

The Object of Our Salvation

Why does God save us? Were we to brainstorm the answer to this question in a Sunday School class, our list might include:

- To take us to heaven ...
- So that we can have fellowship with Him through prayer and obedience to His Word ...
- So that our lives can be better in that they will be filled with the fruit of the Spirit – things like love, joy, peace patience, kindness and those sorts of things ...

These are all the precious rewards of salvation - its side-effects - its perks, if you will. But I think it is important sometimes to remember that the Bible speaks of one divine objective to which we often give inadequate attention:

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined **TO BE CONFORMED TO THE LIKENESS OF HIS SON**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. – Romans 8:28, 29

Jesus came to show us the Father so that the grace of God might restore us, in our very likeness, to God. Man was created in the image of God, and we are still in some respects His image-bearers, but because of sin, that image was hideously marred. We have, apart from grace, lost our capacity to reflect God's holiness.

“Boy, that image stuff is too heavy to think about! Doctrine drags me down,” someone might say. But to understand that restoration to the image of God is fundamental is worth the trouble. Without that final restoration, there will be no fitness for heaven. Without a commitment to the process of that restoration, there is no basis now for concluding that we have the capacity to carry on true fellowship with God through prayer, through the Bible or through any other venue. Without a longing for that restoration, any love joy, peace, patience, kindness and the like will be spasmodic, contrived and shallow, not abiding.

Only those who are being renewed to the image of God have any capacity to reflect His holiness and righteousness. Understanding the relationship of holiness (the image of God) to the rewards of faith gives the believer a shape and a direction for life that is beyond secular pursuits and above the narcissism that so typifies the Christianity of this present age.

... Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. – Romans 6:19

¹⁴Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. – Hebrews 12:14