

Titus 3:1-11; Isaiah 12; The Simple Gospel I. He II. Saved III. Us

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what is the gospel? Can you tell me the good news in its most simple or basic form? Sometimes we make a simple message too complex. Like when we are telling a story of something that happened to us- and we get off message and soon we forget why we started telling that story in the first place. Well, today we are not going to get off message- no rabbit trail is going to lead us away from this simple and sacred truth! You will hear the gospel told in 3 simple words. 3 words that have the power to change your life! 3 little words that set our hearts on fire. Now if I were to ask you what are the most important, 3 little words that people long to hear. Most people would say- the most important 3 words are "I Love You." Well, today, you will hear the most important 3 words that you need to know- He saved Us! You can see that Titus 3:4-7 are one long sentence. But if you pull back the layers- if you peel the different phrases apart you are left with one main verb- saved! He saved us- that is the blessed truth, the core of these verses are the blessed words we long to hear. One main subject and one main verb. So simple that a child can repeat- that a little one can hear, understand and rejoice. 3 simple words that change everything! Being Father's Day- every father here can memorize this truth and teach it to their children. And as we have celebrated the baptism of little Eily, she needs to be taught this most basic truth! Good news for the young and the old- so simple and yet so profound! Sometimes you need to dig to find riches- sometimes the glories of the gospel are perceived from afar and only after much meditation. But at other times- the gems are laying in plain sight. It is almost like we are walking in the Diamond Crater field in Arkansas. With precious stones just laying scattered on the ground. Today as we walk through v. 5, we stumble upon the most precious jewel- the summary of the gospel just laying there in plain sight! He saved us! 3 points for 3 words.

I. He

So we start as v. 5 begins, He. Now who is this He- this being who is the one that performs the work? Well, the preceding verse says that the good and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared. So the

“He” of v. 5 is the God our Savior. Note that in this context, the island of Crete was under the rule of Rome but it was also heavily influenced by Greek logic. But it was not Rome or the Caesar that is credited with this work of deliverance. Nor is it human logic or reasoning- as v. 5 continues- we are saved not by our works done in righteousness. The gods of the nations are powerless. Crete was renowned for being the place where Zeus supposedly once dwelled- and the legend of the mighty Minotaur was fabled to stalk the caves underground. But what are these but fables and myths. These cannot rescue or save! So this work of saving is not the product of gods that are not- nor is salvation a work of Roman government, not even the church nor the works of man. No- the work of salvation is fully and completely a work of God! God must act – it is God who must work- for it is by His hand alone that salvation can be found! Not what my hands have done- not my works- not man’s righteousness! No- it is He who saves! God our Savior. Now in referring to God our Savior- Paul is pointing to the Father as the fountain and source of our salvation. It is the Father who is the one in His goodness and loving kindness performs this work- it is He who pours out the Spirit through Son in v. 6. Grace and peace come to us from God the Father as 1:4 opens. It is the Father who loves us and sent His Son to this earth to die in our place. But how does the Father save us? By the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Spirit. The washing of regeneration is one of the parallel symbols of baptism- as we have witnessed today. We are born again by the Spirit- washed with the water and the word. Washing away the impurity of our soul and causing new life to be found within! The Spirit is the one who gives us life and knowledge – who applies the works of Jesus and gives us a new heart. Washing and renewal- regeneration and conversion. Growth in holiness and obedience as the Spirit continues to sanctify us within. So the Father washes and renews us by the Spirit- the same Spirit who was poured out on us through Jesus Christ as v. 6 continues. According the Son’s prayer- as He was interceding from the Father’s right hand- the Holy Spirit has been poured upon the church. In fact, the Son is called our Savior at the close of v. 6 as well. So the Father is our God and Savior- and Jesus is called the Savior.

There is no contradiction here! As we find also in 2:13- the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. In many ways, we could say that Jesus is the personified goodness and love of God. So in our first point it must be clearly seen- God is the one who is at work here! Salvation is a work of God in us- for us! God must act- He must work! He is the One who does it- and therefore He alone gets the praise! Glory to God alone- because He is at work!

II. Saved

But what is our God doing? What work is being performed by His hand? Well, He saved! Our Triune God Saved! Note that this word is in the past tense- it is a finished work- in the Greek it is in the Aorist meaning it is past action with present implications. So our God saves- He has saved because the Father has loved and chosen us. He has saved because the Son has died and rose again securing our justification. He has saved because the Spirit has been poured out and in our lives He has already washed us in regeneration. So salvation is a past event in that sense- but it is also a present reality. The Father still loves us and adopts us to be His own. The Son prays for us and pours out His Spirit on us. The Spirit renews us within and continues to cleanse us. So the saving work of our God continues to work itself out in us and our lives. God is here recognized as our Savior- the one who saved us. He rescues us- bring us back from the edge of the cliff- bring us back from the brim of destruction and death. He helped us escape from harm. It is as if we were walking blindly towards the edge for the Grand Canyon- and our Saving God rushes to us and holds us back- stopping us in our tracks! He delivers us- He snatches us from the hands of the foe- snatched from the destroying fire- delivering us from sin and the clutches of the evil one! His salvation sets us free- as we find in 3:3- we were once foolish, led astray and slaves! We were once slaves- but our Saviour has set us free! We were once lost- led astray- now we are found- on the right path! We used to be on the broad path that led to destruction- now He has set us on the narrow road that leads to life! There is a parallel point made in 2:11- the grace of God appeared bringing salvation for all men. And again in 3:4- the goodness and

loving kindness of our God and Savior appears- He saved! So our gracious and merciful God and Savior has saved! We are saved from destruction- saved for service! Saved from our own futile ways and saved for obedience and life! That is what our God has done for us! As I Thes. 1:10 says, Jesus delivers us from the wrath that is to come! We need to be saved! You and I- little Eily- your neighbor and co-workers; your classmates! All mankind needs to be saved! And the only one who can save is our Savior and our God! There is no other name under heaven given by which we can be saved- only at the name of our Savior- Jesus- will we find life! The Father has ordained to save by the name of His Son- Jesus- for He will save his people from their sins! Your sins make you guilty- you are foolish, disobedient- lost, slaves to passions. Worthy recipients of God's anger and wrath- but instead God's goodness and kindness has appeared- and He saved! Praise God- He saved!

III. Us

So to be clear- who then are the recipients of this salvation. Who does our Saving God save? Well, He saves sinners! He saves the people of v. 3- Who then, are we? What are we like? By nature, we are each foolish- we ourselves- disobedient. We have a far too exalted view of ourselves- but we are slaves- passing our days in malice- by nature hating and hated! We need to be saved from ourselves- from our own devises and the consequences of our rebellion! As Paul says in Romans, there is no one righteous- no one who seeks God- we have all gone astray! So the "us" of this verse is not a flattering fact! In fact, it is quite humbling to confess that we are the ones who need to be saved! You need God to save you- for you cannot save yourselves- your works of righteousness cannot atone! Your only hope is in the God who Saves! But more than that, this verse is a confession of faith! He saved me- He saved us! He has saved His people, His church, His bride has been rescued! All of God's children need to know and embrace this truth! Salvation belongs to the Lord- and He saves His own- He rescues those who cry out to Him! Those who have been saved are now heirs according to the hope of eternal life- having received the gift of everlasting life! So to be clear, salvation is something that you need- and it is a gift our

gracious, loving and merciful God has secured for you! Salvation is something that He gives to His own! He saves us! We cannot let this this verse go until we can repeat it and apply it to ourselves! Can you say these words- are they true of you? He saved me! Jesus is my Savior and Lord! The God who saves has saved me! Listen again to these words from Isaiah 12. Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and will not be afraid. With joy, you will draw waters from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day, give thanks to the LORD and call upon His name. Sing praises to the Lord, for He has done gloriously! Isaiah seamlessly weaves the application into these verses- those who ponder God's salvation first of all trust in the God who saves- and then are filled with joy and song having received this salvation! Today is the Day of Salvation- today, draw your water from the wells of salvation and give thanks to the LORD- because He has saved us! Do not put this jewel down- don't pass over this gem! God has saved His people- so let us look to His hand to save! Because you and I need what our God freely gives!

To conclude, on this day when we have seen and celebrated salvation, let us rejoice in God our Savior who saves us by the sending of His Spirit and Son. He saved us! If you remember nothing of what I have said so far- and you take home only one truth- remember this- He Saved Us! Such a simple truth that even our little ones can know and embrace it! Walking through the fields of God's revelation we have stumbled upon this magnificent jewel- just laying on the ground- just sitting in the wide open for us to see! He saved us! Rejoice in the grace, kindness and love of our God and Savior who has saved us!