

we're going to look this evening at verses 9 through 13. If you have a particularly good memory, you'll say, wait, I thought we looked at verses 9 through 13. Well, we did, but I thought it would be helpful if we examine them a bit more closely. So turn in your scriptures to Zephaniah chapter 3. We'll be looking at verses 9 through 13 this evening.

By way of reminder, last time when preaching through verse 1 through 13, we had three points. It was sin, judgment, and salvation. And that sin and judgment portion was verses 1 through 8. And then that salvation portion, which we'll be looking at again this evening, is verses 9 through 13.

And what we saw in verses 1 through 8 was that sin in judgment, that background for salvation, is very important for us to have in mind when we consider salvation. Because we will not appreciate salvation if we do not understand it in light of our sin and the judgment that our sin deserves. That is what helps to make salvation lovely to us, to help to make us see how good salvation is, is in the backdrop of our sins and the judgment that our sins deserve. That makes salvation wonderful in our eyes. We said that it's something like a person who's underwater. You're underwater and you cannot breathe. That's sort of what's going on in verses one through eight. You're underneath the water of God's judgment and sin.

And then you finally get this unexpected but tremendous breath of fresh air, the fresh air of salvation in verses nine through 13, which again, we'll be looking at a bit more this evening. So with this in mind, let us pray and ask God to bless the reading and preaching of his word.

Oh Father, again, unless the Lord builds a house, those who labor, labor in vain. Unless the watchman watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. And unless, oh God, you send forth your spirit through the reading and preaching of your word, indeed, it is in vain. Do that which we cannot do.

In Christ's name, amen. Zephaniah chapter three, verses nine through 13. Give your attention to God's holy word. For at that time, I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Cush, my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones shall bring my offering.

On that day, you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me. For then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly, they shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord. Those who are left in Israel, they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue, for they shall graze and lie down and none shall make them afraid.

Amen. This ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless now the proclamation of it to our lives. Well, if you've been a Christian for long at all, you've probably had the following experience. You've prayed a prayer, and God answered that prayer, and you were shocked. You were shocked with the fullness with which God answered your prayer. You prayed it, but then when he answered it, you find yourself shocked, especially at the fullness with which he answered that prayer.

Well, when we come to God's salvation in a far more wonderful way, it's sort of like that. God's salvation is shocking and full. And that's what we're going to look at this evening. God's salvation is shocking and full. And so first this evening, God's salvation is shocking.

We see this in verses nine and 10. To appreciate the shockingness of verse 9, which begins, for at that time I will change the speech of the peoples, we must remember what he has just said at the end of verse 8. Look there at the end of verse 8, the last words.

All the earth shall be consumed. God's judgment at the end of verse 8 appears to have hit a high point, a climax. And so when you come into verse 9, you certainly aren't expecting anything other than more judgment. All the earth, he just said, shall be consumed. And then verse 9 reads, for at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.

Now I ask, how do things go from consuming judgment to shocking salvation so quickly? There's no buildup. It just comes seemingly out of left field, this shocking salvation. How does this happen? Well, it's because of one word. And to make it sound even a bit more incredible, it's not so much even just one word, we could say it's about one letter. It's the letter I in verse nine. For at that time, I. God says, for at that time, I will change the speech. There is no explanation given for this sudden and shocking change from judgment to salvation. The only explanation the text gives is this word, I. In this word, I, is contained the sovereign free grace of God to save hell-deserving sinners.

It's not what you do that saves you. It's not what I do that saves me. It is I, the Lord, who does the saving. It is I, God Almighty, who saves sinners in verse nine. You would all be condemned, but I. He is saying, in essence, I am not like man. I am merciful and gracious. I am abounding in steadfast love. I save godless, hell-deserving sinners. It is I who do it. While you have been casting yourself perpetually into the flames of hell, I have been grabbing you perpetually from those flames. I have been rescuing the very people who were throwing themselves into hell.

It is this little word I and I alone that explains this great contrast from verse eight to verse nine. As Isaiah 43, 25 puts it, I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and I will not remember your sins. And why does he do it? According to that passage from Isaiah 43, 25, it says, for my own sake.

There is no other way to explain this sudden shift from verse eight to verse nine. In fact, some scholars of a liberal theological persuasion have found this shift from verse eight to verse nine to be so unexplainable that their explanation has been the following. They have said, editors later on who didn't like all of that judgment in verses one through eight came in and said, let's create a gracious God, a loving God, because that stuff in verses one through eight is just too hard to hear. But you see, that's clearly not what's going on.

Zephaniah, by divine inspiration, wrote this book. You can trust that this is one author and that behind that author is the Holy Spirit God himself. The truth is not that a later editor came in and added these final verses to the book of Zephaniah. The truth is simply this, the God who calls sin, sin is the same God who calls grace, grace. The God who looks our sin in the face in all of its horror, who understands our sin more fully than any of us have ever begun to

understand our sin, is the same God who says, I will be gracious and merciful to sinners. He's the same God who says, I understand grace like you don't understand grace. That is the God of Zephaniah chapter three, Oh, he does not wince at sin. He does not hold back at calling it evil. And yet he does not hold back in saying, I will change. I will convert. I will save. This little word I here drives us straight to the cross of Christ. That is where this finds its consummation. That is where it finds its fulfillment.

It's there that you see sin at its height and you see God's love and mercy and grace at its height. It is there that you see that sin deserves wrath. It is there that you see that God has been merciful to sinners in his son, Christ Jesus. And this shocking salvation in verse 9 and 10 evidences itself according to verse 9 in worship and service. Look at the latter half of verse 9. to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord, that's worship, and serve him with one accord, that's obviously service. This shocking salvation evidences itself in worship and service. And notice the first thing that it evidences itself in is specifically worship.

The first manifestation of the redeemed heart is that it is a person who wants to worship God. And so this evening, do you want to worship God? Do you want to praise God? Do you delight in worshiping God? I know none of us do this perfectly, but I ask, is that the heart of your heart? Can you say, I do want to worship God. That's the fruit of a redeemed heart. That's not what the unbeliever cares to do. You know, in different times in my time getting to serve as pastor here at Second, it's come up in various contexts that God really does care about his worship.

And a lot of times we think that all that really matters are commandments five through 10. The only commandments that really matter are honoring your father and mother, do not murder, do not commit adultery, and so forth. And even the world, generally speaking, would say, generally speaking, that there's some truth in those commandments. But the world doesn't care about the first four commandments.

One of the evidences of actually loving God is that you at least care about, you care about the first four commandments. Do they matter to you? Well, here, the first evidence, the first fruit of redemption, of conversion, is that these people want to worship God. And then, of course, alongside of that comes serving him, and that, of course, will manifest itself in godliness toward one another.

And they do this with one accord at the end of verse nine. And what an encouragement it is to be at this church, to see how we, by God's grace, do this. We serve one another with one accord. There's unity here. And that's something that is the fruit of God's work in our hearts. And that's what we see happening at the end of verse 9.

They serve him, not sort of in a selfish, way in which they're trying to always bring praise to their own name or some sort of selfish motive. It says they serve him with one accord. They're on the same team and that's by God's grace what happens here at Second Presbyterian Church. May we always be serving with one accord.

But then the shocking salvation continues to unfold into verse 10 because God doesn't just save sinners. He saves sinners from Cush. Now what is particularly noteworthy of this region, the region of Cush, and these people rather, the people of Cush, is that according to Genesis 10, 6, and you may remember this, where do these people descend from?

These people descend from Ham. You remember Ham, right? Ham was the guy, the son of Noah, who, when they got off the ark, committed a particularly heinous sin, and we learn that there's going to be a curse upon his descendant Cain, Canaan, rather. And it's from this very line, Noah's line, or rather, Cush's line, Ham's line, this Sinner Ham, that Cush comes.

And this Cushite, we learn from this very place, these very people, salvation will come. Salvation will come to these sorts of people, the Cushites. Back in chapter 2, verse 12, we saw that judgment was to come upon the region of Cush. Here we see that around this same region there will be salvation. And this salvation has come.

People from Cush have been saved. Down to this very day, people have been saved from Cush, and many people, and rightly I believe so, see that this fulfilled in part in Acts chapter 8, when the Ethiopian eunuch is saved. Why? Well, because in the Septuagint, which is the Greek New Testament, or the Greek translation of the Old Testament, Cush is called Ethiopia. It's this same region. Different in name, but same region.

But in any case, whether that's a correct application or a fulfillment of it, in any case, we can say this much about this verse, verse 10, that this is a shocking salvation, that God would save people from this place. Maybe you have someone in your life for whom you've been praying for many years that God would save them. A verse like this tells you that God can and does often indeed save those whom we might think unlikely to be saved. But moving on to our second point this evening, having seen that God's salvation is shocking, we see secondly that God's salvation is full.

We see this in verses 11 through 13. Verse 11 begins, on that day you shall not be put to shame. This is in stark contrast to chapter three, verse five. In chapter three, verse five, we read, the unjust have no shame. Here we read that these people shall not be put to shame. One commentator noted that back in chapter three, verse five, we see a dead conscience. Now in chapter three, verse 11, we see a clear conscience.

But why is it that they're not going to be put to shame in verse 11? It is not because they don't have sin. Verse 11 states that they do in fact have sin. It says, because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me. There were sins in their lives. But the reason they will not be put to shame is because later on in verse 11 we read this, I, notice that word I again, I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.

You see here that God opposes the proud but shows grace to the humble. That repetition of I will does fit well with what Wayne was saying today in Sunday school. Again, if you were able to attend, he talked about how in 2 Samuel chapter 7, there's this repetition of I will, I will, I will, making it quite clear by God's grace to David that it would not be anything David would do. And the same point is being made here to these people. It is I who will make a full salvation for you, I will take away your shame.

And we read that those people in verse 11 actually down in verse 12 are a humble and lowly people, they are humble. And who are the humble? They are those who know that they can't do it. The humble person does not

believe that he can save himself. The humble person is a man who knows that he needs Jesus Christ. That's what you see in verse 12. Where do they go? They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord. The humble person is willing to believe God at his word. He's willing to take God at his word.

When God says in Jesus Christ, come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, the humble person says, that applies to me. When Jesus Christ says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except by me, the humble person says, there are no other solutions. Every other religion is a lie. When God tells man that he's given us commandments and they're good for us, the humble person says, I will believe what you say in your word, that your commandments are good for me.

The humble person is a person that takes God at his word and all of his mercy and all of his commandments and all of what he speaks, the humble person receives it. He knows he has nothing and he looks to God alone. In verse 13, we see the kind of lives these humble people live. According to verse 13, we could sum it up by saying they live holy lives. Look what verse 13 says.

Those who are left in Israel, they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. These people are a people who are marked by doing justice and speaking the truth. They are not liars. They are marked by truth telling.

And as he goes on here in verse 12 and 13, we see that they are doing all of this because they are staying near their good shepherd. They are staying near their good shepherd. Why are they speaking the truth? Why are they acting in humility? The end of verse 13, for they shall graze and lie down and none shall make them afraid. Because they're depicted here as sheep who are near their shepherd.

They're humble because they realize they're weak, but they realize their shepherd is strong, so they want to be near their shepherd. The weak person, The weak believer, which is every believer, the weak believer sees his weakness and says, I need to be near my good shepherd because he's strong.

This evening, do you see your weakness? If you see your weakness in honesty, that will manifest itself in wanting to stay near Jesus. Because where does the weak person want to go? Where does the weak child want to go when they realize that they're hurt? They want to go towards someone stronger than them. They want to go near and dwell near someone who can protect them, their father, their mother. Where does the weak sheep find himself? Where does the weak sheep find herself? You find yourself near the strong shepherd because you know you don't have it, but he does. You know you need his protection, so you want to be near him.

I was reading just this couple weeks ago in Thornwell he said this, just in proportion as we are drawn to Christ we are drawn from sin. In proportion as we are drawn to Christ we are drawn from sin and that's the imagery really here of verse 13. It's people who are drawn near Jesus. They're drawn near to their good shepherd. And because they are drawn near to him, they are therefore drawn away from sin. We need to live our lives this evening around our good shepherd. We need to be near him, closely tied to him in our daily lives. Our shepherd knows us. Our shepherd protects us, our shepherd feeds us, our shepherd leads us, we need to be near him.

So you see, as you look at verses 11 through 13, that God's salvation is full. It's a full salvation, a cleansing from our former unrighteousness, a doing away with our shame, a drawing us near to Jesus Christ. It's a full salvation. But while this salvation in verses 11 through 13 is full, it hasn't reached its full fulfillment in any of our lives here tonight, but the day will come when it will.

The day will come when we will have no lying whatsoever anymore. We will be complete truth tellers where we will not ever try to walk away from our good shepherd. We will always want to be near his feet. The day will come when we will have absolutely no more shame.

That started now because of what Christ has done for us, but we battle it still because we're not yet in the fulfillment, but that day is coming. So today we have seen God's shocking and full salvation. This shocking and full salvation manifests itself in a life of worship, service, humility, holiness, and love to be around your good shepherd who laid down his life for you. Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for this shocking and full salvation.

Oh God, we pray that if anyone among us has not yet received it, that you would grant it to them. That perhaps they think that there's no way it could be true for them, but how, oh God, could the change of verse nine come to a more undeserving people? A people who, for eight verses, you describe as wicked in various ways. For eight verses, you describe this group of people as being prideful and arrogant. And then, in a way that is shocking, you say, I changed, I will change.

And oh God, we praise you for that change which we have received who are in Christ this evening. And we pray for that change for our nation. We pray for that change for our neighborhoods. We pray for that change for our city, for our state. Oh God, we've been changed because you changed us. and completely only because you've done it. Do it for others around us, oh Lord, and continue to sanctify us. May we be holy, humble. May we long to live our lives near a good shepherd. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.