

JESUS SAVES (2): FOR GOD'S SAKE

(I Tim 1:12-17)

February 23, 2020

Read I Tim 1:12-17 – Five years earlier Paul warned the elders in Ephesus, “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰⁾ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). Now, it's happened; the wolves have arrived with a false gospel – salvation by works. They use the law to do what it was never intended to do – save someone. The problem is not with the law. **1:8**: “Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully.” The law shows the need for salvation, not the means of salvation. The law can't justify anybody. Tim is to weed this out.

Then in vv. 12-17 Paul gives his own testimony. It is intended to demonstrate “sound doctrine” – the gospel – true truth. It is a wonderful passage showing it is Jesus, and Him alone who saves. Last week we 2 truth in this regard.

I. The Source of Salvation – God Himself. **V. 14**: “and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.” The Father initiated before time began; the Son implements in time and history.

II. The Recipients of Salvation – Who can receive salvation? Anyone. No one is too good to not need it; no one is too bad to receive it. Paul was the greatest law-keeper he knew; yet his own zeal led to murder. God saved him “as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.” In Him, by grace thru faith; not in themselves by good works. Anybody can be saved.

III. The Message of Salvation

In two words – Jesus saves. His death is the objective basis. And He provokes the subjective reception in individual lives. It's all Him. Suppose in old England I incur a debt I can't repay. I end up in debtor's prison. No hope to get out. But a benefactor emerges. Can he just say, “Please free him”? He'd be laughed out of court. So, he pulls out his checkbook and pays my debt – every penny. That's the objective basis for my freedom – debt paid. But I'm not out of jail until I accept and walk out. Same with the gospel; Jesus paid my debt, and I'm in Christ when I take the gift. So, let's look at some details.

A. Its Primacy -- ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.” You can stake your life on this: “Christ came into the world

to save sinners”. No other statement of truth has the power and worth of this one. This is the bedrock of gospel truth -- the foundation on which all else builds. Jesus came “to seek and to save the lost” (Lu 19:10). This is the gospel in primal form -- “deserving of full acceptance.” It is utterly trustworthy. It is foundational truth. But have you accepted it? Have you accepted Him?

Thomas Bilney did. Born in England in 1495 and called “Little Bilney” for his small stature, he studied law and theology at Cambridge, but neither his study nor his ordination brought him peace. Then, he found our verse – “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” He later wrote, “*This one sentence did so exhilarate my heart, wounded and in despair with the guilt of my sins, that immediately I [experienced] a marvelous comfort and quietness. After this, the Scripture began to be more pleasant unto me than the honey or the honey-comb.*” Bilney became a central figure among the White Horse Inn theologians who brought the Reformation to England. He was eventually arrested and burned at the stake in the mid-1530’s – so trustworthy did he find this statement.

There is exclusivity to this statement -- “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” No one else; just Jesus. Tim Keller tells was on a panel with a Jewish rabbi and a Muslim imam, intended by organizers to show multiple ways to God. But the panelists agreed on only one statement: “*If Christians are right about Jesus being God, then Muslims and Jews fail in a serious way to love God as God really is, but if Muslims and Jews are right that Jesus is not God but [only] a prophet, then Xns fail in a serious way to love God as God really is.*” Their dogma is mutually exclusive! But the students, steeped in relativism, were upset, insisting loving others was all that counted. One said, “*We shall never know peace on earth if religious leaders keep on making exclusive claims!*” But when claims contradict, someone is right and someone wrong. God’s message is – here is the only something that is trustworthy and worthy of full acceptance. Put your stake in this ground!

B. Its Price – Paul summarizes the price of salvation in one simple clause: **15b**: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Came from where? If He came, He must have been somewhere before. Where? The Bible answers He was surrounded by the glory of heaven prior to “taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:7). His birth was not His beginning. He had no beginning. **Jn 1:1**: “In the beginning [already] was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” In His existence as God, He had no beginning. As God-man, He was born in 4 BC in the most humble of circumstances to an unwed mother who delivered

him in a stable because there was no room for them in the inn. That's how He "came into the world." The price of salvation started then and there.

Imagine running the entire universe one moment, then laying aside the use of that deity and becoming a helpless, dependent human baby the next. Like Charles Colson, presidential advisor, one moment and Prisoner number 4853443 the next – multiplied by a billion times. **II Cor 8:9**: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." What humiliation our Savior endured in just taking on human flesh.

But the ultimate cost was yet to come -- the cross. **Mark 10:45**: "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." That cost staggered Jesus. **Mark 14:33c** says when He went to Gethsemane, He was "greatly distressed and troubled." "Greatly distressed" (εκθαμβεω) = "*intense emotional state bc of something causing great surprise or perplexity*." We view Jesus as the infinite God who couldn't be thunderstruck by anything. Keller asks, "*How could God the Son, who even in his human form seems to anticipate every eventuality, be shocked? But he is. He's reeling, dumbfounded, astonished. A darkness and horror comes down on him beyond anything he could have anticipated, and the pain of it makes him feel he is disintegrating on the spot.*" He always knew that the price of salvation would be suffering the wrath of the Father as He bore our penalty. He knew that. But now, as He begins to feel that abandonment, He is nearly undone. This is the price God – Father and Son – were willing to pay.

Xn minister John Dickson was speaking of the wounds of God at a university in Sydney. A Muslim man cried out, "*How preposterous is this claim that the Creator of the universe should be subjected to the forces of his own creation – that he would have to eat, sleep, and go to the toilet, let alone die on a cross.*" He argued it was illogical that God – the cause of all causes, should suffer pain! Dickson responded, "*Thank you for making the uniqueness of the Christian faith so clear.*" He said, "*What Islam denounces as blasphemy the Christian faith holds precious: God has wounds.*" But they are healing wounds! What a paradox. **Isa 53:5**: "He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." What a price He paid! Isn't it worth denying self and taking your cross to follow such a one? Aren't you glad Jesus "came into the world to save sinners"?

C. Its Appropriation – All those wounds are nothing to me unless I accept them as mine by faith. **V. 14:** “**And the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.**” Grace and faith – the means of personally receiving Jesus’ sacrifice. Paul still had to say, “**I accept**” and so do we. Salvation is “**deserving of full acceptance**”, but accepted it must be if it is to mean anything to me. Two thieves on either side of Jesus. One ended up with Him in paradise that very day. The other did not. Why? One accepted the eternal life Jesus was purchasing there; the other did not. There is no more dramatic illustration of the personal nature of salvation.

Tom Landry didn’t have Paul’s record of sin; but he was like him in one respect: “**I can’t remember when we didn’t go to church. It was something we always did, something I grew up doing.**” Then he added, “**But I didn’t really become a true Christian until much later in my life, after I had joined the New York Giants. I just went to church because my parents always did and took us with them.**” Landry discovered what we all must discover. You’re not saved by going to church or being good. You’re not saved by knowing the right people. Mom and Dad can’t accept Christ for you. That’s your decision. It’s personal. Jesus paid the price, but we must accept by faith.

IV. The Mission of Salvation

Why did God save you? You’d probably answer “**To get me to heaven.**” I spent years thinking that was it. But there are far larger forces at play here that we need to be aware of. Paul knew them and was eternally grateful for them.

A. Toward People – Faithful Service – V. 12: “**I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service.**” If salvation is only about gaining heaven, we should be gone. But Paul knew he was chosen for more than that. He was chosen **to serve**! Uncle Sam doesn’t choose you to get you a nice retirement after 25 years, right? You get that, but you are chosen to serve. And in Christ we have been chosen to serve in a much higher, eternal cause. Paul was chosen for something bigger than himself and so are we. We’re chosen to serve the King. **If you think it’s about you, you may not be saved at all.** There’s a war going on, Beloved. And we’ve enlisted. A **follower follows!** They don’t just stand by, say “**Thanks for the retirement,**” and go home!

We serve – but not in our own strength. Paul was grateful he was strengthened by Christ Jesus. He was judged faithful by Christ. He was appointed to service by Christ. His effort; Christ’s power. **Eph 6:10:** “**Finally, be strong in the Lord**

and in the strength of his might.” His might; not ours. His strength; not ours; His results; not ours. But most definitely our effort. Are you in service this morning, Beloved? Really? *Can you point to one single thing you did last week that was in service to the King – with His agenda in mind, the thrill of His appointment in your heart, depending on Him for the result?* Is this your life? If not, you may not be His. People who are genuinely His show it by purposeful, intentional service aimed at representing Him faithfully in a torn world. That’s just what true believers do – because they want to.

Dec 4, 1857, David Livingstone spoke to the students at Cambridge. When asked about the sacrifices he’d made to serve in Africa he said, *“I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in Africa. Is it sacrifice which simply pays back a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blessed reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and the bright hope of the glorious destiny here after this? It is emphatically no sacrifice. It’s is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, with a foregoing of the common conveniences of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this be only for a moment. All these things are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in hand for us. I never made a sacrifice.”* Faithful service is what we’re called to. It’s what real Xns do, because their heart is devoted to their Savior.

B. Toward God – Display His Glory – Here’s the ultimate purpose for saving people – God’s glory. **V. 17:** *“To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”* It is far too short-sighted to see salvation only in terms of what I get. It’s all about God. Coming to Christ fulfills the purpose for which we were created in the first place. **Isa 43:7:** *“Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory.”* In the end it’s all about Him – as it should be for only He is worthy. Paul knew that when the world looked at him, they had a chance to see God’s greatness. Anyone who could change Paul from the reprobate he was to the gracious servant he became deserved to be glorified – and the same is true of every one of us. Our life is intended far more for His glory than for our happiness. Remarkably, our greatest happiness comes in discovering we’ve been chosen to bring Him glory.

The honeymoon was never over for Paul. God is King forever; Paul gloried in being His servant. God is immortal; Paul gloried in sharing His immortality. God is invisible; Paul gloried in giving Him visibility in His world. We’re like

someone who gets the opportunity to study under a great chef, Jamie Oliver. Eventually, we prepare a great Thanksgiving dinner with spectacular dishes. Everyone is awed, but if we're honest we say, "*Thank you. I did put in the effort. But the credit goes to Chef Jamie Oliver. The recipes are his; the processes are his; the glory is his.*" So it is in our service for Christ.

Conc – Isn't it a great thing to be a Christian? Is there anything better than serving already the One who will one day rule the whole world? Sure it's painful at times. But that's our duty; that's our calling; that's our purpose. More – that's our privilege; our honor; our driving ambition – to glorify God.

Think you were saved to get you to heaven. That's just a sidelight, Beloved. You're into something much bigger than that. You're serving the King of kings and Lord of lords with all the rights and privileges that entails. John III Sobieski was king of Poland in the late 17th century. He saved central Europe from the Turks in 1683. With the Turks at the walls of Vienna, Sobieski led a charge that broke the siege in what's considered one of the decisive battles in European history. In announcing victory, the king paraphrased the famous words of Caesar by saying simply, "*I came; I saw; God conquered*" – something every true believer in Christ will one day be able to say. "*I came; I saw; God conquered.*" Are you in? I pray you are. Let's pray.