

GOD'S PROGRAM

TEXT: EPH. 1:12-14

Introduction:

1. I would like to talk this morning about God's program. God has a program, and so does the devil.
2. I do not intend to talk much about Satan's program this morning but we should at least be aware of it.
3. The devil's program is to deceive. In Revelation 12:9, the devil is called "the great dragon" and "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan," and it says he "deceiveth the whole world."
4. The devil deceives people through false prophets. Our Lord said, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:11).
5. Romans 16:18 says that by "good words and fair speeches" they "deceive the hearts of the simple."
6. Satan deceives and he defiles. His demons are referred to as "unclean spirits." Satan defiles through filth. He is behind all of the filth in this world – adultery, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, etc.
7. Over and over again, God told the children of Israel not to defile themselves with idols. The devil is behind idolatry. First Corinthians 10:19, 20 says, "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."
8. The devil's program is to deceive, defile, and to destroy. Our Lord said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).
9. Revelation 9 describes these horrible demonic locusts coming up out of the bottomless pit. We're told these demonic locusts have "a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon ("Destroyer")" (Rev. 9:11).
10. But I do not want to speak too much about Satan's program. Soon the antichrist will emerge and rise to power. Only God knows how much time we have left.

I. THE FIRST STEP IN GOD'S PROGRAM: HEARING

1. Ephesians 1:13 says, “after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” You have to first “hear the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.”
2. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).
3. First Peter 1:23 says, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”
4. Notice Paul says in Ephesians 1:13, “after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” Something may be true, but it may not be the Gospel.
5. Spurgeon used to say, “Morality will keep you out of jail, but it takes the blood of Christ to keep you out of hell.”
6. The #1 problem in America today is backslidden Christians who are not praying and not reading their Bibles and not winning souls.
7. Immigrants from all over the world are coming to the USA, and most of these people are not saved – Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Roman Catholics from Latin America, etc. We have an excellent opportunity to give them the true Gospel, but most Christians are not even trying.
8. Romans 10:14 says, “And how shall they hear without a preacher?” You say God has not called you to preach? Maybe so, but He has called you to be a witness for Him.
9. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
10. Proverbs 11:30 says, “he that winneth souls is wise.” Are you wise? Or are you foolish?
11. God’s program is for His people to win souls.

II. SECOND STEP IN GOD’S PROGRAM: BELIEVING

1. Ephesians 1:13 says, “after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed.”
2. The great preacher AT Pierson likened this text to climbing the Alps. He said the first mountain peak is “hearing the Gospel” – “after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (1:13).
3. And the next big step is believing the Gospel. The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”
4. “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).
5. If Paul and Silas were RC priests, they would have told the Philippian jailer, “Go to mass, light a candle, confess your sins to the priest, say the rosary, etc.”

6. If Paul and Silas were Mormons or Church of Christ or members of some of these other groups, they would say, “Get baptized and join our organization.”
7. In fact, all of the religions in this world say, “Do good works.”
8. But the Bible does not say “Do.” It says, “Done.”
9. “Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.” – Elvina M. Hall
10. Some people think, Jesus made the down payment, now they have to pay off the rest. But Jesus paid it all.
11. On New Year’s night, 1886, some missionaries were holding open-air services in order to attract passers-by to a near-by mission, where meetings were to be held later. “Jesus Paid It All” was sung, and after a gentleman had given a short address he hastened away to the mission. He soon heard footsteps close behind him and a young woman caught up with him and said:
12. “I heard you addressing the open-air meeting just now; do you think, sir, that Jesus could save a sinner like me?”
13. The gentleman replied that there was no doubt about that, if she was anxious to be saved. She told him that she was a servant girl, and had left her place that morning after a disagreement with her mistress. As she had been wandering about the streets in the dark, wondering where she was to spend the night, the sweet melodies of this hymn had attracted her, and she drew near and listened attentively. As the different verses were being sung, she felt that the words surely had something to do with her. Through the whole service she seemed to hear what met her oppressed soul’s need at that moment. God’s Spirit had showed her what a poor, sinful and wretched creature she was, and had led her to ask what she must do. On hearing her experience, the gentleman took her back to the mission and left her with the ladies in charge. The young, wayward woman was brought to Christ that night. A situation was secured for her in a minister’s family. There she became ill and had to be taken to a hospital. She rapidly failed and it became evident that she would not be long on earth. One day the gentleman whom she had met on New Year’s night was visiting her in the ward. After quoting a few suitable verses of Scripture, he repeated her favorite hymn, “Jesus Paid It All” ...and she seemed overwhelmed with the thought of coming to glory...Two hours afterward she passed away.” (from Ira Sankey, *My Life and the Story of the Gospel Hymns*).
14. To believe means, “to trust.” “who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted...” (Eph. 1:12, 13). That woman trusted Christ, and so she was ready to meet Him in heaven.

15. Are you ready to meet the Lord?
16. The Bible says, “prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12).
17. Blondine, the French tightrope walker, walked across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. After he made it across, he yelled down to the huge cheering crowd, “How many of you believe I can make it back across pushing a wheelbarrow?”
18. The crowd roared, “We believe.”
19. “All right then,” said Blondine. “Who wants to sit in the wheelbarrow?” This is what “trust” means.

III. THIRD STEP: SEALED (1:13c)

1. Every genuine believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit the moment He is saved. When a person trusts Christ, he receives the Holy Spirit as a sign that he belongs to God and that he will be kept safe by God until the time he receives his glorified body.
2. So being sealed means we are secure in Christ. A salvation that is not secure is not Biblical salvation.
3. A salvation that is not eternal is not Biblical (cf. John 3:16).
4. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27, 28).
5. Our church has a seal that verifies we are incorporated. In legal matters, a seal indicates ownership and security. Likewise in spiritual matters – the Holy Spirit seals us as God’s property and guarantees our preservation until the day of redemption (cf. Eph. 4:30).
6. Jude 1 says we are, “sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” The Holy Spirit guarantees our preservation.
7. He is the “Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13). He was promised by both God the Father and God the Son (cf. Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 1:4, 5; John 14:16, 17; 16:7).
8. Ephesians 1:14 says, the Holy Spirit is the “earnest” (pledge or guarantee) of our inheritance. When someone goes to purchase a

building or property, the seller wants a down payment as a pledge or guarantee that the purchaser is in “earnest.”

9. As the seal, the Holy Spirit guarantees that we will be kept safely for the inheritance. As the earnest, He guarantees the inheritance will be kept securely for us.

10. The Holy Spirit is “the earnest until the redemption of the purchased possession” (1:14). In other words, the earnest looks forward to the full redemption, i.e. the redemption of our bodies – free from disease, sickness, and death.

11. Romans 8:23 says, “even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

CONCLUSION:

1. These are three simple steps: hear, believe, and then you are sealed forever.
2. Earlier I mentioned the famous French tightrope walker Blondine. Here is a similar story, but I do not know the man’s name.
3. A preacher was talking with a man who worked in the circus. He was the man on the flying trapeze. This man told the preacher that the safety net below served two purposes: (1) to keep him and the others from breaking their necks. (2) Then he added, “The net also keeps us from falling. Imagine there is no net. We would be so nervous that we would be likely to miss and fall. If there wasn’t a net, we would not dare to do some of the things we do. But because there is a net, we dare to make two, and even three turns.”
4. The preacher saw this as an opportunity to tell the man of our security in Christ. When we are sure that we are saved and in the Lord’s hands, we dare to attempt big things for God. And we do not have to worry about falling into hell because we “were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13).
5. Have you been sealed?