

“What Does It Mean to be Saved?”

Philippians 3:7-11

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor
Smoke Rise Baptist Church
Stone Mountain, Georgia
May 1, 2005

If you grew up Baptist, you are very familiar with the word, saved. It was the theme of every song and sermon during a revival and many other services.

I still consider Jack Scholfield’s song, “Saved, Saved” one of my favorites. The tune makes it easy and enjoyable to sing as a congregation and the words convey a message of love and hope that is encouraging.

I’ve found a friend who is all to me, his love is ever true;
I love to tell how he lifted me, and what his grace can do for you.

He saves me from every sin and harm, secures my soul each day;
I’m leaning on his mighty arm; I know he’ll guide me all the way.

When poor and needy and all alone, in love he said to me,
Come unto me and I’ll take you home, to live with me eternally.

Saved by his power divine, saved to new life sublime!
Life now is sweet and my joy is complete for I’m saved, saved, saved!

What does it mean to be saved? Philip Gulley and James Mulholland give one of the best answers to that question in their book, If Grace is True. They write, “By salvation, I mean much more than a ticket to heaven. I mean much more than being cleansed of our sins and rescued from hell’s fire. I mean even more than being raised from the grave and granted eternal life. **By salvation, I mean being freed of every obstacle to intimacy with God.** We will know as we are known and love as we are loved.”

“By salvation, I mean being freed of every obstacle to intimacy with God.” This is the most healthful and helpful definition of salvation I have read. Let me tell you why.

We need a close relationship with God. Paul certainly felt that way and was not bashful about writing it.

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead” Philippians 3:10-11.

Among your family, friends and acquaintances, who knows you best? That’s an easy question for me to answer because it is my mate of almost thirty-five years, Jackie. There are very few questions about me that she could not answer accurately. On the other hand, I could tell you many things about her. That’s one result of a lengthy marriage.

This was Paul’s goal when he wrote, “I want to know Christ.” He desired with Christ the intimacy that married couples experience, an intimacy that transcends knowledge and enters the realm of the heartfelt unspoken.

We need this kind of relationship with God, too. Why? Why did Paul? Evidently, his life was not complete without it in spite of evidence to the contrary!

In many ways, Paul was the envy of his peers. To them, he lacked nothing. He had the purest Jewish pedigree, was a scholar with the finest education, a leader among leaders and morally faultless. In other words, he could boast with the best of them and probably did.

However, something must have been missing from his life and when he realized it, he pursued it with reckless abandon.

What was missing? It wasn't anything on the outside. He had everything a person could want, power, prestige, respect, notoriety and a comfortable lifestyle. It must have been something on the inside and I think it was. I think he was missing a relationship with a God that he did not have to impress. What Christ brought to him was unconditional love, immeasurable power, eternal presence and a revolutionary way of thinking, relating and living. It was as appealing as it was radical and Paul embraced it by letting go of everything he had worked so hard to accumulate.

“Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” Philipians 3:7-9.

What about you? Do you have an intimate relationship with this God that you don't have to impress? Do you sense His unconditional love and immeasurable power for you along with His eternal presence with you? Has he persuaded you to think, relate and live differently?

Do you trust Him with your hopes, dreams and life? Do you turn to Him for confidence when you are facing challenges, strength when you are facing temptations, courage when you are afraid, patience when you are angry and guidance when you are facing decisions?

Do you look to Him for peace when you are anxious, encouragement when you are discouraged, comfort when you are grieving, companionship when you are lonely, hope when you despair, forgiveness when you sin and life when you are dying? Can you be this honest and humble in His midst?

If not, why? What keeps you from knowing Jesus this intimately and relying upon him to supply your deepest needs? Is it pride, inferiority, sin, shame, guilt, indifference, misplaced priorities or a misunderstanding of Him? Have you followed someone that has led you away from God, not closer to Him? Have you listened to someone that taught you that you had to impress God or convince Him to love you?

Do you need to be saved from an obstacle that is interfering with your intimacy with God? You can be this morning if you open your heart and life to Jesus and ask him to help you. He will come, remove any obstacle that has come between you and God and enable you to sing:

I've found a friend who is all to me, his love is ever true;
I love to tell how he lifted me, and what his grace can do for you.

He saves me from every sin and harm, secures my soul each day;
I'm leaning on his mighty arm; I know he'll guide me all the way.

When poor and needy and all alone, in love he said to me,
Come unto me and I'll take you home, to live with me eternally.

Saved by his power divine, saved to new life sublime!
Life now is sweet and my joy is complete for I'm saved, saved, saved!