

The great salvation

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Paul's letter to Titus chapter 1 and we read from verse 1. Paul a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledging of the truth which is after Godliness in hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie promised before the world began. But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior. To Titus my known son after the common faith, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders [00:01:08] in every city as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word as he had been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to [00:02:01] convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own said, the Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith. Not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that [00:03:04] they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. I would like to say a word about the great salvation. That term is not used in this epistle. You know that it comes from the epistle to the Hebrews. Great salvation. And we want to show from this epistle, the Lord will, that it is indeed a great salvation in all its parts. It must be, must be great, because in this epistle we have God referred to as Savior three times, and we have the Lord Jesus Christ referred to as Savior three times. And what comes from them must [00:04:06] be perfect, must be great, and must be extremely valuable to have, to enjoy, and also to express.

And I believe this is the whole tone of this epistle. Not simply talking about it, or even singing about it, although both of these things are very good, but to live it. And you notice at the very end of the chapter it says, they profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.

And that's a very, very solemn thing indeed. Such an indictment against any who profess to know God, and enjoy his salvation. We don't know when God's grace touched the island of Crete, except that [00:05:03] there were Cretans at the day of Pentecost. You'll find them mentioned in that long list of persons who listened to Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost. We know that Paul was extremely

anxious that when the ship that he was in was in difficulty, that they should land at Crete, or take shelter in Crete. It may have been, I don't know, it may have been that he knew there were believers there, and there would be some kind of respite. That's only speculation. But the fact is, there were believers in the island of Crete, and Paul sent Titus, or rather left him there, in order to set forth what was wanting, that is, some form of regulating power to make sure that this great salvation was seen not only in words, but also in changed lives. But we want to say [00:06:08] again about this great salvation, everything that comes from the hands of God must be great. Very, very interesting, if you read through the book of Nehemiah, to find how often we find the term great mentioned, and we do find it there, the great God. And of course, everything that came from his hands was great, great for his people Israel, and we praise God, great for us today. Isn't it wonderful to sit down quietly and think that God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, long before ever time began, counseled in eternity that there should be salvation. You remember in Peter, it speaks about the Lamb that was ordained before the foundation of the world. And the Lamb is a sacrificial title of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son. And how wonderful to [00:07:08] think of them, looking down at all the corruption and failure that marked people in all dispensations. In spite of all the directions that God gave to them in those different dispensations, they paid no attention and suffered the consequences. And so what was in mind before ever time began was a salvation that would accomplish something for God, for his glory, and for the glory of Christ, and for the eternal blessing of so many. And that's why we say, great salvation, as it comes from the hands of God, our Savior. Delightful expression, God, our Savior. We like to think of him as God, our Father, and perhaps that's the greatest way that we can think of him, term of relationship, term of nearness and endearment. But to think [00:08:03] God, our Savior, brings home to our hearts power, power to effect what he wants to do, power to produce what he wants to produce, and how wonderful it has been done. God, the source, the source of this great salvation for you and for me, and for many, many millions more. But then we read, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. And there we have the sacrifice, the price paid to secure the salvation. And again in Hebrews, we read about eternal salvation, because it was secured by such a wonderful death, such a great price that was paid, a salvation in all its value and in all its attraction, because of the way it was secured for us. Good thing to have the source, good thing to have the plan, good thing to have the purpose. [00:09:05] But it required, shall I say, one of the Godhead, I don't like using human expressions, but for the want of a better, one of the Godhead determined to become a man in order to die, and such a death, such suffering, such ignominy, and such awful sorrow when he was abandoned by God. The older I get, I can say this feelingly, I hesitate to take those words upon my lips that sprang from the lips of the Lord when he was in those hours of darkness. And you know the term that he said, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I believe to be some of the most solemn words, some of the most profound words that the Lord Jesus ever spoke. We cannot understand [00:10:04] them, cannot enter into the depth of them or the feeling of them. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Recently, I was reading in Mr. Darby's well-known book, The Sufferings of Christ, how he portrayed the father and the son together. And in the way that Mr. Darby explains things so, so well, so feelingly, the son receiving from the hands of the father the cup that he had to drink, and in full, perfect, loving communion, and taking a cup from the father's hand that he knew for him meant the greatest sorrow and the most awful wrath. We can't understand that, [00:11:01] but we know it happened because we have the words of the Lord Jesus himself, the cup which my father had given me, shall I not drink it? And so dear friends, what a tremendous thing to consider, the price that was paid, the sacrifice that was made in order to secure your salvation and mine. Marvelous, and how full of gratitude we should be that the son became a man in order to accomplish this great work of salvation. And so I believe in those two counts, we can say yes, it's a great salvation and will reverberate throughout all eternity, the consequences of it. God the source, the son the sacrifice, and we are the ones who get the blessing. I believe in Paul and in Titus, [00:12:04] we have two great samples of this salvation, one a Jew, the

other a Greek. And you couldn't think of two more opposites than a Jew and a Greek. There was continual hostility between them, a great gulf between them. The Jew was warned to have nothing at all to do with the Greeks or the nations. And the Greeks of course despised the Jews. And so there was continual enmity, hostility between them. But the work of salvation was so great that it removed the middle wall of partition that divided them, removed the hostility and the enmity that was between them and brought them together in one body in Christ. Marvelous result of salvation. And here we find two brothers and [00:13:06] their workers together. One describes himself as a bondman, a slave for God, and also an apostle sent by the Lord Jesus Christ and all according to the commandment of God. And the other one, Titus, good if you take a good concordance and look up every reference to his name and you'll find he's a most remarkable man. Diligent, feeling hearted, concerned about the well-being of the saints, and described by Paul as my own child, which would give us to believe that Titus was blessed by Paul's ministrations. Also he is described as Paul's brother. And there we have a bond that is far greater than anything else. And two, he's described as a fellow laborer. And this is what [00:14:08] salvation does. Because when we read Paul's own account of himself, he said, I was a blasphemer.

I don't think anything can be worse than that. To cause people to deny the name of the Lord Jesus, or to say things against him that is blasphemy. Oh dear friends, that was a terrible thing. And Paul confessed that he was. He was a blasphemer and caused people to blaspheme. He was a persecutor. Well, many people have been persecutors down through the ages, but the kind of persecution that Paul was involved in was in relation to the followers of Christ. He wanted to stamp out the name of Christ. Stamp it out completely. That was the kind of persecution that he was engaged in. [00:15:04] And then it says he was an injurious man. He was a hurtful, violent man. And what a wonderful change came into his life when he experienced salvation in a very real and powerful way. I don't need to tell this company of that marvelous moment on the Damascus road when he met the Lord Jesus and the proud imperious man was humbled because he met the Christ of glory. And then what a change. Oh, how wonderful the change in that man's life. Instead of blaspheming, it was his joy to herald forth the greatness of Christ and minister of his glory and his beauties. Change from a blasphemer to one who glorified Christ. And instead of being a persecutor, [00:16:01] entering into the houses of the saints to take them away for punishment or imprisonment, he entered into the houses to build them up in relation to the things of God. And instead of being an injurious man, he became a humble, quiet, valuable Christian. The salvation entered into his life in a real practical way. It wasn't what he said, although he said much, and it wasn't what he sang, and he sang much too. It was what he was in his life that everyone could see indisputably that here was a man who was changed by this great salvation. We don't know anything about Titus, what he was before, but certainly we can write over him what was written over the Gentiles in Ephesians 2, that they were without hope and without God in this world. And suddenly salvation [00:17:03] reaching Titus, what a man he became. What a tremendous man he became for the things of God, and we find him mentioned again and again and again, doing something worthwhile, not wasting his time in useless things or things that are of no account. His time is used up in helping the saints of God, willing to get the direction from the Apostle as to what he is to do. A man set apart because of the value of salvation in his life. Now then, we bring this home to ourselves.

What do we think or what do we experience in relation to this great salvation? Has its greatness entered into our souls as infinitely greater and more superior to anything else that [00:18:01] exists in this world, even the best of things? We're not talking about the depravity and the corruption and the unrighteousness and wickedness that is prevalent everywhere, but the very best that this world can produce, that even God honors in a natural way in our lives, even the very best of that, this great

salvation is infinitely superior to these things. How wonderful it is to have it. I suppose as we get older, these values become more precious to us, that we realize that things of time and sense are rapidly receding from our minds and better things are occupying us. Oh, how wonderful this great salvation and all that it means in this present day for each of us to appropriate, to enjoy, and to follow. And so we have, again, [00:19:04] in Paul and Titus, two sample sayings that are really worth following in their example for us.

And what does it mean basically? A changed life. One thing to speak about salvation, my sins are gone, and then just to rest there. No, it means much more than that. I trust we shall see tomorrow night, if the Lord will, in what salvation teaches. But this is what happened in the lives of Paul and Titus. And we have to ask, is that what has happened to us? And I think we would say, praise God, yes. We are not what we were before we were converted. Much has taken place in our lives that has changed. The foul language that used to come out of our mouths, the ways we used to go, these things have changed. The interests that we have [00:20:07] are entirely changed. New objects, new desires, new pursuits. Praise God. That's the result of this great salvation entering into our lives. We read in our chapter that Paul said, Titus, I want you to remain in Crete to put right what wasn't done. That is to appoint elders for the guarding of the flock. I want to use this expression that we've already said it, it's a great salvation because it has come from God and Christ. And Paul and Titus are samples of salvation. And I believe that these men who are to be appointed are stewards, stewards in [00:21:04] relation to this great salvation. It says so precisely in verse seven, for a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God. That is the help by God and with the qualifications that they have, they can keep their eye on matters and guard and guide and help in relation to this salvation that was known, enjoyed, and was to be practiced in the island of Crete. So these men have to be upstanding persons of the greatest integrity, no blame attaching to them in any way whatsoever, either in themselves or in their homes or in their businesses or wherever they are. Upright men of the greatest possible integrity. And we want to examine this a little closer [00:22:04] because it means guarding the great salvation, a practical guard, a practical vigilance in relation to the salvation that had begun in Crete. Now we want to say this because it's very, very important. We're in a world and we're in a land where the ecclesiastical setup has a great deal of importance. And elders, they are an inferior kind of office in the ecclesiastical setup. John Calvin had four offices for the guidance of the church. First of all, there was the educated man to whom reference could be made in any kind of point that arose regarding doctrine. And then there was the minister who was the one to care for the flock in preaching and visiting. [00:23:05] And then there was the elder who also performed these features of service and caring for the flock and attending to many things of that kind. And then the last one was the deacon who performed the mundane things connected with the testimony of Christianity. Now, bishops, of course, they came later on in the ecclesiastical setup. And the outstanding one, of course, is the Bishop of Rome. And then we have episcopacy, which is the rule of the bishops in the Church of England. And we have to say that when we come to the word of God, these things have to go out because they find no place at all in the word of God. Because we find here that an elder is also designated as a bishop. We want to point this out in verse five, that Titus was to ordain [00:24:05] elders in every city. And then he says in verse seven, referring to the same persons, for a bishop must be blameless. Now you'll find the same if you turn to Acts chapter 20, where Paul gathers together the elders of Ephesus and the island of Miletus. And then he says, the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers. So there is another scripture where both elders and overseers are contained in the same person. Now, if we understand the right, an elder, generally speaking, would be a person of age, but not only age, maturity, maturity, and bearing these qualifications that we find here. Age and maturity, [00:25:02] Paul speaks about not a novice. And then an overseer or a bishop, an overseer is one who is marked by vigilance. The best way I can explain this is that if you went to some of the

farms in Northumberland, and you're staying there in the morning, you might find that the farmer will say, I'm going out to look over the beasts. He's going to cast his eye over them. And he's going to see if some of them need help. Some of them need care. Now that's exactly what is meant by the overseer. He's looking over the saints of God. And I believe there's been a sad, sad lack of this in our companies. And many a way would have been checked when it was observed at the very beginning by some of the vigilance and discernment to see the course that someone was taking. [00:26:03] Just a godly, quiet, helpful word of encouragement. It might even be a rebuke. But oh, how much could have been saved if this kind of activity had been carried on in love, in care, and in obedience to the word of God. So elders, age, and maturity, and overseers, vigilance. Now there we have a good combination for help in any local company of believers. It doesn't mean that they're great expositors. Doesn't mean that they're great preachers. They might not be either. But they are very, very well founded in the word of God. Because there's no good trying to help anyone in any particular instance, if you cannot bring the [00:27:01] word of God to bear upon it. No good referring to circumstances, or relations, or any other form that might come into the matter. What decides every matter is the word of God. Most important. And if we cannot bring the word of God to bear upon any matter, whatever it might be, whether it be encouragement, or whether it be rebuke, then we're wasting our time. And of course it requires a great deal of discernment. But then when we consider, why are we doing this? What is the object? It's the great salvation. It's not particularly the up building, although it does involve that, or the looking after our particular company, our name attached to it, our fame, our interest. That's not the point at all. What's being guarded is the great salvation. That the fruits of that salvation might be [00:28:04] seen in each and all, and that there might be much for the glory of God. Mind, that requires some doing. And of course, if we don't have those qualifications, then we're not going to be very successful in the exercise of eldership, or overseership. Absolutely essential that we have these things. Now, I can't remember all the things, so I've written them down, and I want to refer them to you very, very briefly. And first of all, I'm going to deal with the negatives. No charge against him personally.

You can imagine an elder going to see someone who is in trouble because of some fault, something wrong in their lives, and the elder goes along. And the person to whom he goes [00:29:06] turns around and say, you have no room to speak. What about yourself? And so how important it is. That the elder has no charge against him. Now, that doesn't mean, of course, that he's perfect. There's only one perfect man. But it means there's no outstanding evil connected with his life. No charge against him. Then it says, no charge against his children. I ought to say that I've put Daniel against that. No charge against him. You remember what they did with Daniel? They tried every way to find some fault against him, and they couldn't find it. Not a single fault in that man. Now, that was most remarkable. In connection with modern affairs, you remember when Gerald Ford, the vice president in America, [00:30:09] was being selected, I think, because of circumstances to be the president. They went through his life very, very carefully, and they couldn't find anything that would hinder him from being the president. Now, that was a most remarkable thing in American politics. But that's the kind of thing we find in Daniel. There was nothing in his life that the enemies could latch onto to bring against him. And you remember, I like what Daniel said when he was amongst the lions. He says, there was nothing wrong in my life before God, and nothing wrong in my life before thee. Very like the apostle Paul when he says, I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense before God and men. What a standard. [00:31:04] What a standard. First of all, God, and then men. And so how thankful we are that there was one man, and maybe many others too, who had this outstanding qualification right before God and right before men. Then no charge against his children. I think of Abram when God, that's not the proper word, when God commended Abram because he obeyed God. Now I know that Abram will look after his children and bring them up correctly. Very, very wonderful testimony. Now,

this is absolutely essential in connection with an elder, that his household is orderly.

[00:32:05] Then we find that he's not to be arrogant or self-willed. Very, very sad feature in any Christian when ill temper and arrogancy is expressed in any situation whatsoever. Clear indication that the Spirit of God is not having his way in his life because one of the features of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. And it's no good anybody saying, well, I'm naturally ill-tempered, just as someone could say, well, I'm naturally amiable. Neither of these things is right before God. No one has any right to make any excuse about any feature of failure in their lives because the Spirit of God is the power to help and control. Diotrephes, arrogant, violent kind of man, the kind of action that he had in the assembly.

[00:33:07] Quick-tempered. I've put down Moses against that. You say, that's strange. Moses, quick-tempered. Why? The Bible says he was the meekest man in all the earth. That's true. When it was in relation to the things of God, you never find Moses angry or should I say angry in relation to himself. We find him angry in relation to the things of God. Went out from Pharaoh in a glowing anger. But when he was attacked himself, he was a meek man. But he did act in quick temper when he slew the Egyptian. And he thought he could secure the delivery of the children of Israel by killing one man. And God did it in one fell sweep when he destroyed them in the Red Sea. And so, dear friends, ill-temper is an unbecoming, ugly thing amongst the people of God. [00:34:09] And we find that Moses struck the rock in an act of temper. You rebels, he said, about the people of God. And he suffered the consequences. He was temporarily prevented from going into the inheritance. I say temporarily because he finds his place beside the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. Very good for the dear man of God to find that great compensation later on in life. And it says, not given to intoxicating wine or intoxicating drink. Very, very sad. By Nadab and Abihu, they offered up strange fire before the Lord. And immediately after that, we find God directing Moses and Aaron that the priests were not to partake of strong drink in any shape and [00:35:09] form. And I believe it's very, very easy to see that that was why they offered up the strange fire, because they were under the influence of this evil, evil thing. And so an elder is not to be given to that kind of thing, not to have his mind befuddled by anything of that kind. And if we forget about intoxicating drink and think of the principles of the world, the compromises that the world thinks so much about can be equally intoxicating, can affect the mind, clear thinking in relation to the issues that are involved. And so the elder has to be free from those things. And then it says, violently aggressive, not to be that. And we think of Cain, [00:36:04] how he slew his brother. He wasn't pleased. He was angry against God, and he took it out on his brother, slew Abel. And there we find violent aggression. No, no good an elder going along to browbeat someone into accepting what is right, waste of time. An elder must be gentle and present the truth, but be firm. And the truth can be stated firmly without anger or without aggressiveness or without violence. The truth can stand on its own legs. It doesn't need our help. The Holy Spirit can empower it and make it workable at any time. And then lastly, not greedy for gain.

Filthy lucre, it says here in this chapter, but not greedy of gain. Peter says the same thing [00:37:02] in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, not doing this for filthy lucre's sake, some personal advantage. And there's one outstanding instance of this. And you remember when Elisha was helped by God in the curing of Naaman, the Syrian.

The Syrian, Naaman wanted to give Elisha a present. And Elisha says, oh no, I don't want a present. It is God who has done this. I haven't done that. It's God, God's power. I don't want anything for that. But Gehazi, the servant, he told lies, deceit, and ran after Naaman and told a lot of lies in order to get changes of raiment and silver and gold. There was a man who was greedy, [00:38:02] greedy for filthy

lucre, personal advantage, because he was occupied in some measure in the things of God. Very, very sad. Don't find Abram, the man of God, when they came to him and offered him things. No, he said, I don't want them. Not a thread to a shoelatch. Nothing at all, don't want anything to do with that kind of thing. I've lifted up my hands to the most high God. That is sufficient reward for me. Awful thing, terrible thing. If anything is done amongst the saints of God, simply for personal advantage and whatever way that advantage might come. These are the negative things. Now there's quite a long list of positives. I don't know that we're going to have time to go over them all, but we'll just mention them. We'll come to the last one, which I believe is extremely, they're all important because the word [00:39:01] of God is there. First one, an open home. What a wonderful thing it is to have an open home where you can invite someone to come along and have a talk about any particular matter. As Aquila and Priscilla did with Apollos, it says, they took him to them.

And I suppose that would be, come along Apollos, we'll have a talk at home. And that's the blessing of having an open home given to hospitality.

And then it says a lover of goodness, lover of goodness. Well, when the Bible speaks about goodness, it speaks about all the things that come from the good God himself. He is good and he does [00:40:02] good. And he's filled the world with good things that we can enjoy. But the best things that are good are the things that are seen in a practical way in the lives of the saints. And an elder should be ready to promote that and to nurture it so that it might grow and be enlarged, a lover of goodness. Why there's plenty of lovers of badness in this poor, sad world. It speaks about a balanced mind, a sober mind, able to think clearly, not in any way governed by any personal matters or matters pertaining to relatives or business or any other thing whatsoever, but to have a mind that can clearly see the things that are at stake, a mind that is balanced in every possible way, able to think for God and to think for the well-being of those concerned. [00:41:04] Then righteous, my, that's most important, in an evil, wicked world. How much unrighteousness has come to light recently in big business, awful things with severe consequences for those concerned. But righteousness in our lives is extremely important and more so in someone who takes a lead amongst the saints of God in caring for them. Unrighteousness is an adverse feature that destroys spirituality, destroys power. There is no power in anyone's life, doesn't matter who or she might be, if they are unrighteous. God is righteous, the Spirit is holy, Christ is righteous. And if we are not righteous before God and before men, then we are not acting [00:42:08] as we should be. Righteous to our employer, perhaps not stealing his goods, we might steal his time, and one's as bad as the other. Righteous in our lives and our obligations as a member of a society, a community, obeying the laws of the land, righteous, righteous before men and righteous before God. Absolutely essential in every one of us and more so in connection with any who leads amongst the saints. Self-control, we've already spoken about that. Power of the Holy Spirit operating and keeping down from our lips those hot retorts that we might make, those sayings that can never be withdrawn. Once we say them, they are implanted in people's minds. We wish we had [00:43:02] never said them, but they remain. Sometimes they can be forgotten, but not often. Self-control so that we might not say or do the things that bring dishonor on the name of the Lord. Lastly, sound knowledge of the truth to help believers and to oppose evil. I believe that this is one of the greatest features that we all require for our personal Christian living and also for the exercise of this great service of eldership or overseership. That is a knowledge of the Word of God. The Bible provides much instruction as to various requirements among the people of God. I believe there isn't a thing that arises amongst the people of God, [00:44:02] but it can be met by the Word of God. The more we know about the Word of God and bring it to bear on the matter, then the better chance there is of that matter being rectified. Of course, eldership is not always drawing attention to evil or correcting evil. Far from it. It is the shepherding, the caring, the ruling amongst the saints of God to

help them in every way. Oh, how thankful we are for many of the wise rebukes that we receive from older brothers. I often think it would be better if I had received a lot more when I was younger and done in love and faithfulness. But on the other hand, we are also indebted for old brothers and we'll say, thank God, old sister Stu, for their wise, kind remarks of encouragement [00:45:03] and help. I don't know if I've said this before, but I'm going to say it again if I have, that when I was a young believer, the first time I went to a prayer meeting, the mother of Peter Harkis, she shook my hand so warmly with the tears running down her cheeks, saying how thankful she was to see me at the prayer meeting. Well, that was encouragement for a young brother. Just that little word of help and encouragement to come back again, not to feel that we were unwanted, not to feel that we were out of place, just to feel well, yes, this is the place to be. Some warmth and kindness. And this is the kind of thing that eldership means, overseership means. Guarding this salvation, nurturing it, promoting it, leading along so that those who may need to be rebuked are rebuked in love and faithfulness. [00:46:06] Those who need to be encouraged are encouraged with gentle blessings and help and prayer, all these things necessary. Oh, what a tremendous service this is. I think I remember a brother's meeting being held in this hall some years ago, and this was one of the features that was raised, the great necessity for shepherds. I know how true that is. What a requirement there is for shepherds who care for the flock, not like those in the 34th chapter of Ezekiel who were shepherds for their own personal advancement and aggrandizement. Tomorrow night, we hope to speak about the teaching of salvation. And there's very much in that, a great deal, the requirements of teaching in relation to our great salvation. [00:47:05] May we be encouraged for his namesake.