

Keep Calm...Christmas is Coming
Salvation is Here
1 Timothy 1:12-20

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Text Introduction:

Thus far, we have considered these Christmas reasons as to why as believers in Jesus we can keep calm and carry on. First, we can keep calm because God is with us. Second, because God is with us, we have peace. Peace is here! Third, because He is here, hope is here. We all need hope.

Today, we turn our attention to the most important reason of all that we can keep calm. Salvation is here! Above all things, this is what Christmas is about!

This might strike you as an unusual Christmas text, but it is one that so plainly communicates the ultimate reason for Christ's coming.

Text: I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry—¹³ one who was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief.¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.¹⁵ This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them.¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate His extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in Him for eternal life.¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

¹⁸ Timothy, my son, I am giving you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies previously made about you, so that by them you may strongly engage in battle,¹⁹ having faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and have suffered the shipwreck of their faith.²⁰ Hymenaeus and Alexander are among them, and I have delivered them to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.

Again, this may sound like a strange text for the Sunday before Christmas, but in light of verse 15, this is a perfect Christmas text because it gives us the plainest of statements of the reason for Jesus' coming into the world—which is the essence of Christmas.

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them.

Why do we use this word “saved?”

We use this word “saved” because it is a Bible word, but what does it mean?

In June of 1983 Joe Delaney was living a dream. After a very successful college football career, he was drafted by the Kansas City Chiefs. He was the 1981 Rookie of the Year and played in the Pro Bowl (Professional Football's version of the All-Star Game). In June 1983, while relaxing in a City Park in Monroe, LA, Joe began to hear three young boys calling for help. These three young boys had gone for a swim in a pond that had been dug out for a construction project. Even though, he had never learned to swim, Joe Delaney went in for those boys. He was able to save one, but the other two along with Joe all drowned. His tombstone reads, "Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for another." Joe's heroic efforts saved the life of one young man.

Jesus is more than a hero. His very purpose in coming to this earth was to save sinners like Paul, but also like you and me. So, what is meant in this idea "saved?"

Several questions about that word help us to see the full implications of why Jesus came.

What does Jesus save us from?

The Problem of Sin

Paul described his problem with sin in verse 13. He was a "blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant (insolent, some say violent) man." Paul revealed the problem of sin in almost every letter. Perhaps no place is this more clear than in Ephesians 2. There Paul indicated the problem of sin in these terms. Sin causes us to be "dead," and "children of wrath." (Ephesians 2:1, 3) In Romans and Colossians, Paul referred to our problem as being "enemies" of Christ. (Romans 5:10 and Colossians 1:21) Most of all, the New Testament calls us objects of God's wrath, destined for destruction, and destined for eternity separated from Christ because of sin. This is the problem of sin. In addition, sin causes us to be ignorant of our problem.

But, back in 1 Timothy 1:13, Paul indicated himself as "formerly" these things. Christ freed him from being these things. He saved us from the problem of sin.

The Penalty of Sin

Verse 16 shows us the reversal of what would be the penalty of sin.

God came to save us from ourselves and save us from sin. So often we run from God to do our own thing in life, maybe even running from God's discipline, but in reality, we might be escaping His rescue.

We are kind of like the report I read about of a stolen car in California. On the front seat of the stolen car was a box of crackers that, unknown to the thief, were laced with poison. The car owner was intending to use the crackers as rat bait. Now the police were more interested in finding the thief to save his life more than to find the car and arrest the thief.¹ God is interested in a relationship with you, not to punish you, but to free you from sin and the penalty that sin brings.

Why does Jesus save us?

¹ *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching*, ed. Craig Brian Larson, p. 207.

But, why does Jesus save us. Two reasons...

To save us is the Purpose of Jesus.

Here is the heart of this verse. He came to save us. In fact, the very name, Jesus, means Jehovah saves. His purpose in coming was to save us.

To save us is the Pleasure of Jesus.

Verse 14 reminds us that it His love that compels Him to want to save us.

What happens once we are Saved?

We are Promised eternal life.

The reason that God wants to save us, the reason that He came, and the reason that He finds such great pleasure in saving us is that we gain eternal life. This is the promise. When John Owen, a great Puritan preacher, was on his deathbed, his secretary wrote for him to a friend, "I am still in the land of the living." Owen paused and said, "Change that and say, 'I am yet in the land of the dying, but I hope soon to be in the land of the living.'"

What else should happen?

We should begin to Proclaim Him.

Paul understood that Christ saved him in order to proclaim Him.

So, What Should We Do?

If Saved . . .

Proclaim Him. (As stated above)

Praise Him. (17)

Verse 17 is a doxology or a song of praise. This kind of doxology is kind of common in Paul's writing. I like to think Paul got so wrapped up in the theology of what he was writing about that he couldn't help but break out in song. Thinking about what Christ has done for us ought to lead us to break out in song.

Persevere in our faith. (18-20)

Finally, if we have been saved, the New Testament reveals time and time again that we ought to persevere in our faith. The true believer will persevere.

However, there are times, when those who have been saved don't seem to bear fruit that they have been saved. Such has been the case with the young man that was saved by Joe Delaney.

Reports as recent as 2003 indicate that the young man had really struggled and had “run-ins” with the police.

Are you like that today? Repent and begin to proclaim Him, praise Him, and persevere in your faith as the result of what He has done for you.

If Not Saved or Not sure . . .

Believe

Several years ago, for another occasion, I told that story of Joe Delaney. At our service that day was a man I had never met. His wife had come a few times, but I had never met this particular man. When the service was over, this man approached me with tears in his eyes. He said, “I knew Joe Delaney. I am from his hometown. He was my friend in grade school. We graduated from the same class. We played High School football together.” Then he paused and said, “Joe Delaney was the kind of guy who even had he known he was going to die, he still would have gone in after those three boys.”

Though we all have gone where we should not have gone, Christ went to the cross for us. Would you allow Him to do in your life what He came to do: to save sinners? Then, would you join Him in doing what He came to do—seeking out those who need to be saved. Such is the message of Christmas.