

Saving Grace, Part 3

Titus 2:11-14

56-20

Well, what a joy it is to be back in the book of Titus. We're going to return to Titus chapter 2 and verses 11 to 14, where we left off some weeks ago, and come back to this great section on saving grace. And this will be our third message in this particular section.

In order to get us kind of back into the text this morning, I want to begin reading in verse 11 and read down through verse 14. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

This is one of the most magnificent texts on salvation in all of the Bible. It is the very heart and soul of the Christian faith. It simply says God saves men from sin. God is a Savior. That's the point. It wants to remind us that the very purpose for the incarnation of Jesus Christ, as well as the very purpose for our Christian lives in the world, is to demonstrate that God is a saving God. In verse 11, "The grace of God appeared to demonstrate salvation." And in verse 14, we're on earth, "zealous for good deeds" that we also might demonstrate the saving power of God.

The simple message of Christianity is God saves men from sin. That is Christianity's message. That is the message of the church. That is the message of the missionaries who have followed our Lord throughout all of church history. God saves sinners. Jesus came and His name was Jesus because "He will save His people from their sins." He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." First Timothy 2 says, "God our Savior who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

And this is one of those great texts that reminds us that God is a saving God. And that is the message of the Christian church. That is the message we cannot lose, we cannot shade, we cannot shelter, we cannot adulterate, we cannot modify - God saves men from sin. That is the message.

And the reason this text is placed in this chapter is because it ties into Christian behavior. God is a Savior, and He has demonstrated His saving power through the lives of those He has saved. That is why it is so incumbent upon us to live godly lives in order that we might demonstrate God's saving power. God desires to display His glory by saving sinners from their sin. And then, rather than just taking them immediately to heaven, He leaves them on earth so the rest of the world can see what a saved sinner looks like, so they can see the saving power of God. Nothing displays God's glory like the amazing, miraculous work of redemption, bringing unworthy sinners to righteousness.

Now we've been learning this as we've been going through chapter 2. You remember that chapter 2 directs Titus' attention to every age group in the church - older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and even servants. And all of them are called to godliness; all of them are called to holy living, righteous behavior, in order that they might, verse 10 says, "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." In other words, so that we can put God's saving power on display. Wherever you live, wherever you work, wherever you go to school, wherever you shop or whatever it might be, whatever might be your opportunity to have relationships within your family, your extended family, you are a living, breathing demonstration of God's saving power. You are to be on display. You are to let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and therefore conclude God is a saving God and give Him glory for His saving power. So that all of the commands toward behavior in verses 1 to 10 are built on the truth of verses 11 to 14 - God saved you, now He wants you to adorn Him as a Savior to display His saving power by your godly conduct. You have then in verses 11 to 14 the doctrinal foundation of the duties given in verses 1 to 10. We are called to holy living in order that we might demonstrate then the saving power of our God. If people can't see that we've been saved from sin, then God is not properly glorified.

So we are to live a holy life, not just so that we might be blessed but that God might be honored - that being even the highest motivation. So starting in verse 11 Paul launches into this brief but very rich discussion of saving power, saving grace. And I think the easiest way to sort of sum it up is to describe saving grace by four features; four aspects; four perspectives; four viewpoints.

First of all, we said in the last couple of messages that saving grace is designed to deliver us from, first of all, the penalty of sin, the penalty of sin. And although that's not the primary point in this text, we must add it because it's so very basic. The penalty of sin is hell; the wages of sin is death; and that is eternal death. And if we do not put our faith in Jesus Christ, John 3 says, we will perish. Jesus said elsewhere in the gospel of John, "you will die in your sins, and where I am you will never come." Jesus repeatedly said hell was a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched - eternal judgment. Salvation saves us; saving grace saves us - delivers us - from that fearful eternal penalty.

Let's go back to verse 11 for a moment and talk about that verse just briefly. "The grace of God has appeared." Remember now, that's referring to the incarnation. Grace there is personified in a person no less than the Lord Jesus Christ, just as in verse 4 of chapter 3 kindness and love are personified in the person of Christ. Grace appeared in verse 11, kindness appeared and love appeared in verse 4 of chapter 3, and all of that embodies the attributes of Christ who Himself appeared as grace incarnate, kindness incarnate, and love incarnate that day at Bethlehem. The reason He was born, the reason He appeared was to bring salvation. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. And then that very important statement at the end of verse 11, "Bringing salvation to all men." And that does indicate to us the extent of God's love and grace - that He brought a salvation that extended to all men. God's love, in one sense then, defines the extent of His provision. And the love in which His salvation originates is love to the world, according to John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave...." And so His grace extends to the breadth of His love, which extends to the world.

This last week when I was in England I had the opportunity to do some reading in between the times that I was preaching, and I was reading in the writing of John Brown, an old volume that I've had for many years and haven't really thoroughly read recently. But it's now in three volumes called *Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord*. He was one of the latter if not the last of the Scottish Puritans. And he has an interesting section in there and I will read it. To those of you who are interested in this

matter of the extent of the atonement, I think he really captures in a very helpful way the essence of it. He says, "There can be no doubt in the mind of a person who understands the doctrine of personal election that those who are actually saved are the objects of a special love on the part of God and that the Savior had a special design in reference to them. But there can be little doubt that the atonement of Christ has a general reference to mankind at large, and that it was intended as a display of love on the part of God to our guilty race. Not merely was the atonement offered by Christ Jesus sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, but it was intended and fitted to remove out of the way of the salvation of sinners generally every bar which the perfections of the divine moral character and the principles of the divine moral government presented. In consequence of that atonement, every sinner may be and if he believe in Jesus certainly shall be pardoned and saved. The revelation of mercy made in the gospels refers to men as sinners, not as elect sinners," end quote.

Paul put it this way: "God was in Christ reconciling the world." And so God has, in sending Jesus Christ, demonstrated His love for the world and offered to the world an opportunity for salvation. This must be understood along with the understanding of God's special purpose for the elect. And the purpose of salvation then initially and ultimately and finally is to deliver us from the penalty of sin which is death. And when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ and you put your faith in Him and you acknowledge that He died on a cross and rose again for your justification and you believe and you come in repentance as a sinner, pleading for salvation. God in His mercy will not cast you out. It says in John 6 you will be delivered from the final, ultimate penalty which is hell. You will be delivered from hell and on a course toward heaven. That, however, as important as it is, is not the heart and soul of salvation, and it is not the heart and soul of this text.

Saving grace *does* deliver us from the penalty of sin. But a more important issue is saving grace delivers us from the power of sin, and that's the second point. It delivers us from the power of sin. This is really what is in Paul's mind here, and this is what is so crucial in this text. Verse 12, "The grace of God has appeared," and it has brought "a salvation to all men," a salvation "instructing us to teach ungodliness" – "to deny ungodliness," rather – "instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." Salvation not only effects a change in our future, it effects a change in our present. It not only eliminates the penalty of sin, but it becomes for us a teacher. Here you have the grace of God appearing in Christ, now personified as our teacher. For the first time, now, in our lives, since we were saved, we are getting constant instruction coming from within us about righteousness and godliness. Saving grace breaks sin's dominion.

In Romans chapter 6, and verse 14, it says sin no longer has mastery over us, it no longer dominates us. Saving grace breaks the power of sin. It breaks the dominion of sin. It breaks the mastery and the dominance of sin. In fact, this is so very evident that the apostle John reminds us in 1 John chapter 3 of some very compelling words: "Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous" - God is righteous. We are made righteous in Christ, and therefore we practice righteousness. Verse 9, "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed" - that is God's seed – "abides in Him." He cannot sin. He is born of God. He has a new life. He has a new nature. He is a new creation, and the dominion of sin is broken, and he does not continually, habitually, in an uninterrupted and unbroken pattern continue to practice sin. That's very basic.

Salvation not only deals with our future, it deals with our present. Whereas there was a time when we

could do no good thing. "There was none righteous," Romans 3 says, "no not one; there is none that understandeth...there is none that doeth good....The poison of snakes or asps is under their lips." We're all gone out of the way. By the deeds of the Law none of us can be justified, to put it in the terms of Ephesians 2. We were "under the power of the prince of the air, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience...and we were by nature the children of wrath." We were doomed to damnation. And we were living in an uninterrupted and unbroken pattern of continual sin. We couldn't do anything right.

At the point of salvation we are given a new nature. We become new creations. We are not only covered with the forensic righteousness of Christ, but there is a sanctifying work that goes on on the inside. We are cleansed; a new creation takes residence, as it were, within us in which the Spirit of God dwells and prompts us toward ever-increasing holiness. Salvation not only, then, deals with the future but it deals with the present.

Now if I seem like I'm making a major emphasis on this point, you're right, I am. One of the things that you must understand that saving grace does is it reprograms your spiritual computer. It takes out all the old disks and throws them away and reprograms your spiritual computer with longings for holiness and righteousness and virtue and goodness and God. That is what occurs in the transformation of salvation. So he says grace then, in verse 12, becomes our educator, our instructor. He uses the word *paideuō*, which, from which we get our English word *pedagogy*, which we use to refer to an instructor or a teacher. *Paideuō* is how you say it. That word tells us that when you become a Christian you then become under the tutelage of God and His Spirit and His Word. And a process of training goes on. The word actually means "to train a child." So the process of training goes on as we are trained into the process of sanctification to be made more and more like Jesus Christ.

Now - follow this thought - salvation then was a decisive break with the power of sin. Mark it, salvation was a decisive break with the power of sin. Through Jesus Christ, John 1:17 says, grace and truth were realized. When you come to salvation in Christ there is a major break with the power of sin and to move toward transforming grace. Romans 5:21, "Sin reigned in death, now grace reigns through righteousness." We come into righteousness and grace, and righteousness begins to dominate our lives. Now we have a pattern of righteousness, a pattern of holiness, a pattern of goodness. It's interrupted by sin, as Romans 6 and 7 point out, because we still have the flesh which has not yet been glorified and redeemed. But in Christ we are a new creation. Old things have passed away and new things have become, 2 Corinthians 5 says. Galatians 2:20, "We are crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live, yet not really us but Christ living in us," and that moves us toward sanctification.

Now, beloved, let me just talk about this for a brief moment. Back in 1988 when I wrote the book *The Gospel According to Jesus*, which you all know about, we dealt with one of the issues that is very, very important in the life of the church. That's the issue of the matter of lordship salvation, or what really happens when you're converted. And in this last year has come out the new book, *Faith Works*, which I trust you've been reading. It's even a more important book and a more thorough and careful book than the first book. And that book is following up with the same, very same issue. And what the basic issue is simply this: When a person is converted, is there a transformation or is there not? That's the bottom line.

We all agree that salvation will save us from the penalty of sin, but I am convinced that it not only

saves us from the penalty of sin but it breaks the power of sin. Those who want to deny what is called lordship salvation want to deny that. They want to say it is possible to be delivered from the penalty of sin and still go under total domination of sin to the point where you would even deny Christ, deny the reality of God, become an agnostic, an atheist, etc., etc. Or where, even though you're a Christian, you can live in an ongoing, unmitigated pattern of unbroken sin which, in effect, is to say that while salvation deals with your future, it may or may not deal with your present. That is *not* the salvation of which the apostle Paul writes here in this text, or for that matter in any other text in the New Testament.

What he is telling us here is this: that when the grace of God appears and brings salvation, inherent in that is a transformation that involves reprogramming the very inner man so that, verse 12, we are taught to deny some things and to affirm some things. So there's both the negative and a positive feature in what Paul says. In this process of sanctification, moving us more and more away from sin - separating us further and further, which is what sanctified means - and more and more toward Christ, there is both a negative and a positive.

Look at the negative, verse 12. We are instructed at the point of salvation to deny something. It simply means "to reject, to renounce." And I think it conveys the idea of a decisive act initially, with certainly ongoing implications. I'll tell you, when you came to Christ you came because you wanted to be delivered from sin, right? There are some people who would say, "Well, no, when I got saved all I wanted was fire insurance. When I got saved all I wanted to do was make sure I didn't go to hell." But frankly, you might question someone who comes like that. It's, I'm sure possible, that someone could be truly and genuinely saved out of just nothing but fear, but when you see a conversion that is really genuine, it will be marked usually not only by a concern about the fear of the future but a desire to be delivered from the power of present evil. In other words, the person is overwhelmed with their sinfulness. It isn't so much that the person is saying, "Well, I'd like to continue my life the way it is, but I certainly don't want to die and go to hell." That is not the stuff of genuine repentance. Because when the Holy Spirit convicts, according to John 16, He is not convicting the world of hell, He is convicting the world of - What? - sin. People come to be saved from sin. Being saved from hell is a by-product. To reduce, in some kind of a reductionist mentality, salvation to deliverance from hell and not deliverance from sin is to adulterate biblical salvation and to really deal unfairly and unjustly and with great error regarding the work of the Holy Spirit and the conviction of sin.

At the point of salvation there is a denial, and there is a denial of "ungodliness," he says, "and worldly desires." There is something decisive that happens. And there is a rejection of former patterns. There is a saying "no" to the way it used to be. There is a transformation that involves new desires and new longings. The saved soul is made by God to break the power of sin. And the first thing that goes is - let's look at the word "ungodliness," *asebeia*. What it means is "a lack of reverence for God." If there's anything true about the unregenerate person is that they are irreverent. Certainly you could find the irreverence defined clearly in Romans 1:18 to 32. There you have the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all those people who know the truth about God and reject it. Any irreverent concept of God is punishable by eternal death, as you well know.

And so, when a person becomes a believer, the first thing that happens is there is a break with irreverence. There's a break with all false ideas about God, all lack of respect, lack of honor, lack of worship, failure to adore God. When salvation comes, the sinner abandons all his wrong views about God and instantaneously is transformed into a worshiper. Philippians 3:3 defines a Christian as the

one who worships God in the spirit. John 4 says the Father seeks true worshipers who worship Him "in spirit and in truth." There's no such thing as a Christian who is not a worshiper, because when you were saved you were transformed into a worshiper. You couldn't be an agnostic, you couldn't be an atheist, you couldn't be a denier of God and a worshiper at the same time, and you were saved and made into a worshiper.

So the first thing that you deny is ungodliness - anything that is an irreverent concept, attitude, or thought toward God. And that means you are now focused on the true God with a true perspective, believing in Him to be the God that indeed, in fact, He is. Saving grace then causes you to make a clean break and a decisive break with the old life and teaches you who God really is - gives you worthy thoughts about Him.

And then he adds a second component, he says, "Salvation instructs you not only to deny ungodliness, but worldly desires," *kosmikos epithumias*, it means "lusts which are characteristic of the godless human system, desires that reflect ungodly culture." Peter calls them "fleshly lusts"; Paul calls them "foolish lusts"; he also calls them "hurtful lusts." And writing in 2 Timothy he speaks of "youthful lusts." But here you have "worldly lusts" - the stuff, the "foolish, hurtful, youthful, fleshly, worldly passion." At the point of salvation there is a clean break with wrong ideas about God, and there's a clean break with patterns of living that were dominated by lust. There's a renouncing. There's a transformation. There's a reprogramming. And in Colossians 3, I think, speaks of this in verses 9 and 10, "Do not lie to one another." Why? "Since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self which is renewed to a true knowledge." And there the apostle Paul is recognizing that salvation not only deals with the future, but it deals with the present - not only deals with the penalty of sin but deals with the power of sin. You were no longer under its dominion. So don't give in to it.

It would be absolutely unbiblical to say that a person could be saved from the penalty of sin and have a wrong view of God, either the view of an agnostic or an atheist or any other warped perspective on God that would make him something less than worshiping the true God. *And* that he could be saved and then go on in an unbroken pattern of worldly desires with no visible change in life. That is flagrantly in violation of what this text is saying. So much for the negative in verse 12.

Look at the positive. Not only does salvation become an immediate pedagogue, to teach us, to deny some things but to affirm some things - that is to affirm living "sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." This is the positive side. Here comes the evidence of transformation in three expressions that really sort of sum up how we've been delivered from the dominating power of sin. One thing sin does is it teaches you to live un-, to live rather insensibly, unrighteously, and ungodly, right? Just the opposite. So the mastery of sin is broken and we live "sensibly, righteously and godly."

"Sensibly" is that same word *sōphronōs* we've seen over and over again. And it means "self-control." We've seen it already four or five times in this epistle - once in chapter 1; I think four times before we even get to this verse. It means "self-control." One of the things that happens when you're saved is you have self-control. You can control yourself. The natural man can't. He can't do the things of God; it's impossible for him. He's powerless to do them. All he does is sin, sin, sin, and more sin. But a Christian can bring himself under control. You can bring the unredeemed flesh under the control of the Spirit of God in the redeemed inner man and do what is right. Self-control means proper balance, spiritual priorities, wise choices, all of that.

Then he says, secondly - moving from the individual himself and his own self-control - he mentions "righteously," which means you "obey the divine standard of what is right." You start to live right, and then you affect everybody else. People who live right, of course, impact those around them. So he's saying, first of all, when you were saved it made a change in you. Secondly, it made a change in how you live toward others. You live righteously, demonstrating what right living is.

Thirdly, he mentions the word "godly," and that looks toward God. And you became reverent; you became respectful of God; you honored God; you worshiped; you adored; you praised; you lived under His authority. So here is the evidence of transformation.

Salvation, then, delivers us from the penalty of sin in the future, namely hell, and the power of sin in the present, namely the unbroken pattern of continual sin. And we are now in a pattern of holiness, no longer practicing sin, as 1 John says in chapter 3, as I read earlier in verse 10, because we have the life of God in us. We have the seed of God in us, John says; we no longer continue in the practice of sin.

Now look at the end of verse 12. This godliness, righteousness and sensibility, this turning away from wrong views about God and living by passion is to be done "in the present age." This is not future, this is now - the here and now, the sphere where we live. This particular phrase is repeated by the apostle Paul at least four times that I know of, and it means "the present time." Saving grace, then, not only delivers us from future hell, but educates, trains us to present holiness in the here and now. That's essential in understanding the matter of salvation.

Let's make a third point here. Third point, verse 13, "Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." A third point that Paul lays upon us here - very, very important - saving grace delivers us from the presence of sin; saving grace delivers us from the presence of sin. We live in hope, verse 13 says. And the hope is that some day Jesus will come, and when He comes we know He will deliver us from the presence of sin. We are delivered from its punishment, we are delivered from its power, and we long to be released from its presence. That's why Paul said, "Far better to depart and be with Christ." That's why Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ, but to die is gain." It's a better place. That's why Paul said the whole creation groans, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies. That's why we long for the glorious manifestation of the children of God. That's why we bask in 1 John 3:2, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," and then it will appear what we really are as the children of God. So the longing of the heart of the believer is some day to be delivered from the presence of sin.

What in the world would salvation mean if it wasn't ultimately to deliver us from the presence of sin? If sin burdened my heart, if sin concerned me and debilitated me and crushed me, and if I hated sin when I was an unbeliever, I don't hate it any less - I hate it more and I want the kind of salvation that promises me that some day it won't exist. That's our hope. That's what he says in verse 13, "Looking for." It literally means "to wait for, waiting for." We're not, we're not looking wishfully. We're waiting expectantly. It carries the idea of eagerness, anticipation, longing. And what are we waiting for? "The blessed hope," "the blessed hope." What does that mean? The hope that will bless. The hope that will bring blessing. And what is "the blessed hope?" It is "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." That is our blessed hope. Jesus is coming. That is the hope that will bless. And when He comes there will be joy and richness and peace and reward and perfection, sinlessness, glory. We live in that hope. We live longingly in that hope.

Some people want to split this up a little bit, and they see in the phrase, "looking for the blessed hope" the rapture of the church, and "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus," the second coming seven years later. The rapture being before the time of tribulation. The second coming being afterward. But I don't really feel Paul is pushing any kind of split here. I think he is simply saying we are "looking for the blessed hope," and "the blessed hope" is the appearing of the Lord. And he's just summing up the whole of the second coming. I don't think he's trying to isolate the rapture from the return. Although we understand those to be two parts of the great coming of Christ, the *epiphaneia*, "the appearing, the arrival." I think Paul is simply saying we live in the expectation that Jesus is coming, and when He comes - certainly in the rapture and later in the following glory on behalf of Old Testament saints and tribulation saints - we will be delivered from the presence of sin in our glorified form. "The blessed hope" is a fixed, historical reality for which we long.

In fact, he says "the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory." And who is "the glory?" Indeed, "the glory" is "our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." So in this text the Lord is called "grace" in verse 11. He's called "glory" in verse 13. He's called "kindness" in verse 4 of chapter 3, and He's called "love" in the same verse. He is the personification of grace and glory and kindness and love. We saw the kindness, the love and the grace in His first coming; we'll see the glory in His second coming. I think, as so often in other parts of the Scripture, you don't have a separation of the rapture, called "the blessed hope," and the second coming, called "the appearing." Although we could make those distinctions certainly in our eschatology. I think Paul is just sweeping up the whole concept of the return of Christ as the culmination of the final salvation which delivers us from the very presence of sin. Then we will receive immortal bodies. This incorruptible will put, this corruptible will put on incorruption. This mortal will put on immortality, and we shall be triumphant in our absolute holiness.

One note about the end of verse 13. He calls Christ by this title, "our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Now here is another one of those very, very wonderful passages of Scripture which removed doubt as to whether Jesus was God. There are always people who want to deny the deity of Christ, and little statements like this great title here are helpful to affirm the deity of Christ. Frequently in the Scripture the deity of Christ is presented to us. I think of another text that's not unlike this one in Hebrews 1:3, where it says that Christ Jesus, His Son, the Son of God, is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature." There's one of those verses that definitely refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as being equal with God in very essence and very nature. Another one comes to mind. I was reading earlier today in Romans 9, and verse 5 - a great statement. It says, "Christ who is over all, God blessed forever." So here is a statement that simply says "our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." He came in a humble state the first time with grace. He comes in an exalted state the next time with glory. He comes to glorify His church in the rapture. And then to return in glory with His church to glorify the remaining saints and establish His kingdom.

One other note. As you look at that statement, "our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus," it might occur to you that you could move the comma after the word "Savior" to before the word "Christ" and make them into two people - "our great God, and Savior Christ Jesus," so that one would refer to God, the other, the Savior Christ Jesus and avoid the necessary connection that Jesus is God.

There are a number of problems with that. I'll suggest them to you. It is best to see it referring to one person for a number of reasons. There is one article here, one definite article rather than two. You will also notice in verse 14, "who gave Himself for us," takes the whole title with a singular pronoun,

therefore referring it to one individual. The word "great" there would be quite interesting. "Our great God" could be pointless to use that if he's referring to God alone. It is never used in the New Testament to refer to God because so often in the Old Testament God is called great. It seems to have been assured and affirmed, and it isn't used in the New Testament. "Great" is used in the New Testament to refer to Christ a number of times. He shall be great. Jerusalem is called the city of the great king. "A great prophet is risen among us!" (Luke 7:16). "A great priest over the house of God" (Hebrews 10:21). A "great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews 13:20). So, "great" is used repeatedly to speak of Christ in the New Testament, never of God. And each time "great" is used to speak of Christ, I think it ties Him in as God with the use of "great" in the Old Testament, referring to God the Father.

But the most telling point is this: never in Scripture is the Father joined to the Son in His second coming. So you couldn't talk about the appearing of the glory of our great God *and* Jesus Christ. The Father never joins the Son in the second coming. The epiphany, the appearing, the arrival of Jesus Christ, is singularly Jesus Christ. So all of those things indicate to us that the proper understanding of it is "our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." And therefore it becomes a massive testimony to the deity of Christ, who is indeed called God and the Savior.

So He comes then in the future to save His people. In the sense of what? Delivering them from the presence of sin. That's why Paul, in Romans 13, says, "Now your salvation is nearer than when you believed." What kind of salvation? The salvation from the presence of sin. We already have salvation from the penalty and the power, but not yet from the presence of sin. But "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ," is going to come, and He's going to deliver us from the very presence of sin in our own flesh. Philippians 3, verse 20, says that when He comes, verse 21, He "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." He'll make us like Himself. "We will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is." And that great transformation eliminates from our very person any presence of sin. Even if we come back and reign on the earth in the thousand-year kingdom, we will be untemptable, we will be untouchable with sin, we will be pure and eternally holy. That is "the blessed hope." And I really believe that is the ultimate thing that people have been looking for, to be delivered from the penalty of sin, to be delivered from the power of sin, but ultimately from the presence of it altogether.

And there's one other thought here, and I won't exhaust this. We'll finish it next time, but I'll introduce it to you. Saving grace comes to deliver us from the possession of sin, the possession of sin. Verse 14, "Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

Oh, this is such a wonderful truth. The unregenerate sinner is the possession of sin. He is owned. He is controlled. Romans 6:16 and 17, he is a slave of unrighteousness. Saving grace breaks that ownership. Like Romans 7 says, the first husband dies and the partner is no longer in bondage. The first husband was sin and it is dead, and there is no longer bondage - there is complete deliverance. And we become - I love this - verse 14, "His own possession," "His own possession." And we become His, and He holds us. You can go through the Scripture and read this that "we are hid with Christ in God," "no man is able to pluck us out of His hand," "nothing shall ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus," Romans chapter 8. We are forever secure. That is an essential component of salvation, beloved. We have a salvation that delivers us from the possession of sin permanently. Saving grace breaks forever that ownership. You can't go back into it. Why? Because the Lord paid the price and the justice of God was satisfied and the purchase was made.

For someone to come along and teach you can lose your salvation is basically to say that God did not pay a sufficient price for an eternal purchase. It is basically to say that God could get us started, but He may lose us along the way. It speaks about His being less than omnipotent.

It is also basic if you believe you can lose your salvation to have to affirm that somewhere in the universe someone is more powerful than God. You see, unless you understand the essence of what is in this text about salvation and elsewhere in the New Testament, you can be very confused. You might think that salvation is only deliverance from hell. It isn't. It is deliverance from the power of sin as well as the penalty. You might think that there's some question about whether or not in the future we're actually going to be fully delivered from the presence of sin and exist as holy beings forever and ever. We are. And you might think that somewhere along the line, you know, we could sort of slip in and out of this deal.

If any of those erroneous views are true, then we're going to have a hard time convincing the world that we have a saving God, aren't we? If God could lose us, if we can sort of be in and out of salvation, is that the kind of Savior the people in our world are looking for? When a sinner comes to the end of his rope, as it were, and he wants redemption and he wants salvation, and he wants forgiveness, does he want a God who can't hang on to him? How can we adorn the doctrine of God, how can we display to the world that our God is a saving God if we don't teach that our God keeps who He saves? That our God perfects whom He saves? That our God breaks the power of sin in the lives of whom He saves, as well as delivering them from eternal hell? It's the package that puts God on display. We have a God who can overrule all the minions of the pit and hell. We have a God who can break the devastating infection of sin which is in the fabric of human beings. We have a God who ultimately will so totally transform our bodies that we will never know sin forever and ever. We have a God whose possession we become, whose possession we will ever become, and never will anyone be able to break it. So if we're going to demonstrate the greatness of our God and His saving power, then let us exalt Him for being the Savior that He is. And let's not come up with some kind of salvation that is something less than that which properly exalts our great God.

What does it mean to be a Christian? It means to be saved from the penalty of sin in the future, the power of sin in the present, some day the presence of sin, and to be ever and always for eternity the possession of God – “a people for His own possession,” made pure, delivered from every lawless deed, and redeemed. Verse 14 says He gave Himself to accomplish this. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was to accomplish no less than this full-orbed salvation. Anything less than does not “adorn the teaching of God our Savior in every respect.”

Father, we thank You for our time this morning in Your Word again. Oh the time goes by so quickly and so much richness here. Father, we thank You for again the reminder that You are a saving God. In Your great mercy and grace You stooped down to save unworthy sinners. We thank You, Father, for that. Why You chose us we will never comprehend. Maybe even through all eternity we'll never understand. But we are grateful that You did. We're grateful that the day came when the Spirit of God convicted our hearts, and we reached out as hopeless sinners and took hold of a salvation like the one we just read.

Father, we thank You for the fullness of our salvation. And we pray that we might so live that we might show the world what a saving God You are that they might see in us the joy of one who is forever delivered from the penalty of sin. That they might see in us the purity of one in whom the

power of sin is broken. That they might see in us the anticipation, the longing, the hope, the unearthliness, the sense of heavenly anticipation of one who will someday be delivered from the presence of sin, and that they might see in us the confidence and the security and the settled joy of one who knows nothing can ever change, for we are forever Your personal possession.

Father, may it be this kind of salvation that we put on display for a watching world in the way we live, and the way we speak, and the way we act that others in seeing what You've done in our lives might be drawn to You and give You glory and come to know You.

Thank You for this wonderful opportunity, Lord, to rehearse again these great truths, and we'll give You glory and praise for what You've done with them in our lives and what You will do in the lives of others even now who hear this message, as You save them by Your grace. In the name of Christ. Amen.

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