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SERMON TITLE: Salvation 101: A Specific God Saves Us Through a Specific Savior

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 1:3-11

DATE: January 13, 2019

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read also Isaiah 53:1-6, 10-11

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman Province of Asia. Paul had been restricted by the Holy Spirit from preaching there on his first missionary trip. But on the end of his second missionary trip, the Holy Spirit allowed him and he stopped by Ephesus for a short visit on his way to his home base in Antioch in Syria. And he preached the Gospel there.

On his third missionary journey, Paul visited again and he stayed nearly three years. He found some disciples there, twelve men. A pastor named Apollos had been there; Apollos had taught them well because he knew the Scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus. He was coached by Priscilla and Aquila about the Holy Spirit and then Apollos moved on to Corinth, the capital of the Roman Province of Achaia. In the meantime, Paul arrived in Ephesus of Asia. So God was providing ministers and strengthening these newfound churches in the capital cities of Gentile territory.

In Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the temple of Artemis. It had been there for hundreds of years with origins from what we know as a meteorite which dropped from the sky. Artemis was a Greek goddess of fertility, of the hunt, the moon, and childbirth. Called Diana by the Romans, her temple brought much tourism and business to Ephesus. People came to pray to her statue. Businessmen made little statues which people bought and they carried them, prayed to them, and thought they were speaking to a god who could do something.

There were all kinds of Greek gods for a variety of needs—fertility, economics, the weather, healing, love—you name the need, a god had been created.

That's paganism. The Jews were against it. And so were the Christians.

Paul began teaching in the synagogue, but the Jews did not respond to his message. So he took the twelve disciples, rented out the lecture hall of Tyrannus, and taught daily there for two years. As a result, churches had sprung up all over the region and this letter, which was written when Paul lived in Rome, speaks not just to the local church, but to the whole body of Christ that had formed from pagans. It gives the global view of what God has done and is doing—God's plan from the

beginning for all the ages for his Church universal, Jew and Gentile.

Paul begins the letter describing a specific God with a specific plan of salvation through a specific Savior.

This God is not a random meteor that falls to the earth; not a rock or trinket you buy that can help you with your problem; it's not "god is everywhere or in everything;" it's not something you manufacture. Rather, God reveals God's plan so specifically the Bible describes the Messiah's act 700 years beforehand. (Read Isaiah 53)

And, Jesus Christ fulfills it. The prophecies are given; the prophecies are fulfilled exactly according to the Bible. The Bible describes the problem as God sees it, and then the Bible gives God's solution.

Paganism, on the other hand, has no solid foundation. It is random belief and the object is just that: a god you can see and hold in your hand. In today's world it is non-specific, non-textual, polytheistic movements all over the world. Go on the internet and you will see statues of pagan gods. These are impersonal gods; subjective, inside the believer's own head; a life-force, powerless and false. Sometimes pieces of these beliefs slip into Christianity. This hinders your faith. So it is important to know the truth. Paul explains it. He says this about God:

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. (Ephesians 1: 3-5)

Paul ends with: "So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son" (v. 6).

Do you and I really understand the specific God who saves us in a specific way through a specific Savior? Do we really get the immense, spectacular, personal, absolutely loving action God has taken toward us such that we do not compromise to these other ideas, pagan beliefs that creep in making God less real and less specific and a risky venture?

The Boxes and Quantum Mechanics

To explain, I want to share an illustration from Albert Einstein in his debate over Quantum Mechanics. Quantum Mechanics is a theory of the mechanics of physical systems that are subject to the *uncertainty principle*. It is based on observation. Nothing can be believed unless you can see it. If it isn't seen, it is not real. Thus, scientists believe that **human observation is the validator of reality**.

Einstein said no, there exists "elements of reality," that are really real—for which quantum mechanics provided only a *probability* of reality. Einstein insisted this other reality must be considered, even if it is not visible to the human eye. Einstein explained it using a simple, everyday object of two boxes and a ball.

If you have two boxes, and a ball in one of them, until you observe which box the ball is in, Quantum Mechanics (at that time) would say you cannot definitely say it is in one or the other boxes. Thus the mathematical formula assumes that there is a 50-50 chance that the ball is in either one of the boxes. The idea behind that 50% formula is that the ball can move until and unless you can see it. Maybe it is in this box, maybe it is not. Maybe it is in the other box, maybe it is not. **Where it is is validated by your observation.**

Thus, the scientific theory did not validate the ball in a box. It is not real. You cannot believe in something until you see it. There's a probability—it's 50%.

Einstein said, no, **there's another reality which is not visible which must be calculated into the formula**. That reality makes the formula for one box 100% and for the other box 0%.

Observation matters to scientific theory, but it is not all there is. Even if you do not know which box the ball is in, there is a 100% chance it exists in one of them.

Now let's translate that to faith. There's plenty you can't see.

You have these proofs:

- The life of Jesus Christ (real)
- The predictions of the prophets that Jesus fulfilled (real)
- Heaven (which you cannot see)
- The pre-determined will of God to save you (which you cannot see)

Because you cannot see all these elements of reality, under quantum mechanics their probability is 50%. If you let that thought creep in you will want proof. You will question whether God loves you. You will doubt God will answer your prayers. You will rely on idols like money or success or a political party or popularity to prop up your 50% God.

If your God is a 50% God, you cut off a huge blessing.

If your God is a 50% God, your prayers will be weak. If you are given a chance to serve your church, you will likely be lethargic about contributing. With a 50% probability, you might not exercise your talents because it doesn't seem to matter.

There is a specific God with a specific plan of salvation through a specific Savior, He thought of you and loves you 100% and planned for you to be saved. With faith, you have a 100% reality of major blessing, even in setbacks, even when you cannot see it. Is your God a 100% God?

Imagine the power of your prayers if you embrace this 100% God. You are going to freely pray for yourself and others because your God is fully able. With a 100% God, you can't wait to take every problem to him. You can't wait to serve and see what your God will bring out of it. When you have a 100% God, you will risk using your talents because you are sure God will empower you.

Paul is saying, "Up your sense of reality! God is 100% for you!"

"Long before he laid down earth's foundations, God had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. What pleasure he took in planning this! He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son." (v. 4-6 from Eugene Peterson, *The Message*)

We have scientific theory that looks down on things that cannot be seen, that tends to ignore faith, and diminish the reality of God.

But God has provided a 100% chance of finding him. And what do you have?

He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ— everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan. (Ephesians 1:7-11)

"So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son" (v. 6). Would you like to up your reality? I want a 100% God, do you?



AMEN