

**THE COMPLETENESS OF OUR SALVATION
TITUS 3:3-8**

NEED: SALVATION

PROPOSITION: BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE AND MERCY GOD SAVES US COMPLETELY.

OBJECTIVE: TO LEAD PERSONS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR NEED OF GOD'S SALVATION AND TO RECEIVE IT.

INTRODUCTION:

Do you need a savior? Do you need salvation? The ordinary human response to that question is "No!" There is something in the human spirit that resists the idea that we need a savior.

If you have taken training to be a lifesaver on the beach or at the swimming pool, this was one of the first lessons that you learned. Almost all of the persons you will attempt to save from drowning will resist you. They will curse you, kick you, hit you, seek to avoid you, again and again. In order to save them from drowning, you have to immobilize them and drag them to safety. There is something built into the human spirit that resists being saved. What is true in the swimming pool is also true in life. God offers salvation, and offers it freely, but we resist His offers.

After setting forth the dark, dark, human situation, Paul brings the spot light around to God's saving activity. It is of special interest that both God the Father and God the Son are called "savior" in our passage. We read first, "When the kindness and love of God our savior appeared" — and then we read "Whom He pour out on us generously through

Jesus Christ our Savior." Actually the whole of the Godhead, the one true and living God, are involved in our salvation.

These are some of the most condensed words in all of scripture. Embodied in these few words are most of the basic concepts with reference to God's saving work on our behalf. The thing that impressed me as I meditated on this passage this week was the completeness of God's salvation. It is complete in the sense that no human need is left unaddressed. God has brought a complete, whole, salvation because of His love to everyone of us.

We can see its completeness as we look at the past, the present, and the future!

I. SALVATION REMOVES THE POLLUTION FROM OUR PAST.

As we consider our present, we cannot forget our past. Our past has brought upon us a burden of guilt.

1. We were deeply polluted by sin.

I hesitate to keep reminding us of our past but the Apostle puts it first in our passage. "At one time, we, too, were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." That is our past.

Such a past left us with a life that was polluted and defiled. Such a past left us with that backbreaking burden of guilt. E. Stanley Jones quotes Dr. Mackay as writing, "A sinner is a human being who has become a problem to himself." Dr. Jones then proceeded to say, "There is no worse hell than the hell of having to live with a self you cannot respect." It is this sense of guilt, inner sense of separation from all that is right and good, which drives many into drugs or even into suicide. God's salvation addresses this part of the human situation.

2. We are cleansed through the washing of the new birth.

The Apostle mixes his figures when he states what God does for us — "He saved us through the washing of rebirth." We know about washing and we know about rebirth, but what do they have in common? The word translated "washing" actually refers to the process of being cleansed through bathing. "Rebirth" refers to an experience in which life can be begun all over again. The thing that both of these figures have in common is that they do involve getting rid of the past and making a new beginning. This is what God does for us when He saves us. He cleanses us from the past through forgiveness and opens the door to a new life through the new birth.

In his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle makes it so clear: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral idolatries, adulterers, or male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit the Kingdom of God.

And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 6:9-11). Is that not a beautiful statement of God's salvation? "That is what some of you were — but you were "washed." When God saves a person that is what he does. He washes away the defilement and pollution of the past and gives to them a new life.

I remember so well the moving testimony of Iris Blue. I have heard her tell it several times but never tire of hearing her tell it. After years of living outside of the law, living in immorality and ungodliness, she bowed on the sidewalk, in front of the topless bar that she was managing in Houston, Texas, and cried out to God for mercy. Iris likes to say, "I bowed on my knees as a tramp and stood up as a lady in Christ." That's the way it is. What ever your past may be, God's salvation completely removes the pollution of the past and gives to you a new life.

II. SALVATION ADDRESSES THE PROBLEMS IN OUR PRESENT.

We have emphasized the first part to the neglect of the second. It is not enough for God to remove the pollution of the past through a path and a birth, what about the ongoing problems of life? Listen to the word of the Apostle: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior." This is the provision that God makes for our troubled present.

1. We have a continuing problem of living in a sinful world with a vulnerability to sin.

You do not live the Christian life long until you find that you do have a problem. While God has made a significant change in your life, and has graciously forgiven your past, you are still living in the same old world. It is a world that is full of temptation. It is a world that is still under the control of the adversary.

What makes the problem even more urgent is that you find that there is still something in you that tends to respond to the allurements that are in the world. In Romans 7 the Apostle Paul sets this sobering truth forth in his own personal testimony. In that passage he says, "So I find this law at work: when I want to do good, evil is present with me" (Romans 7:21). Every Christian knows and desires to do what is good. This is a sign that the Holy Spirit is in their hearts. But they also know that in more instances than they want to confess that they end up doing the wrong thing rather than the right thing. Does God's salvation address this problem?

2. We are enabled to live victoriously in the present by the renewing and infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Doubtlessly the Apostle Paul has Pentecost in mind as he writes these words about the Holy Spirit. The inner "renewing" of the Holy Spirit is the by-product of Pentecost. At Pentecost and at conversion now the Holy Spirit comes to live in the heart of each believer. From that position within the life of the believer He carries on the continuing work of renewal. He keeps renewing the awareness of God and of the provisions of God,

and the desire to serve God, and the commitment to serve God. He is the inner source of renewal.

Because he is a graduate of Texas A and M, Gerald Marshall has been the brunt of a lot of "aggie jokes" over the years. One of his favorites is about the aggie who brought a new, heavy duty chain saw that was guaranteed to cut three cords of firewood a day. After several days of hard labor with the saw, he brought it back to the dealer. He complained that it would only cut one cord a day and asked to have it checked out. The dealer took it, pulled the start rope to test it out and it started immediately. Suddenly, the aggie had gotten wide-eyed, just back and said, "Where is all that noise coming from?"

Marshall observes that we often try to live our Christian lives the same way the aggie tried to use his chain saw. Instead of turning on the power and letting the Holy Spirit of God work in us, we try to do all the work and carry the burden ourselves. You and I can live triumphantly and victoriously by the power of the Holy Spirit who lives with us! This is a part of God's complete salvation.

The Holy Spirit is also the one that the Lord Jesus pours out on us generously. Can you not see in this the lavish work of the Savior in providing the Holy Spirit to live within us? In these words we have His work of renewal and His work of infilling. God's salvation did not leave you to struggle alone in your attempts to live the Christian life. Rather the Savior has made the abundant provision of the mighty Spirit available in your heart for this life.

Students of scripture have searched for figures that would help us understand this, and most of them don't seem quite to get it there. Some have used the helium filled balloon as an example. While the balloon tends to be held down by the forces of gravity, when you fill it with helium the helium makes it possible for that balloon to overcome the downward pull of gravity and to fly into the sky. In your old nature there is a downward pull of indwelling sin, but the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life is able to overcome that downward pull and to enable you to take the wings of the eagle and to fly above the temptations of life and victory.

God's salvation covers our past and enables our present! But there is more.

III. SALVATION ASSURES OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE FUTURE.

It is amazing how much Paul was able to cram into so few words. He continues his statement about the salvation with these words: "So that having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." These terms address both the past, the present, and the future. However, the emphasis is upon the future aspect of salvation.

1. Our standing before God is settled forever in justification.

The great fear of death that paralyzes so many people is the anticipation of standing before God unprepared. All of us carry around with us an awareness that we are accountable to our creator. How will it be with us when we stand before Him in that final

and awesome day? God's salvation takes care of this. "Having been justified by His grace," takes care of any anxiety that we might have of standing before God. The word "justified" means to be declared righteous. In the language of scripture, it means to have righteousness imputed to us. This is righteousness given to us as a gift. Paul indicates that this is something that has already happened in our past — "Having been justified!" This was not something that we were necessarily aware of when it happened. It actually took place in the courtroom of heaven. As an act of generous kindness, God made a judicial decision in heaven on our behalf. His judicial decision was this — to move to our side of the ledger all of the righteousness of His dear son. And to remove to the son's side of the ledger all of our guilt and transgressions. It was a legal exchange done on our behalf by the sovereign Savior so that now there is no condemnation to us for we are in Christ Jesus. When God looks at our record and considers our situation, he sees us as being as righteous and thus as acceptable as His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus.

This changes everything! To be justified changes everything! I do not have to strive for acceptance before God because he has given it to me as a gift. I do not have to earn acceptance before God, He has bestowed it upon me as an expression of His grace.

2. Our relationship with God is settled forever by adoption.

The other word in this text that addresses our future is, "We might become heirs, having the hope of eternal life." You know about an heir. An heir is a son or a daughter. An heir is one who is a member of the family. God has not only forgiven and justified us, He has adopted us into His family. Based on this adoption, when we consider the future, we

anticipate living in the Father's House as a joint heir with his only begotten son, the Lord Jesus. I don't know how to explain that in a way that will begin in any way to do justice to it. That is the hope of eternal life. Eternal life is a love relationship with God that nothing that can destroy. This is the anticipation of each person that God has saved.

The question that is pertinent in a moment like this is, "Have you received this salvation?" It is reported that when the Titanic sank in 1912, in the office of the Cunard Line in New York City there was a board listing names of passengers in two columns. They were headed "saved" and "lost." We could make such a list this morning if we could see with the eyes of God across this congregation. We could post a list with just two columns — "saved" and "lost." If God were to post such a list on the bulletin board of First Baptist Church this morning or on these screens one either side, in which list would your name appear? Would you be among the saved or among the lost? Oh, how I pray that your name would be among the saved!

Your name can be among the saved. This complete salvation of our Lord is available to anyone who will quit resisting His saving efforts. You will remember that I began by reminding us that it is our human inclination to resist being saved. Whether we are drowning in the ocean or being pulled down by the pull of life, our response is the same. Our response tends to be, "Leave me alone! I will work this out on my own!" But you can't if you are to ever be saved you must acknowledge that you are lost — that you are drowning — that you are going down. You must acknowledge to God that He is your

only hope. I want to encourage you to do that this morning. Because of His love for you
God will save you completely.