapter 3!

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

God comes in judgment, and calls all rebels on the carpet: (**note we're only in the 3rd chapter!**) The serpent, the woman, the man. The incredible thing to note here is that God is speaking this in this redemptive judgment, not to the man, nor to the woman, but to the serpent. That's how "outside of us" salvation really is! Through the temporary death of the woman's seed (Jesus Christ) there will come a fatal blow on the King & kingdom of Evil. God's plan – God's doing – God's rescue!

*The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure. **One little word shall fell him!*** – Martin Luther, A Mighty Fortress

John 19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "**It is finished.**" (tetelestai) With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus does ALL the verbs ...FIRST!

God's Single-Handed Salvation ...Promised & fulfilled

2. God's single-handed salvation is revealed by 2 word pictures: BIRTH & CREATION!

BIRTH:

John 3:3-7 In reply (to Nicodemus) Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, *no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is **born** again...* (5) ..."I tell you the truth, *no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is **born** of water and the Spirit. ...*(7) You should not be surprised at my saying, '**You must be born** again.'

Trying to justify yourself is like trying to give birth to yourself. - Mike Dornan

CREATION:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; the old has gone, the new has come!

Who can help God birth & create? Re-birth & re-create? NONE but HIM!

Do we then do nothing? Do we do nothing at all for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer, Nothing at all! For this is perfect righteousness, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing of the law, or of works, but to know and believe this only, that Christ is gone to the Father, and is not now seen; that He sits in heaven at the right hand of His Father, not as judge, but made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption -- briefly, that He is our high priest entreating for us, and reigning over us, and in us, by grace.

In this heavenly righteousness sin can have no place, for there is no law; and where there is no law, there can be no transgression (Romans 4:15). Seeing then that sin has here no place, there can be no anguish of conscience, no fear, no heaviness.

- Martin Luther, Declaration to the Commentary in Galatians

3. God's single-handed salvation is substantiated by a sound hermeneutic: God before Man!

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

John 1:11-13 ... (12) Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- (13) children born **not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.**

- Understand John 1:11-13 First Then interpret John 3:16 in light of that!
- In other words, interpret John 3:16 in light of John 1:13 ...not the other way around
- Interpret first what seem to be God-centered verses first, then those seemingly man-centered verses in light of THAT!

Ask yourself the meaning of passages like these first:

Matthew 11:25-27 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. (26) Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. (27) "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Romans 9:11-16 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: (12) not by works but by him who calls--she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ... (14) What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! (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) It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

God before Man!

Let me close with these thoughts that help to clarify & echo a Biblical & Reformation vibe on God's Single-handed salvation:

Martin Luther, commenting on Galatians 1:4

***Jesus Christ...who gave Himself for our sins...** Paul never loses sight of the purpose of his epistle. He does not say, "Who received our works," but "who gave." Gave what? Not gold, or silver, or paschal lambs, or an angel, but Himself. What for? Not for a crown, or a kingdom, or our goodness, but for our sins. These words are like so many thunderclaps of protest from heaven against every kind and type of self-merit. Underscore these words, for they are full of comfort for sore consciences.*

***To rescue us...** Paul answers: "The man who is named Jesus Christ and the Son of God **gave himself for our sins, to rescue us.**" The heavy artillery of these words explodes papacy, works, merits, superstitions. For if our sins could be removed by our own efforts, what need was there for the Son of God to be given for them? Since Christ was given for our sins it stands to reason that they cannot be put away by our own efforts.*

"We are justified freely, for Christ's sake, by faith, without the exertion of our own strength, gaining of merit, or doing of works. To the age-old question, 'What shall I do to be saved?' the confessional answer is shocking: 'Nothing! Just be still; shut up and listen for once in your life to what God the Almighty, Creator and Redeemer, is saying to his world and to you in the death and resurrection of his Son! Listen and believe!'"

-Gerhard O. Forde, Justification by Faith (Philadelphia, 1983), p22.

THIS is God's grace RECEIVED!

"Show me one who has been unshackled by Christ's key of forgiveness, and I'll show you the freest person in the world!" - Chad L. Bird

THIS is God's grace EXTENDED

I think good preachers (*and all Christians*) should be like bad kids. They ought to be naughty enough to tiptoe up on dozing congregations, steal their bottles of religion pills...and flush them all down the drain. The church, by and large, has drugged itself into thinking that proper human behavior is the key to its relationship with God. What preachers (*and all Christians*) need to do is force themselves to go cold turkey with nothing but the word of the cross-and then be brave enough to stick around while the entire congregation goes through the inevitable withdrawal symptoms.

But preachers (*and all Christians*) can't be that naughty or brave unless they're free from their own need for the dope of acceptance. And they won't be free of their need until they can trust the God who has already accepted them, in advance and dead as door-nails, in Jesus. Ergo, the absolute indispensability of trust in Jesus' passion. Unless the faith of preachers (*and all Christians*) is in that alone-and not in any other person, ecclesiastical institution, theological system, moral prescription, or master recipe for human loveliness - they will be of very little use in the pulpit (*and in the pew...and in the life all the week long*).

- Robert Capon (*italics my own*)

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Let's explore the details of this single-handed salvation in depth tomorrow, Lord willing!
Amen!