

God's Search For Man

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-5 Larry - Closed. FPU. Bap/Fam Day. Disaster Relief.
- B. Slide6 Night of Prayer - Tonight 6:30-7:30pm. Agape rm. Topic: Pro-life.
 1. Read about 24 hour Pray Vigil.
- C. Slide7 Pray:

II. Intro:

- A. Slide8/9 Illus: You've seen a painter grasping his *mixing board palette*, with his ugly little daubs of paint on the palette. What can he do with those spots/smears of color? Go visit his studio & gaze upon his splendid paintings.
 1. In the same way Jesus takes us, *poor smudges of paint*, and He makes *the incredible pictures of His grace* out of us.
 2. *It is neither the brush nor the paint He uses, but it is the skill of His own hand which does it all.* Spurgeon
 3. Slide10 As we look at an art piece (A Monet, Van Gogh, DaVinci, Rembrandt) we might say, it's *unique, timeless, one-of-a-kind, priceless, colorful, mysterious & that it beautifully communicates something.*
[we'll see God thinks the same about us]
- B. Slide11 Paul's prayer (last week 15-23) refers to Gentiles (non-Jews) becoming part of God's family. In this chapter, Paul discusses **how** that happens.
 1. Christ's victory over *evil powers* makes reconciliation with God possible.
 2. This discussion has 2 parts: 1-10 and 11-22 (next week).
 - a) 1st part, Paul writes about humanity's **reconciliation** with God.
 - b) 2nd part, Paul then describes the **blessings** that believers receive as a result of being reconciled to God through Christ.
- C. Slide12 Religions throughout the ages have well illustrated *Man's search for God...but The Scriptures* tell the *unimaginable* story of **God's Search For Man.** (God moving toward us)
[from Abraham Heschel, the Jewish Theologian & Philosopher's book...*God in Search of Man*]

D. **Outline:** *What We Were. What We Are. Why He Did It. How He Did It. For What Purpose.*

III. Slide13a **WHAT WE WERE (1-3)** [*Without Life; Without Freedom; Without Hope*]

A. A look at our former life shows we didn't have **life** at all.

1. Our past life is summed in one word...**dead**.
2. **Illust:** The smell of death (rat in attic)

B. Slide13b **FROM DEATH TO LIFE** (1)

C. **Dead** – you spiritually are *deader than dead*, *not mostly dead*. Like on *Princess Bride* where **Miracle Max** (Billy Crystal) **said**, *It just so happens that your friend here is only **MOSTLY** dead. There's a big difference between **mostly dead** and **all dead**. **Mostly dead** is slightly alive.*

1. **Bad news**...spiritually without Jesus, you're not *mostly dead nor slightly alive*.
2. Lost sinners are not simply **sick** people needing **help**; they are **dead** people needing **life**.

D. **Dead in trespasses & sin** – Lost

1. **Trespasses** – wrong steps taken, deliberate breaking of the law.
2. **Sin** – to miss the mark.
 - a) These both **aren't isolated acts**; they speak of *a way of life or a pattern of conduct*.

E. Slide13c **FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM** (2,3)

F. **We note we were in bondage to:** the **World** (2a). **Devil** (*prince power of the air* 2b). **Flesh** (3).

1. What a **description** of the human condition. What an **indictment** against us.
 - a) **Dead in sin**. **Influenced** by Satan. **Controlled** by lust. **And** under God's wrath.

G. **And we defined us both personally & publicly:**

1. **Personally** (2) - Our **personal walk**. Our individual life. **You once walked**.
 - a) Life is a **walk** (journey, trek, pilgrimage) an active process that moves along step by step.
 - b) **When you followed the ways of this world** – the pressures of **society & culture** led us **away** from God.
 - c) **The prince of the power of the air** – (Satan) a spiritual power of evil **who** generates a spirit of **disobedience** in people. [**Air = spiritual realm**]

d) **Sons of disobedience** – *a Hebraic expression indicating their chief characteristic is that of **disobedience**.* (LKGNT) [And this *disobedience* is a matter of *choice*]

2. **Publicly** (3) -Our **public** walk. **Conduct ourselves.**

a) They gratified the desires (i.e. *fulfilling*) of their sinful nature.

(1) And this involves both the **body/flesh & mind**. [or, our *desires & thoughts*]

IV. Slide14a **WHAT WE ARE (4-6)** [*He Loved Us; He Liberated Us; He Lifted Us*]

A. Now we get to look at the *polar opposite*.

1. Rom.5:20b,21 *where **sin** abounded, **grace** abounded much more.*

B. Paul starts this contrast with *but God*.

1. These words signal **God's intervention into our hopeless, sinful condition**.

2. **He is not a God of wrath only; He is also a God of Mercy.**

3. **How did He show this? He Loved Us. He Liberated Us. He Lifted Us.**

C. Slide14b **FROM TOMB TO THRONE (4-6)**

D. **He Loved Us (4)**

E. **Mercy** – (LKGNT) The word indicates *the emotion aroused by someone in need & the attempt to relieve the person & remove his trouble*.

1. God's emotions were aroused by seeing **your need**. **And** He desires to relieve & remove **your trouble**.

F. He is *rich in mercy* & His mercy is rooted in *His great Love* for us.

1. That was shown in what He has done **in Christ**.

G. Slide14c **He Liberated Us (5)**

H. **Made us alive** – Can also mean *raised, to keep alive, to preserve life, quickened, granted a new spiritual life*.

I. **Saved** – here is where doing your *grammatical* homework...pays off.

1. In the Greek there is **the pluperfect tense** (*aka past perfect*), **it is a completed action in the past**. **Eg.** In Jn.18:16 *context*: Jesus was arrested. 2 disciples followed. 1 went into courtyard, but **Peter stood at the door outside**.

a) **Stood** is in the *pluperfect tense*. *Peter standing at the door was a completed act at some point in the past, and is no longer standing at that door.*

2. But here our word **saved** (in 5&8) it is in the **perfect tense** which points to the **completed action w/a continuing result**, thus emphasizing **the continual state or condition**.

a) By grace you are **converted**...by grace you are are being **kept**...and by grace, **will** go home to be w/the Lord. Justin Alfred

J. Slide14d He Lifted Us (6)

K. **Raised us up together** – believers not only receive **life** but they experience a **resurrection**

1. This being raised is **with Christ** – we have been **united with Him** in **His** resurrected life.

L. **Made us alive, raised us, seated us** – means that, get this, what happened to Christ WILL happen to us.

1. The believer's **resurrection, ascension, & enthronement** **must await** complete fulfillment; **BUT** *spiritually*...this has **already happened**.

2. *God didn't give you life to leave you in the cemetery. He lifted you up to sit on the throne with His victorious Son.* (www)

a) So, we are *brought back to life* from our **spiritual death**; **then raised** to the presence of God; **then seated** in heaven.

V. Slide15 **WHY HE DID IT** (7)

A. He did it so that He might display us as ***trophies of His grace***.

1. **We're Trophy kids**. It's God in the stands yelling, *that's my boy/girl out on the field, #23. That's my boy/girl playing percussion in the band.* We're Trophy kids

VI. Slide16a **HOW HE DID IT** (8,9) [*Through His Favor. Through Our Faith*]

A. This is one of the best ***summaries of the gospel*** in the NT.

B. **Saved** – General term that includes (justification, reconciliation, adoption)

1. Again the **tense** is that which has been accomplished in the **past**, & **continues** to have results in the present.

C. Slide16b THROUGH HIS FAVOR (8a)

D. Grace/favor – (12 x's in Eph) pleasantness, favor, & gratitude. *The Unmerited. Undeserved. Unconditional. Divine favor of God.*

1. Early Christians brought more significance to this word by describing “**the utter generosity that God gives to sinners...even though they don't deserve it.**”
2. It isn't only the forgiveness of sin, but includes the gift of God's power in our lives (which brings about a new kind of life).
3. *I defy my free will to fling away what it never brought to me. What God has given, created, introduced, & established in the heart, He will maintain there.*

Spurgeon

E. Slide16c THROUGH OUR FAITH (8b)

F. Through faith/trusting – this indicates *the channel* through which salvation comes.

1. It means more than simply agreeing w/an idea. It refers to a total openness to letting God give the benefits of salvation & to obeying the will of God.
2. Faith is not viewed as a positive work or accomplishment of the individual.
 - a) So included in this grace is the gift of having enough faith to believe *the Good News of Jesus.*

G. Slide17 It is the gift of God – It's a gift.

1. When a person works an 8-hour day & receives a fair day's pay, that's a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that's a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that's an award. But...When a person is NOT capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award - YET receives such a gift anyway - that is a good picture of *God's unmerited favor.*

H. (9) Not of works/actions –

1. Some peoples reaction to the plan of salvation is that...it sounds too easy and too simple to be true. They feel that there is something more they must do, something they must add to God's recipe for salvation.

VII. Slide18 FOR WHAT PURPOSE (10)

A. FOR GOOD WORKS (10)

B. His workmanship – ποίημα. Masterpiece. Art piece. Poem/poetry.

1. One said it this way, *You are the created creation for the purpose of good creations.*
2. We are **a work of art** God is in process of designing.
3. What good is art? No practical function in our world...yet we need it. We love it, in so many of its forms (Visual arts/paintings, sculptures. Printmaking/photg. Performing arts/music, theater, film, dance). At the core of our being we love & are attracted to beauty & something transcendent. You are God's masterpiece.
4. Slide19 And *your portrait* is *so unique, timeless, one-of-a-kind, priceless, colorful, mysterious & beautifully communicates something to everybody* that no other human has. [you are blessed, to be a blessing]
5. Slide20-22 And you are the expression of the artist (God). It's something **The Artist** is creating...**Not you...you the art.** *So hey, pottery piece...Stop telling The Potter, you don't like what He's doing with you on the wheel of life!* You're critiquing **HIS** art when you don't like you.[You're not self-creating. You're His art-restoration project]

C. For Good works – We are **saved from** (negative) a lot that is negative & destructive; **but** we are being **saved to** (positive) good works.

1. Slide23 Illust: of wick & oil. In a biblical oil lamp, if the **oil** runs out, the **wick** burns out. **But** as long as there is **oil**, the **wick** **doesn't** burn.
2. Slide24/25 Question: What's burning in your lie?
 - a) Are you *burning the candle at both ends* (working your hardest)
 - b) **Or**, have you received *God's beautiful free gift of salvation*, His oil (your fuel/power).

D. Communion: Bread & Cup