

# He Saved Us

- Titus 3:3-8
- Last week we saw the four practices that should govern how we live among and treat unbelievers. The two negatives: speak evil of no one, and avoid quarreling. The two positives: be gentle, and show perfect courtesy toward all people. Those these four may be very difficult to do on our best days, and though they are absolutely impossible to do without the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they are possible and they are not optional for those who follow Christ. Today we will see the great compelling argument WHY we should live this way among unbelievers in verse 3: because we were also once just like them. And then we will see the great liberating truths of HOW we are able to live this way among unbelievers in verses 4-8: by the power of the Gospel. As I said last week, this is perhaps one of the most powerful presentations of the Gospel in all of the New Testament. I will share six points with you, and they will each be brief, and I borrow the wording for the outline for today's message from John Stott. We will look at the need, the source, the ground, the means, the goal and the evidence of salvation.

## 1. The Need of Salvation

- When a newspaper posed the question, 'What's Wrong with the World?' the Catholic thinker G. K. Chesterton reputedly wrote a brief letter in response: 'Dear Sirs: I am. Sincerely Yours, G. K. Chesterton.'
- Verse 3: Where else but in Christianity would you find this description of your life before Christ? If you were given this as a performance evaluation at your job, you could most likely sue and win whatever amount you wanted. If a child was sent home from school with this written on a progress report, the parents would have a fit: "Your child acts the fool, always does the opposite of what I ask him to do, is led astray and seems to always give in to whatever his little heart tells him he ought to do at any given minute. He is given to fits of anger and is very envious of other children's accomplishments. He seems to dislike everybody and, quite frankly, most of the other children don't want to be around him, either." That seems harsh, but it is exactly what the Bible says we were like before we met Christ. It's called original sin. The secularists like to say that they don't believe anything unless it is scientifically observable and can be replicated in an experiment. Malcolm Muggeridge said, "The depravity of man is at once the most empirically verifiable reality but at the same time the most intellectually resisted fact." And he said, "Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream." That's who we were: dead fish, swimming with the stream of original sin, desperately in need of a savior.

## 2. The Source of Salvation

- The world tells us that we will get better as people if we have more knowledge. We aren't good simply because we don't know enough. The source of our salvation, then, is education. Or others say, no, we really are good; we just have been led astray by the world and governments and religion. What we need is to be more enlightened spiritually, and that happens by looking within ourselves. The source of salvation is self. What does the Bible tells us.
- Verse 4: "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us." A family was out vacationing at the lake one summer. Dad had been puttering out by the boat house. Two of his sons, a 12-year old and a 3-year old were down playing along the dock. The 12 year old was supposed to be watching his little brother, but he got distracted. The 3 year old, little Billy, thought that would be a good time to check out the shiny aluminum fishing boat tied up at the end of the dock. So he went to the dock and put one foot on the boat, and one foot on the dock. He lost his balance and fell into the water, which was about 5 or 6 ft deep. The splash alerted the 12-yr old

who let out a piercing scream. Dad came running from the boat house, jumped into the water, swam down, but unable to see anything, came up for air. Sick with panic, he went right back down into this murky water, and began to feel everywhere around the bottom. He couldn't feel anything. Finally, on his way up, he felt little Billy's arms locked in a death grip on one of the posts of the dock, about 4 ft under water. Prying the boy's fingers loose, they burst up together thru the surface to fill their lungs with life giving air. Finally when the adrenaline had stopped surging, and nerves had calmed down a little bit, the Father asked his son, "What on earth were you doing down there hanging onto the post so far under the water? And little Billy's answer was a classic, laced with the wisdom only a toddler could give. He said, "I was just waiting for you dad. Just waiting for you."

- Epiphany! Paul talked about the two great epiphanies, appearances, in chapter two, verses 11-13. The first epiphany, when Christ appeared as our Savior. The second epiphany will happen when He returns as our King. Here in verse 4 Paul reminds us that the source of our salvation is God our Savior, who appeared, and He did in order to save us. "He saved us." Perhaps the most powerful truth to know experientially. That is knowledge because He is the truth! That is enlightenment because He is the Way. He is the source of our salvation. Only God could save us.

### 3. The Ground of Salvation

- Look at what the ground of salvation is NOT: "not because of works done by us in righteousness." In his book, *Limited Church: Unlimited Kingdom*, Rob Rienow says, "Imagine a person comes to you seeking spiritual advice. He says, "I know God is a personal God, and He wants me to draw near to Him in worship. So in order to do that, I am going up to the top of the mountain each morning, scrape myself with sharp rocks and jump in the fire. These are the things that help me to worship God and feel close to Him." Now, I doubt that any of us did things like this before we were born again, but there are millions around the world who do, and many world religions that teach that to get close to God you have to do such things.
- Verse 4b: The ground of salvation is the mercy of God. His own mercy. Specifically, God's mercy that was put on display in Jesus on the cross. This is a stumbling block to all who trust in their own good deeds to win them favor with God. (Picture: Wrong Way) They are headed down "Good Deeds Highway," happily on their way, seeking to justify themselves by their own works, and the cross of Jesus suddenly appears. The cross! Where sorrow and love flow mingled down. They have to run over the cross in order to pursue their "good deeds" done in their own strength according to their own agenda and for their own pleasure. God, we need to see your mercy and learn to despise our own self-righteous works.

### 4. The Means of Salvation

- Verse 4b: "by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." The church fathers and orthodox Christians ever since have believed that the first phrase refers to water baptism. Think of Paul's testimony in Acts 22:16 when he recalls Ananias saying to him, "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name." The church fathers did NOT teach baptismal regeneration and did not interpret this phrase to mean that Paul was saved when he was baptized and not before. They understood that baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace and did not confuse the sign with the thing it represented. The second phrase, "renewal of the Holy Spirit" points to that inward grace that baptism dramatizes. We were dead in our trespasses and sins, and then at the moment of God's choosing, we were renewed by the Holy Spirit, raised to walk in the newness of life. We had our own personal Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ. It means that we are made different than we were before; Paul uses the

same word in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”

- The means of salvation also includes justification, as Paul says in verse 7: “so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs.” Paul says in Romans 4 that Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. It happens at the same time God is doing His work in us of renewal and regeneration. Stott says that justification means that God declares us righteous through the penalty that Jesus paid for us on the cross, and regeneration means that He makes us righteous through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit!

## 5. The Goal of Salvation

- Verse 7: “so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Two unsearchable truths in that promise. First, that through salvation we are made heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, as Paul says in Romans 8:17. Let me ask you something. Will there ever be a moment in time or eternity when God will say to His Son, Jesus, who suffered and died on the cross to satisfy His justice: will there ever be a time when God says, “Jesus, you are no longer my heir.” Of course not. We can’t even imagine that unspeakable idea. But...we are heirs of God, too. We are fellow heirs with Christ. Will there ever be a moment in time or eternity when God will say to one of us, whose sins were paid for on the cross by the precious blood of Jesus: will there ever be a time when God will say to any of us, “You are no longer my heir.” Of course not. And because of that, we know the second unsearchable truth: we have the hope of eternal life. Not the hope that says, “I sure HOPE I make it to heaven!” That’s not hope, that’s faithlessness. Our hope is solid and secure because it rests on the character of God Himself, who cannot lie. (“in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began...”)

## 6. The Evidence of Salvation

- Verse 8: “I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.” You see that? The evidence of your salvation and mine is good works. We will talk about this more next week, as it is one of the major themes of the book of Titus, but remember as we have said many times before, that though we are not saved BY good works, we are saved TO good works. Good works are not the ground of our salvation, but they are the evidence of it. Not the root, but they are the fruit.
- The Apostles’ Creed: #716 in your hymnal. Perhaps as old as the middle of the second century, the roots of the creed go back to the teaching of the Apostles. It developed into a baptismal confession in the church, as new converts would recite it before being baptized.