

Understanding the Why of Salvation

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Titus 3:4-5

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I'm Jon. I'm one of the pastors of Redeemer Bible Church. Thank you for joining me for Redeemer Live. If you're watching and you're part of Redeemer, I'm sure I speak for the elders when I say that we miss you and we cannot wait to see you again. I've been so encouraged. I'm sure our whole team has and all the expressions of love and especially the notes that say we're praying for you. We're not going to be stronger as a church. We're not going to get through this. We're not going to help other people get through this without your love, without your support, and without your prayers. So thank you.

Looks like there's going to be a light at the end of this social distancing tunnel. My guess, and it's only a guess, but my guess is that we'll be back meeting in person sometime in June. Hopefully before that, but I'm thinking June at the latest. With that in mind, I've been asking you to take a picture of your family and post it on social with the hashtag Redeemer AZ Live. I've loved seeing all of you. That's been so cool. Thanks for doing that. If you haven't, could you please do that today. The longer this goes just the better it is to see your faces. I'm sure the better for you to see other people's faces that go to your church. And it's just great to see the vast amount of people that call Redeemer their home church.

Before I get into the text, I want to give you a quick ministry update. I had the privilege of leading two people to Christ from our Easter service. One in Santa Rosa, California, and the other on the big island of Hawaii. So Linda and William, if you're watching, may God bless your new life in Christ. I also got to baptize someone on Thursday. And on Friday, I performed a socially distanced 10-person max wedding right here in our church. So Devin and Vicky, if you're watching, I know that wasn't your dream wedding, but hey, the most important part is what? It's that you're married. And may God bless your new life together.

On a sad note, I've talked to more people who lost their jobs or have been put on furlough. So remember if that's you, the church is here to serve you. So let us know and we want to help you. We can help you. You can let us know by emailing us at info@redeemeraz.org. If you're struggling or think that you're going to start struggling, that struggle's going to become real. If that's you, please don't give, please take care of your family and let us help you; info@redeemeraz.org. I cannot thank you enough if you're still giving regularly on our website or through the mail. I can only say what I just did to those in need because of you. So thank you.

Now, grab your Bibles and open to Titus chapter 3, Titus chapter 3. If you have one of the blue Bibles that we give away, that is page 1,100. Page 1,100. Titus chapter 3. We're staying in Titus, as I said, to keep a sense of normal, but we're also looking at specific truths that we all need to know and truths that we need to hold onto during this time of trouble. So this Wednesday at 7:00

PM, I'm going to answer the question: what is God doing during this crisis? What is he up to? So I hope you can watch Wednesday at 7:00 PM on Facebook, YouTube, or on our website. Now, before we look at God's word in Titus chapter 3, join me in prayer.

Father, this is going to continue to be very strange to preach to a room that is not packed full of people like usual. Yes, the more you do it, the easier it feels, but God, it's just not the same, but your work, your power is the same. Your Word is the same. So I pray that you will work through this message through all the eyes that are going to watch this today. Use your Word by the power of your spirit to open eyes, to change lives, to help us see you for who you truly are and to live our lives in light of that. And in light of all kinds of churches, many churches, dozens of churches all around us doing the same thing, I lift up Evident Life Church. I lift up Pastor Eric. I pray that you would bless him. As his sermons are going out this weekend as well, I pray you would bless the word that comes from his lips. I pray that you would use it to powerfully impact people for your kingdom. I pray you would bless his word. I pray you would bless mine now. I ask these things for the glory of your name. Amen.

When you were a kid, did you ask the question why a lot? When your kids were kids or maybe your kids are still kids, did your kids, or do your kids ask why? Now I'm not talking about the why of defiance. I'm talking about the why of discovery. Why are things the way they are? Why is this or that happening? My kids are learning about the different planets in our solar system right now. So why do planets go around the sun, they say. Or why does Venus spin in the opposite direction of all the others? The question that I'm wondering is why isn't Pluto a planet anymore?

One of my kids, I'm not going to say which one, because they're watching with me right now, but I have one kiddo in particular who asks why a lot. Is that true of one of the kiddos watching with you? They ask why a lot too. Well today we're going to ask Titus the question why. We're looking for a reason. Now, let's see if you can spot the answer to the question why, starting in verse 4. Titus 3:4 says, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

You may have asked the question why thousands of times, but none of those times is as important as today. Today my hope is that you will better answer the question, why are you saved? Or really why is it that anybody is saved? That's my hope. Is that you will understand why you are saved and not just why you're saved, but really my hope is you'll understand why anyone is saved. Why is it that anyone can be saved in the first place? Our text just answered those questions. Notice salvation is the big idea in verses 4 and 5. You can see this in the phrase that starts verse 5, "He saved us." That's the main verb. And you can see this in the title given for the Father in verse 4, and given for the Son in verse 6. They are both identified as Savior. The

repeated words are typically the main idea in any text and the repeated word in our text this morning is save and Savior. Meaning the subject of our text is salvation.

Now let's remember where we've been before we move forward. Paul is concerned that Christians on the island of Crete about 63 AD. He is concerned that they are living godly lives. Notice 3:1, Titus says their pastor is to remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient and to be ready for any good work. That's a command that some of you really need to be reminded of and really need to do. Isn't it? And personally, look at verse two, we're to speak evil of no one to avoid quarreling, to be gentle and to show perfect courtesy towards all people. Then starting in verse 3, Paul gives the reason why Christians should treat every person they come across how they would want to be treated. He says, "Here's why you should treat people with love and respect and consideration." Christians should act that way, Christians should be that way because, verse 3, "We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another."

When we look out at the world, filled with defiance, filled with foolishness, filled with delusion. Yes, be angry. Yes, desire justice. Yes, be grieved. Yes, be disgusted for sure. However, before all of that, do not ever forget that when we look out at the world, when we observe the rebellious culture that we live in, never, ever forget that that used to be us. That culture, that rebellion, that's us without God's grace in our lives. We can't be angry with too much bitterness. We can't desire just as too much. We can't be too disgusted. Such were some of us, such were all of us before Christ.

Christians, we can be terribly arrogant toward the world, but how soon we forget that we were once foolish. We were once disobedient. We were once deceived too. We were slaves to various passions and pleasures. We filled our days with malice and envy. We hated other people. We were hated by other people. We cannot condemn too harshly or desire God's wrath too passionately because without God's love generously injected into our hearts, we would look out at that world and we would never think that was us. Because that love has been injected into our hearts, we should have compassion on the world. We should love them. We should be gentle, it says there. We should not quarrel. We should show perfect courtesy towards all people. In other words, what Paul is saying is he wants God to use the lives of Christians. He wants God to use the hearts of Christians to save people out of the world. He wants Christians to go into their world and to save people out of the city of destruction and for God to use them to transfer people into his city of light and love and peace.

So the question for us today is why aren't we like the world anymore? What's the reason? What's the cause? What's the basis for why we can look out at the world and see a difference between us rather than thinking, "Well, that is me." Notice verse 3 is where we were. Verse 4 is what changed us. Into the blackness of our existence, into the darkness, the light of the gospel of the glory of God, notice, appeared. The word refers to what happens to the sun when it rises. Something invisible to us one moment becomes instantly visible. Light shatters the darkness.

Well, according to the text, what is it that appeared? What shattered the darkness? What was invisible to us, but suddenly became visible? Notice the text. It was God. More specifically, it was "the goodness and loving kindness of God that appeared". And notice when these truths about God appeared, what happened? The text says when he appeared at the same time, at the exact moment, he saved us.

So when God's goodness, and when his loving kindness, when this God who was once invisible to us, when he appeared to us in his goodness and in his loving kindness, at that same moment he appeared, he saved us. In other words, the effect of his appearing is the salvation of those that God appeared to. Now, I want to look closely at these two attributes of God, goodness and loving kindness. If we're going to understand why we're saved, it starts with God. Goodness is not an easy word to nail down. It's translated goodness, kindness, generous, gracious, considerate, friendly, pleasant, even sympathetic. The word isn't too much. It's not moral like the word goodness. This word is more attitude and motivation. It's used for someone who is sweet or friendly, easily approachable, not harsh or cruel, pleasant, joyful, easy to get along with. I wonder, do you think about God that way? When you picture God in your mind, is it those words that come to mind?

The point here is that Christians should be verse 2, gentle and show perfect courtesy towards all people. Why? Because God has been so good, so kind, so friendly, so generous to us. So if you're going to understand why you're saved, if you're going to understand why anybody is saved, that'll happen when point #1) *you embrace God as kind. Embrace God as kind.* In other words, there's no salvation in general and there's no salvation for you personally. In fact, there's no salvation for anyone personally, unless God is first kind. For salvation to exist, God must first be a kind God. Kindness is actually one of the motivations for why he blesses people.

Listen to Ephesians 2:7. The context is the same as ours in Titus 3. The context is salvation and the text says God saves us "so that in the coming ages..." So 10,000s of 10,000s of years from now, he saves us so that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness. That's our word. In kindness towards us who are in Christ Jesus. Notice, his kindness and his grace go together. His kindness is the motive. His kindness is the reason that God shows grace to those who are saved.

Listen to Romans 2:3-4. Paul writes, "Do you suppose, O man, that you will escape the judgment of God? This is God's Word. Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness? There's our word. And forbearance and patience. Not knowing that God's kindness... There's our word again. God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance. Here, what we see is that it's God's kindness that motivates him to postpone his wrath, to hold his wrath back from those who are sinning against him. He deals graciously with people who deserve his wrath instead. And he does this, he holds back his wrath, he expresses his kindness to melt the hard heart of the rebellious and to lead them to repentance.

Now, when I described the definition of this word earlier, when I said it means someone who is sweet, friendly, easily, approachable, not harsh or cruel, but pleasant, joyful, easy to get along

with. Does that make you uncomfortable to think that God used Paul to write that word to describe him? Listen, when God saves a person, Titus 3:5, it is because God appeared to that person as kind. Unless you believe God is kind, unless you believe that he is able to be approached, unless you believe that he is friendly and pleasant and kind, listen, you will never come to him to be saved.

The creator God, yes, the Holy God, the just and righteous God, the God who should be feared, when he reveals himself to somebody to save them, he reveals himself to them as kind. So what's true for human leaders is true for God. A harsh, a mean and unapproachable God, a God that's not predisposed to be gracious, a God who is unpleasant and angry, that God will never be loved. He'll be seen like the wicked servant just as described as seeing God in Matthew 25:24. You will see him as a "hard man". O God will be feared, but those he saves will never love him unless they embrace him as kind. And that is how he reveals himself to those that he saves. The rest of the New Testament says he's kind to sinners because of Jesus. Jesus gives access to him. And when we have access to God, he doesn't destroy us, but he eternally blesses us. Because of Christ, we get to see God as kind.

However, to those that he does not save, God's kindness will never appear to them. They will never understand it. They will never experience it. But if you are saved, if you are a child of God, listen, God has a fatherly affection for you. A kindness towards you that may be unbelievable to you, but a kindness that you must embrace. If you're not saved, if you're not a child of God, listen to Psalm 145:17. It says, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways." That's bad news. "Everything he does is right." But in addition to that, he's righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. Jesus said Luke 6:35, that God is "kind to the ungrateful and the evil". There is hope for you. He is kind, he is gracious even to the evil people and the Bible's teaching is that all of us are evil because all of us have rebelled against this God. And how does God approach and appear to those that he saves? He appears to them as kind. Ask him. This is the wide-open door. Ask him, pray to him, cry out to him to be kind to you.

Now back to Titus 3:4. When God saves someone, he appears to them second, as he appears to... He does so by appearing to them in his loving kindness. Now, what does this refer to? This word literally means lover or friend of humanity. It's very similar to the previous word. It means kind, benevolent, humane, generous, compassionate. However, it seems to me that if the first word spoke of motive, the second word speaks to action. This is the demonstration of love. This is the showing of care and compassion for those in jeopardy. The word here is philanthropia, which sounds familiar, right? Philanthropia. We get philanthropist from this word. Well, let's think about that. What does a philanthropist do? They typically meet a need. They can even rescue someone or something that is in trouble or in danger. That's what philanthropist does.

Well, one author says this word refers to "an eagerness to deliver someone from pain, trouble, or danger". He says, "It involves more than mere emotion and actually finds a way to express itself in some form of helpfulness." The point here, don't forget, is that as Christians, we should be everything it says in Titus 3:1-2. We should be all of those things because God has been

philanthropia to us first. So if you're going to understand why it is that you're saved, if you're going to understand why it is that anybody's saved, that'll happen as you point #2) **see God as compassionate. See God as compassionate.** James, Jesus' half-brother puts it this way. James 5:11, "The Lord is compassionate." The father of the prodigal son, a picture of God, it says that when he saw his rebellious son coming home, he "felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him". That is a picture of salvation.

In other words, there is no salvation. God is not savior. No one is saved unless God is compassionate. But compassion assumes what? This is so critical. What does compassion assume about the one who receives it? It assumes those who receive compassion are in some kind of peril, some kind of danger if they don't get an act of compassion. Well, let's think about this. Why do we need a God who is compassionate? Why do we need a God who is eager to help us? Who desires to help those in danger? Answer, because our sins put us in danger. We need the God of Titus 3:4 because without him we are and we will forever be the people of Titus 3:3. We saw this two weeks ago, but it bears repeating Ephesians 2:1, "We were dead in our sins." Ephesians 2:2, "We followed the world in its disobedience." Ephesians 2:3, "We lived in the passion of our flesh. We were at our very core marked out for God's wrath." But Ephesians 2:4, "But God being rich in mercy..." Not stingy, not begrudgingly. "But God being rich, being generous in mercy, being generous in compassion, he saved us."

Listen, you will never see God as compassionate unless you first see yourself as needy, destitute, in danger and in desperate need of compassion. To see God as one who shows pity, we need to see ourselves as those who need pity. To see him as one who helps, we need to see ourselves as people in need of help. Do you see the real you before God in texts like Romans 1:29. Filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliceness, a gossip, a slanderer, a hater of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, an inventor of evil disobedient, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. What about Galatians 5:19? What about a life may be marked by sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these?

Listen, if you can't go to text in the Bible that describe the lost world, the world in rebellion against God, then you will never ever see any need for God to be compassionate to you. There's no mercy until you are convinced that you need mercy. Unless that happens, you'll see salvation like a minor house remodel. "Yeah, the bones are great. We just need new carpet, maybe a little paint, but that's about it." Or if you admit that maybe there's some bigger problem in your life, salvation is a new bathroom or it's a new kitchen. It's, "There's no need to tear this down and rebuild the whole thing. That's a little drastic. I'm not all that bad. I'm pretty okay most of the time. No.

The word save, Savior, and salvation assume you are in danger. And the thing you're most in danger of is not an unfulfilled life and it's not bad feelings. It's not salvation from debt or loneliness or things that you're embarrassed of. Salvation in the Bible is salvation from God's

wrath for your sins. It's rescue, it's liberation from his justice, his right, his good punishment for every crime that we've committed against him. Every time that we've taken a token of God's goodness towards us and used it as an opportunity to rebel against him. So listen, think about it. Using the eyes that he formed to lust, using the breath that he gives to slander, using the hands and feet that he created you with to chase after and fulfill sinful desires.

Listen, if sin is no big deal to you, then neither is a compassionate God. However, when you admit that you need rescue from your sins, in that moment, you want a God who is compassionate. You want a God who is willing and ready and eager to rescue you from your sins. And listen. That is the God of the Bible towards sinners. He is in the words of Jonah 4:2, a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and relenting from the disaster coming for you because of your sins against him. If that's true about him, cry out to him, trust in him as the God of mercy and compassion.

Exodus 22:7, God says, "If someone cries to me, I will hear." Now, why is it that he will hear when someone cries to him? The verse continues, "I will hear because I am compassionate." Psalm 103: 13-14 puts it this way, "As a father has compassion on his children..." Fathers, when you see your kids in danger, when you see your kids in pain, when you see your kids in trouble, aren't you drawn to them to try to help them, to try to fix whatever the issue is? Well, that's God. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord shows compassion on those who fear him, who live their lives with him in mind because he's already saved them.

Now, before we leave this text that shows us that God is kind and God is compassionate, you need to see something that is incredibly easy to miss. And if you miss it, you're not really going to understand why it is that people are saved. Look back at verse 4. The word appeared is interesting. This does not describe something a person does. No one makes God appear. No one tries or studies or works to make God appear. When God appears, that's something that happens to a person. The person is passive. He receives the action of appearing. It's God who is acted. He is the one who appears. In other words, when God's kindness and his compassion, when that appears to people, it's because God caused those things to appear to them. The tense of the verb makes that clear.

And second, verse 5, notice the text says he saved us. So who does the action of saving in verse 5? Answer, God. Well, who is the recipient of the action of saving? Who is it that gets saved in verse 5? Answer, us. Very easy to miss the point on this. It might be obvious to you, but this point is not obvious to most people that you know. So if you're going to understand why you're saved, if you're going to understand really why anyone is saved, that'll happen as you point **#3) admit God alone acts to save. God alone acts to save.** The reason anyone is saved is because God is kind and God is compassionate. The reason anyone is saved is because God caused these truths to appear to the people that he saves. This means that we are in danger and he rescued us. The sheep never seek the shepherd, sheep stray from the shepherd. He saves, verse 5. He's the Savior, verse 4. That title, that action, both belong to him.

Here's the point. Verse 5 does not say we saved us. It says he saved us. We weren't drowning and God threw a life preserver in our direction and said, "Hey, swim to it, grab it, pull it over your head. Save yourself with what I provided." You didn't cry out to him to be saved. He came to you uncried out to, uninvited, unsought. He came to you because of the kindness of his heart and he saved you. You were dead in the water, floating towards destruction and God in his kindness and compassion saved you by giving you life. The text is clear. What is it that moved God to save? Answer, his kindness and his compassion, verse 4, in light of our sins and the hell that awaited us in verse 3.

Salvation is the result, in other words, of what is in God's heart, not what is in our hearts. We weren't attracted to him. We were dead. We were, verse 3, foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to sin, full of malice, full of envy, full of hatred. Nothing is more repulsive to a good and Holy God than that, but the same God is also what? He's kind and compassionate. He came to us, he saved us. He rescues us from the danger that we put ourselves in because of our sin. And notice, it's not just God the Father who did that. Jesus is identified with the same title in Titus 3:6. He is the Savior. And notice verse 5 again, God saved us notice by the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. In the end, the whole Trinity acted to save us.

And listen. If the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit equally God and equal in all power, if each one did the work to save us, listen, that means we are completely unnecessary for salvation. We contribute nothing. The Trinity never needs our help. And it's blasphemous to think that we save ourselves. And it's equally blasphemous to think that we are some kind of co-savior. You are saved. Anyone who has ever been saved is because God is kind, God is compassionate, and God alone acts to do the saving and that's it. Which can mean incredible calm for the anxious, for the weary, for the doubtful Christian soul.

Think about it. Your salvation is not dependent on you, your feelings, your actions, your theological education, your resume as a good little boy or girl. He actually saved you. He saved you from his vengeance. He saved you from the penalty of sin, from his wrath, from hell and from eternal death. Is there any better truth than those three words? He saved me. Let these three words be a refuge in times of doubting. In the midst of danger and death, he saved me. Do you have this assurance in your heart?

Look at verse 5 again. It doesn't say he will save us like after we die. Saved in this text is in the past tense. That means salvation is a present reality. Saved now from sin. Saved now from wrath. Saved now from eternal hell. That is true for the Christian now. The Christian will never condemned, will never be punished for the sins that he committed because he now and forever stands as saved. Examine yourself. If you're not saved, you're lost. If you're not saved, you're in danger. If you're not saved, you are condemned. Every one of your sins adds another weight to your soul that will pull you straight to hell unless you abandon your rebellion against God and you trust in Jesus alone to save you. But you won't go to Jesus until you see God is kind and compassionate and you see yourself as in desperate need of his kindness and compassion. Because if he doesn't save you, you'll never be saved because he alone does the saving.

But when you embrace these truths about God, when you take these in your own soul, when you don't just have them in your head, but you embrace them with your whole heart. When you do that, you will run, you will sprint to Jesus. You will waste no time. You will let nothing stand in your way of going to Christ. You'll throw yourself on his mercy. You will cry out to him for compassion. Salvation exists and it's experienced by sinners like you and like me, because God is kind and compassionate. And because salvation does not depend on us at all, it wholly and completely depends on God alone who acts to save.

Now I've tried to squeeze every last drop of truth out of this text. However, I left out what most people that I read this week, didn't mention about this text. It's likely the most valuable, the most precious, the most wonderful word in this text. So before I get to that, just want to remind you Tuesday 2:00 PM on Facebook, you can pray with the pastors. And Wednesday at 7:00 PM, you can join us to learn about more truths that we need to hold onto during these troubled times.

Now, do you see the word, the special, valuable, wonderful word? I'll give you a hint. It's in verse 4. Do you see it yet? What could be the most valuable, wonderful word in verse 4? I think it's the little, tiny word, our. For the non-Christians, for rebellious, for those who refuse to come to Christ and be saved, the best they can know about God is that he is the Savior. He's willing to save. He's able to save. He's mighty to save and he calls on you to come to him to be saved. However, for the Christian, for those are saved, for the child of God, he is our Savior. We can say to him, "I was dead, but you gave me life. I was a slave to sin, but you set me free. I was a rebel, but you made peace with me. I was lost, but you adopted me. I was guilty and you forgave me and you accepted me. I was dirty and you washed me. I was the focus of your anger and you held back your own anger against me." We can say to him, "You are my Abba. I am your child because you saved me." Let that truth be real. Let all of these truths, allow them to wash away the doubts and wash away the questions and embrace these truths. This is the Word of God for us today. Let's pray.

Father, thank you. Thank you that we can even call you Father. Thank you that we can come to you as our Savior, our Christ, our King, our God and that thy Word is full of relationship and closeness. That the barrier between us has been removed and there's fellowship, there's relationship in that word. God, I pray for everybody watching that they would know what that means. I pray that they would experience that. I pray that you would be gracious and help them see that you are a kind God, you are a compassionate Savior. And in your grace, you do the saving. Thank you for helping us understand why it is that we're saved. And I ask these things, all of these things for the glory of your name. Amen.