

SAVED FROM WHAT? (Romans 5:9-10)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on December 23, 2007

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I want to share just a few words from Romans chapter 5 that summarize in a concise way the ultimate message behind what has been sung, and what happened 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem.

In Matthew's gospel the angel says the child conceived miraculously in Mary's womb would be named Jesus "for He will save His people"

The angels when they announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in the field said "Unto you is born this day a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

Those words "save" and "Savior" are so familiar to many of us, however, that we may not pause to ask the most basic question of all – what are we saved *from*? Many of you have probably never been asked that question or have even thought about how you would answer that question. The answer may be different than many of you think. It was certainly different than the type of Savior and salvation some were looking for 2,000 years ago.

The predominant 1st century Jewish attitude was that the salvation they needed was from the Romans, from physical political oppression. Because of their past and their upbringing as physical children of Abraham, they didn't see their truly great need – they were looking for a political Savior, a monarch whose kingdom is of this world, a military general who would come riding in on a white horse and get rid of all their enemies and inconveniences.

Most respectable Jews probably wouldn't say it out loud, but many certainly thought that the Messiah would come to save them because they deserved to be saved, because of who they were. The Pharisees didn't think they even needed to be saved.

In our day today, there are still many who feel this way – because we are Americans and grow up in a Judeo-Christian heritage or maybe go to church sometimes or have done religious things in the past, we assume we are Christians and we assume we're saved. I have no doubt many would echo the sentiment that God saved us because we were so lovely, God loved us *because of* who we are, and we deserve to be saved because of something we've done.

God's Word teaches the exact opposite. Paul says in the first few chapters of Romans that men are sinners, they have a depraved mind (1:28) and in chapter 3 he declares plainly that that none are righteous, no not one, none understand, none seek God, together mankind is useless (NIV "worthless"), there is none who does good, not even one (3:10-12). Christ did not die to save His people *because of* who they were, but *in spite of* who they were. It was not our loveliness, it was God's astonishing *agape* love poured out on unlovely, unworthy, unable, undesirable, undeserving sinners!

Romans 5:6-8 (NASB95)

6 For while we were **still helpless** [NKJV "without strength" or NIV "powerless"], at the right time Christ died for the **ungodly**.

7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the **good** man someone would dare even to die.
 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were yet sinners**, Christ died for us.

Even for a righteous or good man, or the greatest man, few would dare to die. Greater love has no man than this, that he would lay down his life for his friend. But to die for one's *enemy* is unreasonable, unthinkable, unexplainable, unfathomable! You see, verse 10 says sinners are enemies of God. The Bible says we commit crimes personally against the Judge of the universe who hates sin and must punish sin because of His holy character.

The one question I *can't* answer is why God would choose to save me, knowing what He knows of my heart. But there is a question the Bible *does* give an answer to: What do I need to be saved *from*?

The answer is not how some make it sound today, if you listen to the prosperity gospel preachers, their message is that Jesus came to make us healthy and wealthy and wise. If you didn't know better and listened to many televangelists, you might conclude we need to be saved from being unhealthy, unwealthy, and unwise.

Other presentations you hear today might give you the impression that we need to be saved from feeling bad, we need to be delivered from feelings of low self-esteem, or we need to be saved from our felt needs, or saved from a lack of happiness or our lack of purpose, or we need to be saved from a lack of feeling fulfilled.

Now when God saves someone, He *does* transform their thinking and life, resulting in joy, and replacing wrong and sinful thinking.

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 But that's not ultimately what we need to be saved *from*.

R.C. Sproul has written a book entitled "Saved from What?" which prompted my thinking on this matter. He shares an encounter that occurred many years ago, I believe when he was an unbeliever walking around a college campus minding his own business when he writes (p. 14):

Suddenly, apparently out of nowhere, a gentleman appeared in front of me, blocking my forward progress. He looked me in the eye and asked directly, "Are you saved?"

I wasn't quite sure how to respond to this intrusion. I uttered in response the first words that came into my mind: "Saved from what?" What I was thinking, but had the grace not to say, was "I'm certainly not saved from strangers buttonholing me and asking me questions like yours." But when I said, "Saved from what?" I think the man who stopped me that day was as surprised by my question as I had been by his. He began to stammer and stutter. Obviously he wasn't quite sure how to respond.

"Saved from what? Well, you know what I mean. You know, do you know Jesus?" Then he tried to give me a brief summary of the gospel.

... it was clear that, though this man had a zeal for salvation, he had little understanding of what salvation is. He was using Christian jargon. The words fell from

his lips without being processed by his mind. As a result, his words were empty of content.

What we ultimately need to be saved from is not anything superficial in this life, or even serious consequences of sin in this life – our greatest problem we need to be saved from is not even Satan. Ultimately, above all, sinful human beings need to be saved from ... GOD. It's not how we feel in this life or what happens in this life, it's what God will do after this life that men need to be saved from.

Romans 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved from the wrath** [WHOSE WRATH? GOD'S]

Verse 10 says we all were enemies of God. Man's greatest enemy and problem is not Satan, it's God Himself. For several chapters now Paul has been talking about God's wrath and our great need to be saved from the God whose wrath is aimed at all unbelievers.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

... 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

2:2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

6 who will render to each person according to his deeds:

... 8 to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil ...

Yes, it would be accurate to say we need to be saved from sin.

Yes, it would be accurate to say we need to be saved from hell.

But ultimately, those are secondary results of man's real problem – hell is the result of God's wrath against sin. It's *because of* God's justice and holiness that sin must be punished. The reason we need to be saved from sin is because of the wrath of God towards sin.

Jesus said we are to fear the One who has power to cast both body and soul into hell. God is who we need to be saved from, and paradoxically, God is also the only One we can be saved *by*.

WE ARE SAVED FROM GOD BY GOD

9 Much more then, having now been **justified by His blood**, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be **saved by His life**.

To be justified is a synonym for being saved – it means to be declared righteous. If you read Romans 4, the chapter right before this chapter, it is very clear that justification is a work of God at the moment of saving faith, and it is only BY GOD – by God’s grace. God is ultimately the only One we need to be saved from, and He is also ultimately the only One we can be saved by.

Verse 9 says we are justified “by His blood” and verse 11 says we are saved by His life. This speaks of God the Son who took on full humanity that first Christmas, not just to be born in a manger and to fulfill prophecies, and to teach us good ethics, but He came to fulfill the perfect demands of God – a perfect righteous life acceptable to God who demands absolute perfection and holiness. No mere man could ever live up to the standard, no one is good enough to save himself. We are only saved “by His blood” in v. 9, which represents not only the life of Christ but His death on the cross as a substitute for all who trust in Christ’s cross work alone for their salvation.

SAVED FROM GOD BY GOD THROUGH GOD

Jesus is not only the Son of God, He is God the Son and it is only through Him that any can be saved.

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God **through Him**.
10 For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled to God through the death of His Son**, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

It is only through God the Son, Jesus Christ, that anyone can be saved. Jesus said “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except THROUGH ME”

God was once our enemy who we needed to be saved from, but verse 1 of Romans 5 says
“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”

SAVED FROM GOD BY GOD THROUGH GOD FOR GOD

We are saved from God’s wrath by God’s grace through God’s Son *for God’s glory*. The ultimate aim of God’s saving mercy is the ultimate aim of everything – it’s for God’s glory. The Christmas message, the gospel message is not primarily about you, it’s about God. It’s not about how lovable and worthy we were, it’s about how unlovable and unworthy we were in our trespasses and sins, but God in His magnanimous mighty mercy rescued and saved us, not because of who we are, but in spite of who we are!

Romans 11:30-36 (NASB95)

30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown **mercy** because of their disobedience,
31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the **mercy** shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show **mercy** to all.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?
 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?
 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. **To Him be the glory forever.** Amen.

God's mercy does not magnify us primarily, it magnifies the glory of God, the infinite worth and value of an unsearchable unfathomable God of wonders beyond the galaxies, who shows forth His glory in the radiance of Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:5-12 (NASB95)

5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

6 **so that** with one accord **you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

7 Therefore, accept one another, just as **Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.**

8 For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,

9 and **for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy;** as it is written, "Therefore I will **give praise** to You among the Gentiles, And I will **sing to Your name.**"

10 Again he says, "**Rejoice,** O Gentiles, with His people."

11 And again, "**Praise** the Lord all you Gentiles, And **let all the peoples praise Him.**"

12 Again Isaiah says, "There shall come the root of Jesse, And He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, In Him shall the Gentiles **hope.**"

How do we glorify God? The purpose of the gospel Paul has explained in the previous chapters is, according to verses 6-9, all about glorifying God for His mercy. How do we glorify God? This text gives us multiple ways:

- Verse 9 quotes scriptures that speak of praising God, and singing to His name? Why did we spend so much time in song and praise this morning? The ultimate reason is because we want God to be glorified, as this text says, even by us praising him in the presence of unbelievers.
- Verse 10 says rejoicing is another way we glorify God. That's why our forefathers would say man's chief end is to glorify God *and* enjoy Him forever – Paul here says we glorify God *by* enjoying Him, by rejoicing
- Verse 11 calls on all Gentile nations and peoples to praise God – this is the ultimate purpose of missions, that God would be worshipped in places where he is not currently worshipped. The goal of missions is far more than getting converts – it is the glory and worship of God
- Verse 12 closes with the words that we can glorify the Lord by putting our hope in Him. When we trust Him and hope in Him in our daily lives, that brings glory to God.

Romans 16:27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

The glory of God and the worship of God is the most important thing in the universe. If you do not know the Lord Jesus this Christmas as the King and Commander of your life, today is the day to be like the wise men who saw His star in the East and came to worship Him. You can come to glorify and worship God's Son by bowing your life and will before His, recognizing that you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, a God whose glory is the entire purpose of your existence.

Romans 10 says if you truly confess that Jesus is LORD (God and rightful ruler of your life) and

believe in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead (you truly are trusting 0% in yourself and what you've done and you trust 100% in Christ's death and resurrection as your only hope) you can be saved from God, saved by God, saved through God, and saved for God. You can pray and plead with God to have mercy on you today, using your own words in your heart of hearts – surrender to His Lordship. If we can be of any help to you in your spiritual journey, please let us know.

I pray that everyone in this room will make sure Christ is the center not only this Christmas, but the center of our lives. If you have already received the greatest Christmas gift ever – Jesus Himself as Lord – let's express our gratitude and thanksgiving to Him that we are saved, understanding more fully what that means – saved from God by God through God and for God. And if you have not already received Jesus and repented of your sins, today is the day to be saved from God's wrath by God's grace through God's Son for God's glory.