

DIVINE INTERVENTION

Ephesians 2.4-7, Message 12: What God has done in Christ for wicked sinners

“But”: Think about the implications of this small, three-letter word.

- (Gen 6.5-8, esp. v8) “But Noah...”: God saw Noah as different than the rest.
- (1Cor 2.9-10) “But God...” has given us something that lost people don't have.
- (Rom 5.7-8) “But God...” did something no one else *could* or *would* do.
- (Eph 2.1-4) “But God...” intervened in our lives and did something wonderful.

We have spent the last two messages looking at ourselves and our condition before our salvation.

- Ephesians 2.1-3 has been like a spiritual mirror for us and the picture it gave us has not been pretty.
 - ✓ (Eph 2.1) Before Christ, we were dead spiritually, separated from God in sin.
 - ✓ (Eph 2.2-3a) We were carried away by the world, controlled by the devil, and consumed by the flesh.
 - ✓ (Eph 2.3b) And because of all that (because of what we *were* and what we *did*), we were condemned to suffer God's wrath, and rightly so.
- The greatest evil (us and our sin) provoked the greatest hatred and required the greatest punishment.
- But from the greatest evil, God has brought out the greatest good (our good and His glory); and He did that through the greatest sacrifice (Christ on the cross).

In Ephesians 2.1-3 we laid down the black cloth (and it could not be any more black), and now in Ephesians 2.4-7 we get to set the diamond of God's goodness on that black background and see just how good He is.

- We have spent the time looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word, and now it's time to turn our focus to God.
- (v4) “But God...” I don't think there is any other phrase in the Bible that conveys as much hope for lost, sinful man as this one.

Look at what we were and what we had done, *but God* intervened.

- That is where it all starts... That is where *life* begins... that is why we can have a new beginning.
- God intervened. We were wicked and condemned, *but God* did something...
- We are going to look at three questions this morning as we contemplate what this passage says about God's intervention in our lives:
 1. Why? Why did God even bother to intervene when we didn't want Him to?
 2. What? What did God do when He intervened in our lives?
 3. What for? What did God do all of this for? What's the purpose in it all?

I. Why? Why did God intervene in our lives?

A. (Eph 2.1-3) Remember what you were before God's intervention—before the “But God...”

1. You were wicked and you did wicked things (you lived for that and enjoyed it).
2. (Rom 1.30) The Bible speaks of sinners without Christ as “haters of God.”
 - Many fashion a god for themselves in their minds, a god that makes them feel good. But the one true God, the Creator and God of the Bible, is hated by sinful man.

3. (Rom 5.8, 10) The sinner (v8) is the enemy of God (v10). He lives in opposition to the Creator.
4. So, why would God chose to intervene in the lives of those who do not want Him, those who hate and despise Him?

B. (v4) God intervened in our lives because He loved us.

1. God is rich in mercy, but that is only because (“for”) His love is great. His mercy stems from love.
2. (1Jn 4.8) Although many misunderstand and misapply this truth, it's still true: God is love.
3. (1Jn 1.5) The misunderstanding and misapplication seems always to come from the refusal of sinful man to take into account the other “God is...” statement in this same book: God is light.
 - a) God is completely and totally holy and just and good.
 - b) He will bring every sin, no matter how small, to justice because there is no darkness at all in Him (and He will therefore not allow any sin at all to enter into His kingdom).
 - c) God's love is not a “get-out-of-jail-free card”; it is not some spiritual Visa Card that simply pays for everything without consequence.
 - d) God is light (He is holy, just, and good), and because He is light, He will judge the world in righteousness—according to His perfect righteousness.
 - e) But, the same God who is light is also love...
4. (1Jn 4.8-10) Love is what moved God to intervene and save us from His justice.
 - a) But, His love did not just simply erase the charges against us. God's love moved Him to pay our debt—to suffer the justice we deserved.
 - (1) God is light and we are darkness. God is holy and just and good, and we are wicked and worthy of His wrath because of what we are and what we have done.
 - (2) But God is love and because of His love, He chose to become the propitiation (the innocent substitute and sacrifice) for our sins.
 - b) (1Jn 2.2) And He not only suffered for our sins (the sins of the saved), but also for the the sins of the whole world—Christ's atonement is without limit (He paid for all sins).
 - (1) (John 3.16) Because of His love, God intervened in our history, and He intervened for the whole world—all sinners can be saved.
 - (2) (John 3.17-21, 36) But the sinner must come to God on His terms: repentance and faith.
 - (3) (John 3.16 cf. Eph 2.4) Notice that Bible says that God “loved” (past tense): God's love is offered today, but the sinner must go to the cross to get it (that is where God “loved” the world because that is where the propitiation was made).

C. (v4) God's great love moves Him to offer us great mercy.

1. Mercy is not receiving what you deserve (e.g., a child that deserves a spanking would ask his parents for mercy, and mercy would result in withholding the punishment he deserved).
 - Because of God's mercy, we have been rescued from hell and the lake the of fire.
2. (Micah 7.18) Because God is love, He delights in mercy. It is His joy and pleasure to extend mercy to wicked (repentant) sinners and forgive them.
 - a) Don't miss this! God loved the world. God's love for all men moved Him to become the propitiation for all sins (all sins, all men, all of history).
 - b) And now, because of that great love wherewith He loved all of us (on the cross), He offers the riches of His mercy to all men. And He delights in that!

- c) God *wants* to forgive you. And even more than that: God is *delighted* to be *merciful* to you and to *forgive* you *all* your sins.
 - d) Tell me that's not good news! And it is all because God is love, and His love moved Him to be our propitiation. Now that same love moves Him to be *merciful* to sinners.
3. Who qualifies for this great love and riches of mercy? Sinners (if you're a sinner, you qualify).
- a) You qualify for God's love.
 - b) You qualify for God's mercy.
 - c) You qualify to be a *delight* to God, a source of *great pleasure* to Him.
4. But, if you refuse to recognize how wicked you really are (Eph 2.1-3), then you are just the opposite. Let's not forget this great truth:
- a) (Rom 5.6) Christ did not die for good people.
 - b) If you think you are a good person, then you are on your own!
 - c) In order to get to the "But God..." in Ephesians 2.4 (God's love that moved Him to have mercy on us), you first have to go through Ephesians 2.1-3 (you are the greatest evil).
 - d) "But God..." is willing to bring the greatest good from the greatest evil, if we will only recognize what we are and what we have done, so that we come to God through the cross.

D. (v4) Why did God intervene in our history and in our lives?

- 1. Because He is love (and He loved us like no one else can, could, or would).
- 2. And, because He is love, He *delights* in being merciful to sinners, forgiving our sins, and rescuing us from His justice.

II. (v5-6) What? What did God do when He intervened in our lives?

A. (v5) God quickened us with Christ.

- 1. (v1) We were dead spiritually because of sin and sins, but God intervened and gave us life (we were spiritually separated from God—dead--and now that spiritual separation is gone—life).
- 2. God quickened (made alive) our dead spirits.
 - a) (Titus 3.4-5) God regenerated (re-generate: to make a live again) our spirits by His Spirit.
 - b) (1Cor 6.17) God's Spirit came into our spirits to dwell forever. Where there was separation from God (death, in our spirits), there is now unity with Him (life, in our spirits).
 - c) This is what is meant by being "born again by the Spirit." We are regenerated—made alive again—in our spirits by the Holy Spirit of God.

B. (v6) God raised (resurrected) our spirits from the dead with Christ.

- 1. We have been resurrected spiritually, but not yet "fully." Although we have eternal security, we have yet to experience all of the salvation God has given to us in Christ.
- 2. (Rom 8.9, 10b, 16) The Holy Spirit is joined to our *spirits* and we are therefore saved spiritually (God saved our spirits in them moment of our conversation, when He regenerated us).
- 3. (Rom 8.10a) Our *bodies*, though, are still dead in sins.
 - a) This is why we can know for sure that the health and wealth movement is not of God. The Bible says that your physical body is still dead in sins. It is not yet "saved."
 - b) (Rom 8.11) The salvation of our bodies is still yet future (Rom 13.11), in the rapture.

4. (Rom 8.29) What God is doing today (between the salvation of our spirits in the past and the salvation of our bodies in the future) is “saving” our *souls*.
 - a) (Gal 4.19) God is molding us into the image of Christ, in our character and our conduct.
 - b) (Php 1.6) God will perfectly and complete finish this work at the rapture.

C. God intervened and quickened us (past tense) with Christ, and that is just the beginning!

1. (v4) God's *mercy* rescued us from hell (mercy kept us from getting what we deserve: punishment).
2. (v5-6) God's *grace* gave us life and a home in the presence of God (grace is getting the opposite of what we deserve: blessing, reward, inheritance).
3. And that brings us to our last question: What for?

III. (v7) What for? What did God do all this for?

A. God loved us and gave us mercy and grace for salvation for *His glory* and *our good*.

1. Remember the purpose of our existence: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
2. Remember how we fulfill that purpose (our mission): To *be* and *make* disciples of the Lord.
 - a) In our salvation (spirit, soul, and body) we experience God's *kindness* (we enjoy God!).
 - b) In that (in our salvation and joy in God), God's attributes are put on display for all to see, especially the attributes of love, mercy, grace, and kindness. God is glorified!

B. And let's remember this: Ephesians 4.7 says that God did all this to put *one* attribute on display above all others: His kindness!

1. Kindness is God's inclination to be good to us and to seek our well being.
2. And that is our God! He is kind!
 - a) His great love resulted in riches of mercy and exceeding riches of grace toward... us!
 - b) His kindness has taken the greatest evil (us, sin) and brought forth the greatest good (His glory in our salvation, because our salvation is a display is infinite kindness).

Let's remember, though, where God's kindness can be found:

- (v5) It is found “with Christ.”
- (v6) It is found “in Christ Jesus.”
- (v7) It is found “through Christ Jesus.”
- Kindness is found at the cross, in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God *delights* in saving the sinner (*any* sinner), but the sinner must come to God on God's terms: Repentance and faith in His Son.

- And then, when we come to God on His terms, then *we* can *delight* in Him (we can enjoy God forever!) because He is kind toward us.
- (Eph 2.1-3) We first need to understand just how wicked we are. But we can't stay there.
- (Eph 2.4-7) We need to see the “But God...”: God's love, mercy, grace, and kindness.
 - ✓ Our wickedness is the black background; Jesus Christ is the diamond God puts on that background.
 - ✓ Don't stare at the blackness, but rather let the blackness focus your attention on the diamond!
 - ✓ Yes, we are wicked. “But God...” intervened and He is kind! He intervened because He loved us. He intervened because He is kind and delights in lavishing on us mercy and grace in Jesus Christ.