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Saved!

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1219-A

Series: I Timothy



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For nearly two years, they were held hostage by fanatic terrorists. They were permitted no contact with their loved ones; no real contact, in fact, with the outside world. Those who held them in bondage poured propaganda into their minds, day after day, bitter propaganda, denying the concern of their own people, pretending that no one *even was trying to rescue them*. At first, they counted the hours till their release. Then they started counting days. Finally, weeks, then months—until they *stopped counting altogether*.

Then one day, it happened. Through secret negotiations and the payment of an unknown ransom, they *were saved*. Safely, they were delivered back into the arms of those who had never stopped praying, never stopped hoping, never stopped waiting. All five of them were saved at last.

Three years later, they had a reunion. With their families, they gathered at a luxurious hotel to recall stories of those horrible days when they were hostages and to compare notes on what had happened since they had been set free.

Three of them had returned to develop successful careers and happy families, and they looked back on those years as deep learning years, horribly painful, but nonetheless a part of the process of life. The other two had not fared so well. One had been under the care of a doctor continually. The stress had been too much for him. He still awoke in the night, screaming. He still could not eat well, sleep well, or communicate well with people. The fifth man had drifted from job to job, from relationship to relationship, unable to settle down again into any meaningful kind of life. He had tried, but always something inside of him caused him to bolt and flee.

The question is: “How many of those five were saved?” You, no doubt, will answer, “Well, obviously all five of them.” Then why aren’t all five of them *happy*? Why aren’t all five of them *content*? Why aren’t all five of them *healthy* and *successful*?

The answer is that being saved meant they were delivered from a fate worse than death. It was up to them to begin to build

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a new life. Three of them, in varying degrees, were able to do that. The other two had scars so deep they never quite got it all together, at least not visibly. But they were all saved. No longer were they sentenced to endless torture. No longer were they deprived of the things necessary to live a fruitful life. No longer were their captors in control of their ultimate destiny. They had all been saved.

That word *saved* is a most unusual word. In Christian circles, it has all but been outlawed as *out-of-date* or *archaic* in the context of salvation. Uptown folks don't get saved any more; they enter a "*new relationship*" with God. And while that is true, we have, perhaps, lost something valuable in the translation. Perhaps the converts (there's another word we don't like anymore), *by not referring to themselves as saved*, have missed out on the depth of their understanding of *what they have been saved from*. We do not simply *enter a new relationship with God*.

We enter that relationship because He, in His love, has reached down into the pits of hell itself, where a vicious enemy held us captive. We were doomed. There was no hope, no light, no life, no joy.

Then one day, *someone who loved us more than we could even comprehend* paid the ransom in full, and our captor had no choice but to set us free. We were saved! We were delivered! We were set free! We have enjoyed that freedom in varying degrees. Some seem destined for the sheer heights of heaven while living on earth. Others seem to live roller-coaster kinds of lives, never quite getting a consistent existence. Still others show almost no evidence of being saved.

It's these kinds of varied testimonies that spawn all kinds of doctrines by those who are measuring doctrines by experience. Some react by teaching that if you're not living in constant victory, you're not saved. The problem is they don't quite explain Paul's life. Others espouse a kind of *precipice salvation*, saying that so long as you don't go off the deep end, maybe you were saved, but if you actually fail the Lord or deny the Lord, you never were saved. They don't quite explain Peter. Still others teach a *kind of works doctrine*; that unless you put together a life of obvious fruits, it's too late to be born again. They don't quite explain the thief on the cross. All of them deny one basic fact that if you cried out to God in faith and *asked Him to save you*, He did. But *being saved* was

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not the end; it was the beginning. And not everyone had handled this new life in Christ the way God intended. Some refused to obey. Others had scars so deep, they are still struggling to find the victory in the Christian life.

But if God *delivered you from an eternity in hell by grace*, you are saved. You didn't do it, and you can't undo it. Nothing they say will change it. You are no longer sentenced to endless torturing and a hopeless future. One day you will experience what you possess—total freedom. Hopefully you will grow and experience it in ever-increasing splendor, every day that you live between now and then. That's what God wants for each of us. But beware of people who try to tell you or try to redefine what it means to be saved. In Paul's day the Gnostics and the legalistic Jews in Ephesus were trying to do just that. So far away in Macedonia Paul has written Timothy, his protégé, a letter, and in it there are loving instructions to young Timothy. Wrapped around these instructions are some key ingredients that explain our salvation and we might do well to read those words one more time.

Today we are going to key in on one word—saved. This lesson is going to seem very simple to some of you. Please forgive me but I think it is necessary. We come into this church from varied kinds of backgrounds, from all types of denominations, from different types of spiritual backgrounds. And there is in our society today a tremendous emphasis on principles of living the Christian life. These are vital but the problem is that there is a tendency if we're not careful to confuse Lordship with salvation or discipleship with salvation. So occasionally we must go back to the basics, Beloved, to be sure we understand the grace of God. Our passage reads like this,

This is good and pleases God our Savior,
who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge
of the truth.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and
men, the man Christ Jesus,

who gave Himself a ransom for all men—the testimony
given in its proper time. (I Timothy 2:3-6 NIV)

Now just to recap, if you remember I Timothy 2:1-2, Paul is saying for us to pray always for all men, especially those in authority, so that we might live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. That means peace within, peace without.

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That means purity before God and purity before men. This is good and pleases God. It reflects God's nature and it warms God's heart.

THE REASON

God clearly gives us the reason we should pray like that. You say you want to know the desire of His heart...well here it is. He has a desire in His heart that is so great it overwhelmingly is the only primary reason man is left on planet Earth. The desire is that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. That's why the church was placed on Earth.

We are to go into all the world preaching, teaching, baptizing, and observing to *everything God told us to do*. And lo, Christ will be with us, for He will be in us until He comes to take us back to that state of Glory man was so freely given before the fall. That is our hope. That is our joy. That is our reason for living; and *any reason other than that is less than that which God intended*.

We were placed on planet earth *to be saved*. We have been left on planet earth to proclaim to a lost world that, *if it were possible*, all men might be saved. That's what God wants. That's what pleases His heart. That is what the angels in heaven get so excited over as they are gathered around the throne that they stop what they are doing to rejoice *every time one sinner repents*, every time one person is *saved*.

Once again it may be over simplified for some of you but it is imperative in this class, in this church, wherever you are that, we delineate continuously between those who are saved, and those who are lost. The reason is that we can teach Christian principles and assume people know the difference, but if you have not been saved you do not have the power to understand. "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God."¹ And you do not have the power to apply the principles without the Holy Spirit being your teacher. So you will become increasingly frustrated, or perhaps spiritually proud but not transformed into the image of God. Now let me remind you one more time those who have come to God on God's terms, and asked Christ into their lives by faith are saved. They may or may not be enjoying the full fruits of their salvation. They may or may not be reproducing their lives in Christ as they were intended. But if they took God at His Word, God did what He said He would

¹ I Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV)

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do, they are saved. They are bound for an eternity in Heaven, where moth and rust can't corrupt and where thieves can't break through and steal.²

On the other hand, if they have never acknowledged their need of God, and thus never asked Him to be what He is—Savior, they are lost. They may or may not be morally good. They may or may not be cultured or educated or even religious. It doesn't matter. They, by virtue of refusing to accept God's free gift of salvation, are lost. They may be Sunday school teachers. They may be preachers. They may be seminary professors, but if they have not come to God on God's terms, *they are lost*. Unsaved, unregenerated, not born again are words we no longer seem comfortable with. They are not lost because of what they have done; *they are lost because they* have not accepted what God has done; they are lost because they have not been saved.

Please get it straight in your mind.

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (I John 5:12 NKJV)

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36 NKJV)

And that man might be more moral than any Christian you know. Moral, but lost. He might be more religious than any Christian you know. Religious, but lost. He might be more compassionate than any Christian you know. Compassionate, but lost. Why is he lost? He has not been saved! Is that God's wish?

No, God desires that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of truth. In today's study of I Timothy, we are continuing our look at His amazing grace.

SAVED AND SAFE

Our first assignment will be to look at that word *saved* from a Scriptural perspective. It is not a word coined by evangelical fanatics; it is a word used by God over and over and over in His Word to emphasize both the intensity and the finality of your deliverance from an eternal hell. The Greek word is *sozo*, a word that means *to save from death and judgment; to bring blessing in the place of condemnation; to bestow once for all, everlasting*

² Matthew 6:20

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life in place of everlasting death. In the dictionary we have this definition: *save is to rescue from danger, to preserve for future use.* It is a combination of delivering something or someone from harm, and setting of them aside, assuring its safekeeping for a future time.

The person who does the delivering or saving is called a *savior*. He was needed because the one lost could not save himself. Hence, unless a Savior came, there was no hope. But the Savior who did come possesses two infinite powers, the power to save from, and the power to preserve for. Hence, you and I, if we have been born again, have been not only saved from the penalty of sin, but by that act of being saved, we have also been guaranteed to be preserved from the ultimate purpose of sin which is to separate man from God. Saved from hell, saved for heaven, all in one act, all at one time, all by one Savior, all by one irrevocable decision that acknowledges God as the only one who can save.

Now this may be too simple for some of you, too redundant, too much of a review but my friend, there exists in the Christian community today as there always has from the beginning of time...lies. And it is terribly important that we never loose sight of the lies that Paul preached against from the moment he first took up the mantle of apostleship. Over and over to every church he preached Jesus Christ plus nothing equals salvation. It is all free, it is all grace, and it is all a gift.

The word saved is used more than 100 times in the New Testament alone. It is hardly a modern invention. Jesus used it in John 3. He had just told His disciples that

...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16 NKJV)

It goes on,

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

(John 3:17,18 NKJV)

In John 5:34b, Jesus clearly related His purpose in preaching when He said this,

I say these things that you may be saved. (NKJV)

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In Acts 2:47 we read:

And the Lord kept adding to their number daily those who were being saved. (NKJV)

And if you think that word to be out-of-date, try looking these verses up in modern translations. You will find that the word *saved* is translated *saved*. No better word could be found in today's language.

There are several key thoughts that evolve from its usage.

1- Only the Savior can save. In Acts 4 we read,

Then Peter filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them:

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

(Acts 4:8a,12 NIV)

2- We know from its usage in Scripture that it is a one-time act. In Acts 16, we read of that Philippian jailer, who suddenly realized his lost condition as he saw God deliver Paul and Silas, and the jailer fell on his face before them and asked,

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...”

(Acts 16:30b,31 NIV)

3- We know from the use of the word that in order to be saved, a man must abandon his own righteousness. In Romans 10, Paul bared his heart with these words:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. (Romans 10:1-3 NIV)

4- While being saved is once for all, it involves the act of being kept as well, so it is an ongoing activity. Paul wrote,

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (I Corinthians 1:18 NIV)

5- The word defined in the Word clearly means that the wisest man in the world cannot fathom this magnificent act of God apart from God's Spirit.

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Then Paul adds,

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

For since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

(I Corinthians 1:20c,21 NIV)

So I would like us to consider four basic Scriptural principles by which to relate human experience. We do not judge Scripture by experience, we must judge experience by Scripture. That was Eve's problem. She felt good about eating that fruit, so she redefined what God meant in the light of how she felt rather than assessing how she felt in the light of what God said. Had she done that, she would have said "no" to that slimy serpent, and all of history would have taken a different turn.

Now please don't tune me out. These are four basic truths. But, somehow, they are getting lost, in an attempt by society today, to modernize the gospel, and they mustn't.

Truth 1- Salvation is free. You didn't deserve it. I didn't deserve it. Billy Graham didn't deserve it. Dwight L. Moody didn't deserve it. No one who ever lived deserved to be—saved. There is none righteous. No not one.³ So it was not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us. For by grace were we saved, by faith, it was a gift from God. It was not related to works or worth.⁴ I know that is common knowledge, but it is basic truth that Satan, with his humanistic substitute for the real thing, never stops trying to circumvent that truth and slide in to our theology tiny question marks. Salvation is free.

Truth 2- Everyone in this world is either *saved* or *lost*. No one is almost saved. No one is formerly saved. No one is saved, but... You are either born or not. You are either dead or alive. You are either *in Christ*, or you aren't. If someone says to you, "I'm nearly saved," they are saying that if they died in their present condition, they would spend an endless eternity in hell, separated from the Living God. If someone says to you, "I used to be saved," either they thought they were but they weren't, or they are and they aren't sure, but no one *was saved* and is *now lost*, because salvation is a once-for-all final act that is based solely on something God did by an act of His will. He has chosen to make

³ Romans 3:10

⁴ Ephesians 2:8,9

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it irrevocable. “No one can take you out of the Father’s hand.”⁵ And “He will never leave you or forsake you.”⁶ The word *saved* means both *delivered from* and *kept for*. You, according to Peter, are being “kept by the power of God unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”.⁷

Truth 3- You can do nothing to earn it, since every man or woman is either saved or lost. Since salvation is eternal and cannot be taken from you, and since it’s a free gift, it boils down to a simple choice, and that choice has got to be the one single most important decision any man or woman will ever make. If everyone is either saved or lost, anyone who is not one is the other. Everyone you meet when you go out today, everyone you pass on the highway, everyone you walk by in a store, everyone who lives in your home or lives in you dormitory or lives in the house next door to you is one of two things, they are either alive or they are dead. You cannot be in between. You just can’t walk by a cemetery and wonder if there are live bodies in any of those graves. If they are alive, they are not dead; if they are dead, they are not alive. That means that anyone you know who has never personally trusted Christ as Savior, and been born again (born from above), no matter how good they may be, Beloved, is lost, without hope, and destined for hell. Your job and mine is to tell them the Good News that they can be (here’s our word again), saved!

Truth 4- Not everyone who has been saved lives like it. Not everyone who has been saved grows at the same pace. Not everyone who has been saved makes the right choices. That doesn’t mean they were never saved, and it doesn’t mean they are less saved than someone else. It only means that they have been *saved from an eternal hell* and never entered into the fullness of the life God has offered them. In heaven they will miss the joy of the eternal rewards that might have been. On earth they will miss the joy of the Christ-filled life they might have had. But don’t start rewriting your theology to conform to their behavior. Paul writes in I Corinthians 3:11-15 of the testing of a man’s works in eternity, to see if they are of God or not. He writes that if any man builds on the foundation, which is Christ Himself, using the gold, silver, and precious stones of the Spirit, only that work will stand. If the work which any person has built on this

⁵ John 10:29

⁶ Deuteronomy 31:8b

⁷ I Peter 1:5

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foundation [any product of his efforts whatever survives this test] he will get his reward. But if any person's work is burned up [under the test] he will suffer the loss [of it all, losing his reward], though he himself will be saved, but only as [one who has passed] through the fire.

The foundation can't burn. Christ is the foundation. But a man can receive Christ, and never lay a single righteous stone upon that precious foundation, thus losing all his reward in heaven, and all his spiritual blessings on earth.

But he himself will be saved. He will be saved like a man escaping a blazing inferno, with nothing but his life. And there may be men and women, who come to Christ and begin to walk with Him, but "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things entering in choke the word and it becomes unfruitful". They will miss the blessing, but they will be saved. Like someone whose home was destroyed by fire, who, rather than rebuild it, just camped out for the rest of their life on that slab of concrete that remained, so they will be safe, but have nothing to show for a lifetime as a child of God.

Grace is a difficult thing to understand, and it is a humiliating doctrine to build your theology upon, because it brings man no glory at all. And so from the Corinthians to the Ephesians to the Philippians to the church of the early centuries to this very age, anything man can do to reason away the *foolishness of grace*, he will do.

And in virtually every generation a *new theology* will emerge that questions whether or not grace could be that easy; and tries to imagine a way to justify questioning the salvation of anyone or everyone who doesn't do something, or show something or prove something. And usually it progresses until the gospel becomes narrower and narrower.

The Ephesian church was filled with it in the first century, and the church is filled with it today, as well. God's call to discipleship is real, and so is God's demand for lordship of His people, and God's enabling us to become all He wants us to be. But salvation is still all of grace, and grace alone. Some will say "yes" to Christ's call, and be saved, and never appear to be walking in the Spirit. It is sad. It is more than sad, it's pathetic, because they have been seated at the banquet table of God, and with all that feast of spiritual riches before them are still eating

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scraps from the trash can of life. You have to pity them, and you have to pray for them. But you don't have to change your theology because of them. If they really trusted Christ, they are saved, though as by fire. If not, God is their judge. We're not equipped.

Our goal is two-fold: to see that all men who will are saved, and that those who are saved come to a knowledge of the truth. We will study more about that in our next study.

I ask you only three questions in closing.

1- Have you been saved? It's an old-fashioned word, but no better one exists. Either you are, or you're not a child of God. No one is in between. And if you are not sure, be sure to find out.

2- If you are saved, are you living like it? Are you building on the foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones, or are you presuming on God's grace, that because you have been given an indestructible foundation you don't need to build a life of faith upon it. Fool! You will be saved, all right, but as one delivered from a blazing fire, who never had the sense to do anything but sit on the foundation and wait for it to be over.

3- Are you questioning the grace of God? Is God's plan too easy to suit you? If you are questioning God's grace, you are questioning God's character. Stop it. Simply humble yourself this hour and acknowledge that God made it simple for simple people like us. He made it all of grace, so proud people like us cannot share His glory.

The truth of the matter is this: if you come to God on God's terms, you are saved...saved...saved. What you do after that will affect your rewards, but not your salvation. Too easy? No. It wasn't easy for God. It cost Him the life of His Son's. It's only easy for you and for me.

Oh, dear God, I will not question
How your plan so sweet could be.
I will only stand and marvel,
That your grace should fall on me.

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