

Christ Our Savior

Luke 2:11

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

In Luke 2, verse 11 we read where the angel said to the shepherds,
11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11 (ESV))

And in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 3 and 4, we read . . .
3 . . . I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NASB))

Those first words that I read for us from Luke 2 . . .
11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11 (ESV))

Those are words that we most often hear at Christmas time as we celebrate the beginning moments in the life of the Lord Jesus. And while it might seem out of place to hear them now when we are considering His final moments of life, His death, His burial and His resurrection, it's good for us to be reminded that those first words bespoke the whole reason and purpose for Jesus being among us.

Those words again in Luke 2,
11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11 (ESV))

Too often, as we read the words in these scriptures, our eyes see them, but we rush right on through them, catching their general meaning but failing to grasp all that God is saying in them. These words here in Luke 2 are of that kind. We get caught up in the angel making an announcement about the Baby Jesus being born and we miss out on those all-important ending words, "A Savior who is Christ the Lord", words that are filled with meaning and purpose.

Plainly and simply, this Baby that the angel was speaking about was to be a Savior. That is what His name Jesus signifies. And that is what the angel said to Joseph in his dream. Listen!

20 . . . behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "She will bear

a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21)

Jesus would bring salvation to His people! And He would accomplish salvation by being the Christ, the anointed One of God, who would die, and by dying, pay the penalty for all our sins.

And praise be to God, His special mission of salvation was not limited to only a few, or only to the nation and people of Israel, but was sufficient to wipe away the sins of the whole world, even ours today. We are told in 1 John 2 that His death, His burial and His resurrection provided the "propitiation", another word that our minds can pass right on by without wondering about its meaning, but it means the full and final and perfect payment necessary to satisfy all the debts of our sins. Those words in 1 John,

2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

Folks, there is no other religion among the peoples of the earth that accepts this truth, or even perceives that such is needful. Why is that so? It is because it is only in Christianity that we find that we have need for a Savior, that our sins, though we consider many of them to be small and inconsequential, are indeed too heinous, too odious and too vile, for us to possibly try to atone for them by our own efforts. We need a Savior, someone beyond ourselves to save us!

And as a Christian, I am especially thankful for this annual celebration of Easter, because it brings back to the forefront of our minds exactly what it took for our sins to be atoned for and for us to have and to enjoy eternal salvation. And may I say, even if this day is only one of two times that some people attend church each year, it is at least an opportunity for this gospel to be received.

Folks the message of the gospel is clear and plain. Ephesian 2:8 & 9 and many other scriptures like them leave no room for question, our salvation is by grace through faith, a gift, freely provided through the shed blood of Christ, His death, His burial and His resurrection, nothing more to be added, and no other provision possible.

And again thankfully, that same provision is available to us today. Nothing has changed since those first moments of Christ's death, His burial and His resurrection. His provision is just as effectual for us today as it was then, 2000 years ago.

May I say that again, that this gospel is still as sure and as powerful as it was on that first resurrection day! Why is that so? It is because the “Gospel” always has a special miraculous power that resides within it, the power of the presence of God’s Holy Spirit. And this gospel never loses its power! Its words can somehow draw men and women’s souls to Christ and then save them. Listen to these words of Romans 1,

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16 (NASB))

May I ask you the question that Jesus asked Martha when He was talking to her about eternal life? He asked, “Do you believe this?” So, I ask you, “Do you really believe these words?” Listen carefully again to what they say to us!

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16 (NASB))

May I share a concern that I have, yea even a complaint towards many of us who preach this gospel? We read and we preach these simple words and then we too often try to explain them by adding to them or taking away from them some of their simple meaning. Brethren that should never be! These words are fully sufficient in themselves. And they are as simple and as powerful as they appear.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16 (NASB))

Yes, salvation of our soul truly is a very complicated matter. But for us who believe and receive it, it is a very, very simple and “easy” transaction. No, it was not easy for Christ. He had to suffer and die, but not so for you and me. All we have to do is “believe” this gospel and receive Christ into our soul and we are saved. It is that quick and that simple. It is as Paul and Silas said to the jailer,

31 . . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved . . .
(Acts 16:31)

How so very, very easy it is for us to be saved! And this simple gospel is the message that I want to give to you and me again today. And I want us to pass it on along to anyone who will listen.

And I know that yes, we have heard these words over and over again. But as your pastor, I must keep giving this same old gospel message, that it is

8 . . . by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
(Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV))

While all the other religions of the earth struggle with all their personal efforts to gain salvation by doing a lifetime of good works and good behavior, it is this gospel and this gospel alone that “really saves”!

And may I say again, salvation is a free gift from God, by grace through faith, provided through the shed blood of Christ, His death, His burial and His resurrection, nothing more to be added, and no other provision possible.

But also, as we have said so many times from this pulpit, salvation is only the beginning of our eternal life. Salvation is where those “good works” that we try to do before salvation are to really begin. Now that we are saved and now that we have taken our part in His blessed resurrection, we can now do truly “good works”. Those words also found in Ephesians 2, just following the ones we read a moment ago . . .

8 . . . by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
(Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV))

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
(Ephesians 2:10)

May I take the remaining few moments of our time today for us to consider and rejoice over the blessed provision, those “good works” that this special day, “resurrection day”, has given to our Christian lives!

This is the day, 2000 years ago, when Jesus was resurrected from death. This is the day that He triumphed over the power of sin and of Satan and of death and came back to a whole new life. And His resurrection provides you and me with the same benefits that took place in His resurrection, that being that just as He was freed from the power of our sins that He had taken upon Himself, so also have we been freed from the same power of those same sins.

Through the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit who comes to live within us the moment we are saved, we now have the means within us to turn away from every form of sin and no longer yield to its temptations.

In Romans chapter 6, God clearly tells us those truths, that just as Christ rose from death completely freed from the power and control of sin, so also are you

and I who receive His salvation, freed from the power and the control of sin; and we should no longer walk in its ways.

And those words are not intended to just provide us with some additional theological knowledge, but they are intended for us to apply in all the practical matters and ways of daily life. May I give us just one example . . . Just recently, I had a conversation with my son about what we are to do with the daily sin of “impatience”, which by the way, leads us into all sorts of other sins, anger, frustration, unkindness, even sometimes violent behavior. “Impatience” is one of those sinful behaviors that clings to our back as we enter into the freedom of our salvation.

Yes in salvation, we are completely freed from all bondage to sin, but the sin of “impatience”, like so many other of the ordinary lifestyle sins, seems to “hitch a ride” on our shoulders as we move into our new condition of salvation.

That is why, as we studied in the Book of Ephesians, we are commanded to “put off the old man” and to “put on the new”. Some sins have long “claws” and are able to dig deeply into our souls and hang on through many of the efforts we make to rid ourselves of them.

And that was the discussion my son and I were having. It is a question that I have pondered many times over the years, “Is it a good thing to practice behaviors such as “patience”?”

It really seems logical that we should, but then again, such human efforts are only a part of the misguided belief that “behavior modification” really works, that “anger management” really works. And as we know, it doesn’t work, not really.

As believers, those who have the presence of God’s Holy Spirit abiding within us, the real question is, “It is a good thing to practice any or all of the ‘Fruits of the Spirit’, because behaviors such as ‘patience’ are one of the ‘Fruits of the Spirit’?” And when we place the question in that context, there is a far deeper wisdom to be sought.

So then, the question, “Are we to intentionally practice the “Fruits of the Spirit”, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control?” Most Christian teachers will quickly say “yes”, we should and must practice those “Fruits of the Spirit”.

But folks, may I warn us to be very careful with such teachings and such practices, else we will return to the problems most of us had before we were saved, that of trying, though personal effort to deal with the dilemmas of sin. Such human efforts did not work before we were saved and they will not work after we are saved.

Yes, we are to give personal effort. We are told clearly that we are to be holy.

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16 (ESV))

These words present us with a course of behavior that really sounds much like personal effort. And there are numerous other scriptures that appear to say the same. But as we draw nearer to the Spirit of Christ and grow in Him, we find that any actual steps forward in faith and obedience and holiness and sanctification come first through a deeper "in-filling" and "indwelling" of the Holy Spirit, yes, with a unique combination of our own involvement being carefully applied to those efforts, but never simply coming through our efforts alone.

Why must that be so? It is because, those "Fruits", love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness are not "fruits" of our own, they are "fruits" that belong to the Holy Spirit. They are not "gifts" from Him to us and therefore become ours. Not at all! Those fruits, such as the one of "patience" are part of the Character of the Holy Spirit, and are only present when and to the extent that the Holy Spirit is present within our soul.

Some might argue that the Holy Spirit is always present within the soul of a believer, and that would be absolutely true. But strangely, and I confess that I don't understand the concept very well, but the Holy Spirit can be present within us in varying measures. That is easily seen when we receive commands from these scriptures such the ones that tell us to "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18) and also to, "draw near to God and He will draw near to you". (James 4:7-8)

So then, while we might not fully understand these concepts of righteousness, we know from them that we can experience the presence of God's Holy Spirit to varying degrees. And it is only as we are "draw near" to God and are filled with His Spirit that the "Fruits of the Spirit", such as "patience" will be able to fully come forth within our behaviors.

So then, the answer to our question “Should we practice the Fruits of the Spirit”? It is not a bad thing to do. It is a “good” thing, but not the “best” thing. If we are ever to experience real “patience” in our daily circumstances of life, the “very best” thing for us to do is to “draw near to God” and be “filled with His Spirit”, then He will bring “patience” with Him. And it will be the kind of patience that will really, really work well!

And folks, this is all part of God’s gift to us in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In His resurrection, He has wrought in us this blessed provision of His power over sin, such as this one of “impatience”.

I must close for now! But may I repeat this blessed truth that we have spoken about here today, that there is power, wonder-working power available to all those who will believe this “gospel” and receive this precious Savior, the Lord Jesus.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16 (NASB))