

EPHESIANS 1:13a
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 22, August 22/99

INTRO: Salvation, what a wonderful word. When I was about 12 years old a terrible accident happened at my Dad's sawmill. The man who was running the edger was just putting a timberbound cant through the edger. This particular edger could make several boards at one time. The cant he was pushing through would make two boards and of course, two slabs. Of course you cannot easily tell if a particular piece of log is timberbound and this one was. When it was almost through it bound up badly enough for the saws to grab it and shoot it out the back of the edger. One 2x4 hit him in the hip, breaking bones. The other hit him in the head. He lived for a number of days. It was a hard time in our home. I went to school with kids related to this man. And every day we would get all the last bit of news. Then news came that he was doing better and our hopes rose. Then news came that he was not doing so well and finally news came that Jake Elias was dead. There was no salvation from his injuries.

The theme of Ephesians 1:3-3:21 is salvation. I trust that the message of salvation never becomes common to us. You see, there are many types of salvation. One could be saved from a bad car accident. One could be saved from cancer. One could be saved after being lost in the forest. One could be saved from death in a house fire. One could be saved from many life-threatening circumstances but none of those is worthy of comparison to the salvation which saves from sin. Just the other day I was told of the life of one of my brothers. The sin of alcohol has enslaved him and he is so low he said, "Don't waste your time praying for me." When God sent His only Son He did not have Him provide salvation from every kind of life-threatening thing. He had Him provide salvation from the greatest thing of all: sin. And Jesus came to save us from sin's penalty; from sin's power and some day from sin's very presence.

Ephesians 1:3-14 speaks of the blessed source of salvation; God the Father. God the Father is manifested as the Triune God or the Trinity. Our Catechism, in Part One, Chapter 1 says: 1. Wer hat alles erschaffen? Gott der Herr. 2. Wer ist Gott? Der einige Gott ist Vater, Sohn und Heiliger Geist. The question is: Who is God? The answer says that there is only one God. That certainly does not match the

thinking of our world. But the theology of the Catechism here is precise. This wording allows for no misinterpretation. There is only one God. Then follows the description of this one God, a description so precise as to rule out all other possibilities: The one God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1:3-14 we have the blessed source of salvation. It is God. And in this passage He is revealed God the Father (1:3-4). In verses 5-12 we have God the Son and in verses 14-15 we have God the Holy Spirit. This is the blessed source of salvation.

We have considered a number of blessings that we have in Christ in Ephesians 1:3-12. This morning we want to consider another blessing and that is that in Christ we are given hope. But here in verse 13 we are not only given another blessing, but we are clearly told how we came about all these blessings.

h. God has given us hope in Christ (1:13a)

You will remember that in verse 12 the word often translated *trusted* is actually the Greek word *hoped*. In verse 13 this same verb is understood and verse 13 should read, "In whom also you hoped after you heard the word of truth..." I do not know why translators stumble over this word *hope* in this text. I do not wish to bore you with the different translations, other than to say I see here no good option but to translate this text thus, "In whom also you hoped after you heard the word of truth..." Paul says in verse 12, "We, the Jews, were the first to hope in Christ, in whom you also hoped after you heard the word of truth..." This morning, we want to consider first this word *hope* in verse 13. "...in whom you also hoped..."

Let us look first at the time element of hope. Here is one of the basic differences between hope and faith. Faith has to do with the past tense. Hope always has to do with the future. Look at an interesting verse, Romans 8:24. "For we are saved in (or by) this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?" Hope that is seen is not hope. Let me give you an example. Here's an illustration for the boys and girls. Let us say you hope you will get

a bicycle for your birthday and your birthday is tomorrow. Then the big day comes and, sure enough you got a bicycle for your birthday. Would it be right to say now, "I hope I got a bicycle for my birthday?" No. Why is that not right? Well Romans 8 said, hope that is seen is not hope. Why? because the future element is gone. It is now present or past tense. Hope always has to do with the future.

So we have seen that hope always has a future time element. Now, second, what is the foundation or basis of hope? Turn to another interesting verse (Heb. 11:1). This verse is often given as a definition of faith but it is not. The word translated *substance* is the Greek word *hupostasis*. It literally means that which stands underneath. Recently we had some contractors come and add to our church building. This new addition has something that stands underneath it. It is the foundation. Now according to Hebrews 11:1, what is the foundation of hope? What does it rest on? Well, faith is what hope rests on. Faith stands underneath hope and is the foundation of it.

Now what is meant by hope in the Bible? Well, hope is used in some instances just as we use it. Last summer we went out on the Pacific ocean to do some halibut fishing. We had just started fishing when the waves became so big we had to head for shore. Well, it got so rough I could not use the video camera. Sometimes the nose of the boat would go high up and then head almost straight down. A few times it went under water and came back up and it went back up so high that it threw the water on the bow right back over the windshield. It was a cold miserable trip. When I looked at my dejected family I said, "You know, the Bible can come alive for you right here." So I told them about the apostle Paul and how three times he experienced shipwreck and once he floated a night and a day in the ocean. Well, one time he was being taken to Rome as a prisoner and a hurricane came up. Now turn to Acts 27:20. All hope of being saved was given up. You see, their

hope of being saved became less and less until they finally gave up. There was no hope.

Hope, in almost all things, has an uncertainty about it. But there is a major difference between such hopes and the hope of the Bible. Turn to Hebrews 6:18-19 to see this difference. The Gospel inspires a hope that is sure and steadfast. It is not called a hope because there is uncertainty. It is called hope because it is yet future.

We need to consider yet one more thing regarding hope. What is this hope of the Christian? Well, we know this much, that it is something in the future and Titus 2:13 tells us what this future Christian hope is. Sharp's Greek rule tells us that the blessed hope is the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. For those who know that their sins are forgiven and that they are going to heaven, the appearing of Jesus Christ is a blessed hope. For those who are unsure of their salvation or unsaved, the return of Christ is a event to be dreaded.

Ephesians 2:12 tells us that once we Gentiles were without hope and without God in the world. But what is it that gave the Gentiles (that's us) hope? Ephesians 1:13 tells us. We received hope after we heard the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation. But that brings us to consider yet another word in this text. The Word of truth. When Jesus was before Pontius Pilate, Pilate said, "Are you a king then?" Jesus said, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into this world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Then Pilate asked a question that the philosophers from before his day to ours have not been able to answer: "What is truth." Now I would like someone to answer Pilate's question this morning. What is truth?

A little while ago, my daughter Noreen and I visited the lady at the Buffalo Head tower. In our discussion I asked her if she was really

interested in the truth. She finally admitted that if such a thing was to be found she was interested. So I said, "Then we must first come to terms as to what truth is." You see, there is a teaching that says truth is relative. That means what is true to you may not be true to me. I don't need to tell you that that view comes from the philosophers. The lady at the tower is quite knowledgeable in worldly ways. I was sitting at her table. I said, "If I say to you there is a table here. Would you say that statement is true." She was afraid of being taken in and so she hemmed and hawed. Then I said, "Look, if you say that may not be true then I'm out'a here. We are wasting our time." Well she did not want us to leave and found our discussion very interesting so she admitted that at least mostly, my statement that there was a table was true. Well, what is truth? It is very simple to define truth. You may want to write it down, "Truth is that which corresponds to reality." Now notice in our text that the Gospel is the word of truth. It is that which corresponds to reality. It is in actual fact true.

Now look at Ephesians 2:13 again. The word of truth that gave hope to the Gentiles is, "...the Gospel of your salvation..." Now the word Gospel means good news.

Now some people get the Gospel and hope mixed up. I have been told that you cannot know if you are saved. That is not good news. These people tell me you can only hope that some day you will be saved. Now I must tell you that that is not only a false Gospel, it is hardly a Gospel. Look at Ephesians 1:13 again. "In whom you also hoped after you heard the word of the truth, the Gospel of your salvation..." Now you know that Gospel means good news. Now in order to understand the good news you must understand that there is bad news. The bad news is that not one sin can enter the presence of God and you and I and all others have all sinned (Romans 3:23). Paul spends the first three chapters of Romans to prove that every person is a sinner. The bad news is further that every sinner must die and go to hell for all

eternity. There is no more horrible news in all the world. It should strike terror into every heart. But the good news is that Jesus Christ died for my sins. He took my place and if I believe in Him, He has promised me eternal life. The most often quoted verse of the Bible says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life!" That is good news. I want you to listen to Jesus own words, "... whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Jesus said if you live. We all qualify this morning for that right? Then He goes on, and if you believe in me, you will never die. Now look again at Ephesians 1:13, "In whom you also hoped after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; *in whom also, having believed...*" Now I want to tell you something very, very serious. It is so very important that you must check the Bible yourself and make sure I am telling the truth. Some people say they believe in Jesus Christ but they do not. I know. I have talked to some. Here is what I said, "Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?" "Oh yes," they tell me. Then I say, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ really was on earth once and now is in heaven?" "Oh yes," they say. Then I say, "Do you believe Jesus died for you?" "Oh yes" they say again, "but He also died for the whole world." Then I say, "Well, if you believe all that do you know if you died today where you would go?" "Well," they say, "I hope I'll go to heaven." And do you know what I fear? Oh I fear they have not really believed the Gospel.

Sometimes I say to people, "If Jesus took your place and took all your sins and then He gave to you all His righteousness, would you go to heaven?" Well, it's hard to argue that. But when I truly believe in Jesus Christ, that is exactly what happens. It is called, in Romans 4, imputed righteousness.

Sometimes I ask people, "If you died today, would you go to heaven?" And they say to me, "Well, I joined the church, or I got baptized." It is good to join a church and to get baptized but only if

you are saved first. First you must believe. And believing means I accept the fact that Jesus took my sins and He gave me His righteousness. And I cannot see how a person has truly trusted in Christ if they have not believed that their sins are taken away.

This morning I want to take time to go through a passage that is very special to me and that many of you have heard me explain before (1 John 5:9-13). If I told you that this past summer I was on the Queen Charlotte Islands. How many of you believe me? Well, if you believe that, then you have received the witness of men. This passage says the witness of God is greater, yes, it is much greater indeed. Now the witness of God is this: If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior you have eternal life (read 9-12). If I say I have accepted Jesus Christ and then say I cannot know I have eternal life then I have committed a very, very serious sin. I have basically said, "God is a liar." Now look at what John says in verse 13.

Our text says that we Gentiles hoped in Christ after we heard the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation. The Gospel or good news of our salvation is this: If we receive Christ as our personal Savior God imputes Christ's righteousness to me and takes all my sins and puts them on Him. That is good news.

Now look at the last phrase we want to consider this morning, "in whom also, having believed..." When a person has heard the good news and believes the good news, that is faith. Faith is a belief you hold to, based on certain information from the past which you think is trustworthy. True faith is based on facts. False faith is not based on truth. Let me give you an example of false faith. The Catholics teach that if you were a Catholic but you were not a very good person and you did not do enough good works you will go to a place called purgatory. This place is between heaven and hell. Then they teach that the living relatives of a person in purgatory can pay money to the Catholic church and eventually get

this person out of purgatory into heaven. Is that a true faith? No! Why not? Well, because it is not based on facts. The Mormons teach that if you have relatives who died years ago and they were not Mormons, you can get baptized for them and then they will not be annihilated. Will that actually happen? Of course not! It is not based on truth. Now look at Ephesians 1:13 again. "In Him you also hoped after you heard the word of the truth..." And what is the Word of truth on which our faith is based? It is the Gospel of our salvation! You see, true faith is based on facts.

Let me give you the order of things with regard to truth, hope and faith. The footing of the foundation is truth. It lies at the very bottom. It is the bottom line. On top of truth comes faith. Faith is the foundation of the Christian life. Resting above faith is hope. So let us say you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and you believe he has taken your sins and given you His righteousness. And then you die. Will you actually go to heaven? Of course! How do I know? Because that faith rests on the truth, which is the Gospel. And the Gospel is the good news which tells us that if we live and believe, we will never die.

CONCL: Now the very moment a person believes in Jesus Christ in this way many things take place. I have the privilege of teaching many of those in the Basic Bible Doctrine class where we study the Catechism. You see, the doctrine of justification in the Catechism teaches regarding this matter and it is so accurately described in the Catechism. In Ephesians 1:3 Paul writes that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. One of those blessings is that we have a sure and solid hope, one that will never let us down. In Ephesians 2:12. Paul described the state of the Gentiles before the message of the Gospel was brought to them. The state is described as hopeless. But now, according to Romans 8, we are saved in this hope. This hope is based on the faith which is based on the facts of the Gospel. It will never let you down. It is as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.