

Week 29

July 16 - July 22

2 Kings 18:13-20:19; 2 Chronicles 32:1-31; Isaiah 18:1-27:13; 29:1-39:8;
Micah 2:1-7:20

Our theme for the week is salvation. There are a number of different topics related to salvation that we are going to look at. My prayer is that, by the end of the week, you will be rejoicing even more in the salvation that we have in Christ.

July 16th

Isaiah 18:1-23:18. "Saved from the Penalty of Sin"

Judgment, Judgment, Judgment. Five chapters of judgment. Judgment is not a pretty thing to look at or encounter or even to think about. However, it is an important part of who God is. Judgment is God's reaction or response to man's sin and rebelliousness and, as the verse above indicates, the judgment or penalty for that sin is death.

This is where the need for salvation comes in. It is because, on our own, we stand before God condemned or judged in our sin. This salvation I speak of today is the first level or primary experience of salvation in that we are saved from the penalty of sin. We experience or will experience salvation on two other levels, which we will discuss later in the week.

This experience of being saved from the penalty of sin is often what we think of when we talk about being saved. It is in this salvation that comes by faith in Christ that we experience a regeneration of life and an adoption into the family of God, becoming co-heirs with Jesus.

July 17th

Isaiah 24:1-27:13; 29:1-24. "Free Gift of Salvation"

"God saved you by His special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it" – Ephesians 2:8-9

I was once asked how I respond to God for His gift of salvation, considering that not everyone will receive that gift. I think that the gratitude and joy expressed in Isaiah 25:9 sums it up well. There is nothing more and nothing less that can be done in response to God's salvation than to just praise Him. You cannot claim credit for your salvation, for you did not earn it. And it is not that your faith is greater than the next person, for the faith to believe is from God Himself (John 6:44, 65).

Any time you find yourself feeling proud and satisfied about your faith when standing before God, instead of feeling humble and gracious, that is an attitude that should be repented of. The only right response toward our salvation is one of worship and gratitude for the free gift that God has given us.

July 18th

Isaiah 30:1-33:24. "Salvation is in Christ Alone"

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me.'" – John 14:6

In today's reading, Isaiah warns God's people about relying on outside help for their salvation. Israel as a small nation was weak at this point in history because of civil war and rebelliousness toward God. It was tempting to rely on Egypt's help in battling the Assyrians instead of relying solely on the Lord.

These international relationships and the need for Israel as a nation to rely on the Lord (Isa. 31:1) is representative of our need to rely on the Lord for our own salvation.

Our salvation is based in the Lord and our standing as righteous before Him is because of the work of Christ and His imputed righteousness in our life. However, many times we attempt to attain righteousness through our own efforts. Any time we add lists of dos and don'ts to our relationship with God, it makes our faith about earning righteousness.

May you begin to see your salvation as complete in the work of Christ, and that you cannot do more than He has already done.

Day 200 – July 19th

Isaiah 34:1-35:10; Micah 2:1-5:15. “License to Sin?”

“Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?” – Romans 6:1-2

In the days that Micah prophesied, Israel was proud and arrogant of their standing before the Lord. They had ignored the need for obedience and holiness and had relied on their position as God’s covenant people. They believed they could act however they wanted without any consequences because the Lord had chosen Jerusalem as His dwelling place (3:11).

A false understanding of grace and our assurance of salvation can lead us into a similar way of living. However, Paul makes it clear in the above verse that grace is not a license to sin but, on the contrary, the new man in Christ is to have nothing to do with sin and is to live by righteousness.

This is not to say that we must be perfect or that our salvation or sanctification is totally based on our obedience and holiness. Rather, the way in which we live is not a means to righteousness, but rather is in response to the great salvation we have in Christ.

July 20th

2 Kings 18:13-37; 2 Chronicles 32:1-8; Isaiah 36:1-22; Micah 6:1-7:20.

"Foolishness of the Cross"

Recently I watched an episode of Nightline, in which they moderated a debate between Christians and atheists. The atheists in the debate worked hard at making the Christian gospel sound foolish. Of course, this would come as no surprise to the Apostle Paul who declared in his own day that the message of the cross, the gospel, was foolishness to those who don't believe (1 Cor. 1:18).

This dynamic seems to parallel the scene that is taking place in 2 Kings 18 and Isaiah 36. King Sennacherib's representative mocks the idea of trusting in the Lord for Jerusalem's deliverance. Even in the Old Testament, those who did not know the Lord were unable to comprehend His power to save and deliver His people.

Do not be surprised when you are mocked or scorned for trusting in Jesus for your salvation. Do not respond harshly, but rather may you "live wisely among those who are not Christians, and make the most of every opportunity (Col. 4:5).

July 21st

2 Kings 19:1-37; 2 Chronicles 32:9-23; Isaiah 37:1-38. "Saved from the Power of Sin"

"You have died with Christ, and He has set you free from the evil powers of this world." – Colossians 2:20

Today we have read the magnificent account of how God responded to the faith of Hezekiah and Isaiah and delivered Jerusalem from the armies of the Assyrians. While nothing is too difficult for God (Jer. 32:17), the defeat of the Assyrian army was no small thing. The Assyrians were the dominant nation in the region at that time. The army they had amassed was over 185,000 troops, and they had already taken the northern territory of Israel into captivity. To say the least, the Assyrians were powerful and had every reason to be in control of Jerusalem except for the intervention of the Lord.

In a similar way, sin has power and control in the lives of people. It is only when someone experiences salvation from the Lord through faith in Christ Jesus that they are set free from this power. And not only that, but every time we choose obedience instead of sin we are saved from the power of sin.

July 22nd

2 Kings 20:1-19; 2 Chronicles 32:24-31; Isaiah 38:1-39:8. "Saved from the Presence of Sin"

"He will remove all their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever." – Revelation 21:4

Hezekiah's poem (Isaiah 38:10-20) is a beautiful response of praise to the healing that he experienced from the Lord. In verse 17, I think we see a foreshadowing of the experience we will have when God totally does away with sin and death.

This is the third level of our salvation experience. Not only are we saved from the penalty and the power of sin, but we will also be saved from the presence of sin. And it is at that point that we will no longer have to deal with the curse of sin, for that will have been done away with and all things will be made new.

What it will be like when that curse is lifted is impossible to fully know. But what we can know is the hope of salvation that comes from knowing Jesus Christ.

May you with great anticipation long for that day when we will finally experience the fullness of our salvation.