

## **OUR GREAT SALVATION**

### **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14**

**By Andy Manning**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. **R.C. Sproul** “To be saved means to be rescued from a dangerous or threatening situation.”
2. When I was a youth minister, I took the kids to summer camp for a week. Our pastor was there as well. One day as our group was eating in the cafeteria, I heard a bunch of commotion down at the other end of the table. One of our kids, Brandon, was choking on a piece of meat. Our pastor sprung into action, wrapped his arms around Brandon’s abdomen from behind him, and performed the Heimlich maneuver. The piece of meat came shooting out of Brandon’s mouth. The pastor saved his life. Brandon experienced salvation.
3. The Bible is all about salvation – salvation from sin. The Bible is very clear that we are sinners and we deserve hell. There’s no sugar-coating it. We are sinners and we deserve hell, which is the place of eternal torment. But God is so rich in mercy and love that He sent His Son Jesus to earth to die for our sins. He was punished in our place, so that we could be forgiven, reconciled to God, and have eternal life. He sent Jesus to save us.
4. My oldest daughter is in her freshman year at ULL. And ULL offers many different courses. Mathematics, science, nursing, engineering, political science, biology, economics, finance, accounting, marketing, teaching, psychology, sociology, English, history, music, the arts. But the most important thing you can study is soteriology – the study of salvation. And there is not one course at ULL that teaches is. But it is the most important topic to study because your eternity depends on it. All of us will either spend eternity in heaven or in hell, depending on whether or not we have been saved.
5. In the city of Philippi Paul and Silas were put in jail for preaching about salvation through Jesus Christ. At midnight they were praying and singing to God, and everyone was listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake and all the prison doors were opened, and everyone’s chains came loose. The jailer drew his sword to kill himself, since he thought the prisoners had escaped, but Paul stopped him and said, “Don’t hurt yourself, because we’re all here.” And then the jailer asked Paul the most important question that anyone has ever asked in all of history. “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” What must I do to go to heaven? What must I do to make peace with God?
6. Today we are going to look at a small passage of Scripture that is all about our great salvation.

#### **II. TEXT**

1. **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14** “13 But we ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, so that you might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

### III. SIX FACTS ABOUT SALVATION

#### 1. It is because God loves you.

- a. **2 Thessalonians 2:13** “But we ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord”
- b. God didn’t save you because you are righteous; because you are a good person; because deserve to be saved. He saved you because He loves you.
- c. The Bible says that God’s very nature is love (1 Jn 4:8). He always acts out of love.
- d. But the Bible also says that God loves you (Jn 3:16).
- e. How did God prove His love for us? By sending Christ to die for us. In order to save us, God sent His Son to earth to endure the most horrific death imaginable for our sins. He was whipped with 39 lashings; he wore a crown of thorns (spikes up to twelve inches); he was nailed to a cross with five to seven inch nails; and he hung naked for 6 hours until he died.
- f. Christ died not for His own sins. He was innocent. He died for your sins. He died for you because He loves you that much.

#### 2. It started with God choosing you.

- a. **2 Thessalonians 2:13** “because from the beginning God has chosen you for salvation”
- b. “From the beginning” means from eternity past; from the foundation of the earth.
- c. God chose to save you before you were born. To put it another way, God chose to save you before you put your faith in Christ. He chose not to save others before they rejected Christ.
- d. Why did God choose to save you? Why did God choose to not save everyone? The idea of God choosing us in advance is called the doctrine of election, or predestination, and it is a huge debate among Christians.
- e. There are two main views of the doctrine of election: Calvinism and Arminianism (both named after Christian theologians, and both views are within orthodox Christianity). Calvinism can be remembered with the acronym TULIP. Arminianism can be remembered with the acronym FACTS.
- f. The TULIP of Calvinism:
  1. Total depravity. Unbelievers are so sinful that they cannot accept Christ as Lord and Savior without God enabling them to do so.

2. Unconditional election. God chooses to save some and not others, and it is not based on any condition met by the individual.
  3. Limited atonement. Christ died only for the elect, not for the whole world.
  4. Irresistible grace. The elect are regenerated – born again – by the Holy Spirit, moving them to accept Christ as Lord and Savior.
  5. Perseverance of the saints. Those God saves are protected by Him from losing their salvation.
- g. The FACTS of Arminianism.
1. Freed by grace to believe. As opposed to irresistible grace, God enables unbelievers to accept or reject Christ. This is also called prevenient grace, or grace that goes before.
  2. Atonement for all. Christ died for all sinners, not just the elect.
  3. Conditional election. God chooses in advance to save some and not others based on His foreknowledge of who will accept.
  4. Total depravity. Unbelievers are so sinful that they cannot accept Christ as Lord and Savior without God enabling them to do so.
  5. Security in Christ. Those God saves are protected by Him from losing their salvation. Some Arminians believe that a Christian can forsake Christ and lose their salvation.
- h. Sometimes you will read verses that seem to teach Calvinism, and sometimes you will read verses that seem to teach Arminianism. The reason I am an Arminian is that I believe the Scriptural evidence points heavily toward Arminianism.
- i. For example, the Bible clearly says that God loves everyone (Jn 3:16), Christ died for everyone (1 Pt 3:18), God wants to save everyone (2 Pt 3:9), salvation is received by faith (Jn 1:12-13), and the Bible condemns people for their lack of faith (Jn 3:18). So, here are my questions for Calvinists:
1. How can Calvinists claim that God loves everyone, but doesn't give everyone the chance to be saved?
  2. How can Calvinists say Christ didn't die for everyone, but only the elect?
  3. How can Calvinists say that God wants everyone to be saved, but only chooses to save the elect?
  4. How can Calvinists say that we must believe to be saved, but at the same time say that we must be saved in order to believe?
  5. How can Calvinists say it is just for God to condemn people for not believing, but at the same time say the reason that people don't believe is because God hasn't irresistibly moved them to believe?

**3. It includes your spiritual growth.**

- a. **2 Thessalonians 2:13** “because from the beginning God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit”
- b. What is sanctification? It is the big word for spiritual growth.
- c. Is this verse saying that we are saved through spiritual growth? Are we saved by striving to grow into a mature Christian? I thought we were saved by faith and not works (Eph 2:8-9)?
- d. Salvation involves deliverance from three enemies:
  - 1. God saves us from the penalty of sin. This is called justification. It occurs instantly at the moment of salvation. It is salvation in the past tense. We have been justified. The moment we accept Christ as Lord and Savior, God declares us legally righteous in His sight.
  - 2. God saves us from the presence of sin. This is called glorification. When Jesus Christ comes back, He will give us new bodies, completely free from sin. This is salvation in the future tense. We will be saved completely from the presence of sin when Jesus comes back. Until then, we will always struggle with sin. We will never be completely sinless this side of heaven.
  - 3. God saves us from the power of sin. This is called sanctification. When God saves us, the Holy Spirit begins the lifelong process of growing us more and more like Christ. He gradually redeems us from the power of sin. This is salvation in the present tense. It starts the moment of salvation and continues until you go to heaven.
- e. In this passage Paul emphasizes sanctification – salvation in the present tense. God doesn’t just want to save us from hell – the penalty of sin. He doesn’t just save us to bring us to heaven – saving us from the presence of sin. He saves us to deliver us from the power of sin in this life. He wants us to live a holy life for His glory.
- f. So in this passage Paul is saying, “God chose to save us from the power of sin through the lifelong process of sanctification.”
- g. While sanctification is initiated and empowered by the Holy Spirit, it requires our wholehearted cooperation. We must train ourselves in godliness. Each day we must repent of sin, imitate Christ, and practice spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study, service, and church involvement.

**4. It is received by faith.**

- a. God wants to save everyone (1 Tim 4:10; 2 Pt 3:9). He sent Christ to die for everyone (1 Pt 3:18). But not everyone is saved (Mt 7:13-14). How can we make sure that we are saved? Faith.
- b. **2 Thessalonians 2:13** “God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”

- c. To be saved from the penalty, presence, and power of sin, we must put our faith in Jesus Christ. We must accept Christ as Savior and Lord.
- d. How to put your faith in Jesus Christ? It's as easy as ABC.
  - 1. Admit you are a sinner. You deserve hell. You cannot save yourself. You need a Savior. As long as you believe you are a good person, you cannot be saved. As long as you believe that you deserve heaven, or that hell is too severe for you, then you cannot be saved.
  - 2. Believe in Jesus Christ. You must believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose again. You must believe that He your Savior. You must believe that He is your Lord (Master).
  - 3. Call on Jesus to save you (Rm 10:13). Ask Jesus to be your Savior and Lord. Hand over the steering wheel of your life to Him.
- e. The fact that salvation is received by faith (belief in the truth) means...
  - 1. It is not received by good works. God does not save us because of anything we do for Him; He saves us because of what Christ has done for us. We don't go to heaven if we are good enough; if we have tried hard enough. It's not about works. It's about faith in Christ's work for us.
  - 2. It is not received by religious rituals. Going to church won't save you. Baptism won't save you. Tithing won't save you. Communion (the Lord's Supper) won't save you. Going to confession won't save you. You must put your faith in Jesus Christ, accepting Him as your Savior and Lord.
  - 3. Good works and religious rituals are the result of salvation, not the means of salvation. They are acts of gratitude, not merit.

**5. It is spread through the gospel.**

- a. Salvation is received through faith, or belief in the truth. This means that for people to be saved, someone needs to tell them the truth. This is Paul's next point.
- b. **2 Thessalonians 2:14a** "He called you to this through our gospel"
- c. The way that the Thessalonians learned about Jesus and salvation was that God called them through the proclamation of the gospel message. In this case it was through the preaching of Paul when he visited their city. He shared the gospel message with them, and they believed.
- d. For people to be saved, two things need to happen.
  - 1. They must believe the gospel. They must believe the truth. What is the gospel?
    - a. Creation: God created us for a relationship with Him.
    - b. Corruption: We have sinned and are separated from God.
    - c. Cross: Jesus died for our sins to pay our penalty and bring us back to God.

- d. Choice: We must accept Jesus Christ by faith as our Savior and Lord.
- 2. Someone must share the gospel with them. People cannot believe in what they have ever heard. So somebody has to share the gospel with people.
- e. **Romans 10:14-15** “14 How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.”
- f. This is why evangelism is so important. Evangelism is the act of sharing the gospel with people far from God so that they can get in on it if they want to.
- g. Every Christian is called to the task of evangelism. Soul-winning. You are called to share the gospel with the lost people around you. You need to tell them how to be saved.
- h. You can do that in several ways:
  - 1. Tell them personally how to be saved.
  - 2. Share the gospel with them by giving them a resource – written, video, audio, etc.
  - 3. Invite them to church to hear the gospel.

## 6. It results in glory.

- a. **2 Thessalonians 2:14b** “so that you might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- b. As I mentioned earlier, our salvation can be divided into three categories.
  - 1. Justification – salvation from the penalty of sin. Salvation in the past tense. We have been saved.
  - 2. Sanctification – salvation from the power of sin. Salvation in the present tense. We are being saved.
  - 3. Glorification – salvation from the presence of sin. Salvation in the future tense. We will be saved.
- c. Here Paul refers to our future and final salvation as obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- d. What is this glory that we will obtain?
  - 1. It is not godhood. The Mormon religion teaches that Jesus was once a man who achieved godhood, and that the goal of our lives is to make the same passage. That is unbiblical. We will never be gods. We will never be worshiped. We will always be worshipers. The Bible is abundantly clear that there is only one God (1 Tim 2:5).
  - 2. Instead, salvation leads to a multi-faceted glory.
    - a. New glorified bodies that are immortal and sinless (Phil 3:21).

- b. Praise from God (1 Cor 4:5). God will tell us, “Good job!”
- c. Rewards from God (Mt 16:27). Remember, our eternal home is based on faith, but our eternal reward is based on works.
- d. Heaven (Mt 25:34). We cannot even imagine the glory of heaven when we die, or of the new heavens and earth when Christ comes back.
- e. Being in the presence of God (1 Thess 4:17). The greatest thing about the next life is that there will be no distance between us a God. We will be with Jesus all the time.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

1. Goose Goslin was a baseball player in the Major Leagues in the 1920s. He was nicknamed “Goose” because of the way he flapped his arms when he ran, and his long neck and big nose. He became one of the best hitters in baseball. In 1924, the Washington Senators and the New York Giants were in the world series, tied up at 3 games apiece. It was the bottom of the ninth inning, and the score was 3 to 3. It was two outs, and Goose came to the plate. Two strikes, and two balls. On the fifth pitch, Goose slammed the ball to left center field. It hit a few inches below the top of the wall and fell back onto the field. Goose took off running. He slowed down for a tripple, but the third base coach waved him home for an in-park home run. The center fielder threw the ball to the shortstop, and the shortstop zoomed it to the catcher. Goose slid home in a cloud of dust, a split second before the tag. But then the umpire called, “You’re out!” The manager ran onto the field to protest. But umpire said, “Ladies and gentlemen, the batter is out...not because he didn’t beat the ball at home plate but because he didn’t touch first base!”
2. The first base of life is salvation. You can hit a home run in marriage, in school, in business, with money, in sports, but if you don’t touch first base, if you don’t get saved, then you will go to hell. You can hit a home run in religion – go to church every Sunday, give a lot of money to charity, study the Bible deeply, but if you miss first base – if you don’t get saved, you will go to hell. Don’t miss first base.
3. Would you get saved today? You must accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.