

FOUR GREAT GOSPEL WORDS
Tit. 3:1-7, esp. vv. 4-7

Intro: Here again we have an example of the Gospel for believers! Paul is talking about a Christian's attitude toward governmental leaders, and the proof of what he has to say takes him back to the Gospel of Christ. They should be different from others and the attitude that they have because "He saved us."

This explains why unsaved men are what they are and why they do what they do--because they are not saved!

And when Paul says what he says in v. 3 (i.e., "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish," etc.), the question is immediately raised, Why, then, are we now different, while they remain the same?

If I used to be like they are (v. 3), then I have no right to criticize them. BUT I NEED TO RECOGNIZE WHY I AM NOW DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY I USED TO BE.

Any true Christian will be glad to agree with Paul when he says that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done" (v. 5)!

When J. I. Facker is establishing the sovereignty of God in salvation he makes the following, very interesting, statement:

"In the first place, you give God thanks for your conversion. Now why do you do that? Because you know in your heart that God was entirely responsible for it. You did not save yourself; He saved you. Your thanksgiving is itself an acknowledgment that your conversion was not your own work, but His work...You do not put it down to chance or accident that you attended a Christian church, that you heard the Christian Gospel, that you had Christian friends, and, perhaps, a Christian home, that the Bible fell into your hands, that you saw your need of Christ and came to trust Him as your Saviour. You do not attribute your repenting and believing to your own wisdom, or prudence, or sound judgment, or good sense. Perhaps, in the days when you were seeking Christ, you laboured and strove hard, read and pondered much, but all that outlay of effort did not make your conversion your own work. Your act of faith when you closed with Christ was yours in the sense that it was you who performed it; but that does not mean that you saved yourself. In fact, it never occurs to you to suppose that you saved yourself" (Evangelism and The Sovereignty of God, p. 12).

He goes on to say that we might take the blame for our "past blindness and indifference and obstinacy and evasiveness," but that we would never for a moment even think of dividing the glory for our salvation between ourselves and God. "You give God all the glory for all that your salvation involved, and you know that it would be blasphemy if you refused to thank Him for bringing you to faith" (p. 13).

What is the reason, then, for the salvation of any man?

This brings us to our four great Gospel words in our text. (The same four words, with a different word for love, are used in Eph. 2:4-7.)

I. KINDNESS, the kindness "of God." See v. 4.

χρηστότης

Sometimes this word is translated, "gentleness" (Gal. 5:22). One Greek authority has suggested the word sweetness.

It is a word which depicts that fact that in God's attitude toward the sinner there is a kindness which pervades and penetrates his whole nature so that there is nothing harsh or austere about Him (cf. Trench, p. 233).

James expresses this in James 1:5, "upbraideth not."

Since Paul is the only NT writer who uses this word, one wonders if this were not the outstanding thing about God which impresses his heart first on the road to Damascus. He found God to be kind, gentle, approachable!

"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37b)--KINDNESS.

See how this is illustrated in our Lord's attitude toward the woman who was "a sinner" (Luke 7:36-50).

It was God's kindness that won our hearts. Cf. Rom. 2:4, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness (Gk., kindness) and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness (cognate) of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

And all through eternity this is what we will experience. Cf. Eph. 2:7,

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

II. "LOVE . . . TOWARD MAN," which is one word in the Gk.
~~φιλανθρωπία~~

From this expression we get our word, philanthropist.
 God is a philanthropist. What does this mean?

The only other time the word is used in the NT is Acts 28:2. Reading vv. 1 and 2,

"And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness (philanthropy): for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold."

Later on in the same chapter Luke writes,

"Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary" (Acts 28:10).

Philanthropy!

A person is a philanthropist who has an instinctive love in his heart for people, and who must express that love by giving something to them to meet their needs!

God's love is instinctive. And He must display that love. With all of the unloveliness about man, it remains an eternal fact that God loves him and must do something to meet his need. Cf. Rom. 5:8.

So here we have a second reason for our salvation--all in God!

Let us look at the third.

III. MERCY. See v. 5. ^{ἔλεος}

Cf. also Eph. 2:4, "But God who is rich in mercy . . ."
 And 1 Peter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope . . ."

This is a word which describes both God and man because it is a word which views the misery of man which is the consequence of his sin.

Two words to link together: misery and mercy.

Did you ever know sin to leave anything behind it in the final analysis but misery?

We have a wonderful illustration of the meaning of this word mercy in the story of the Good Samaritan which our Saviour told.

(Read Luke 10:30-37.)

Sin has left man as this one was left by the thieves on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho: "stripped . . . wounded . . . half dead" (Luke 10:30).

God is not responsible for this condition, but mercy is the divine characteristic which will not let Him pass by on the other side of the road. He must do all that He can to meet man's need.

When our Lord stood over Jerusalem and said,
 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"
 THAT WAS THE LAMENT OF A MERCIFUL HEART.

That same mercy is responsible for your salvation and mine. He could not leave us to the misery of sin!

But there is one more word.

IV. GRACE. See v. 8. *χάρις*

Just as mercy indicates God's concern for our misery, grace indicates His concern for our guilt, our sin.

Note that it is linked here with the word, justified. This is more than forgiveness; this is to be declared righteous.

But how can He do that for us when we are guilty?

Note Tit. 2:11. It is by grace. What is grace? Cf. 2 Cor. 8:9, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that . . ."

It is God condescending to deal with sinful men, utterly unworthy though they are, removing their guilt and declaring them righteous in His sight.

The Roman centurion of Matt. 8:5-8 sensed his unworthiness in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"I am not worthy." This is an understanding of grace.

Concl: So here we have our four words:

- (1) Kindness.
- (2) Philanthropy: love of man.
- (3) Mercy.
- (4) Grace.

And these words together add up to the reason for any man's salvation. While they reflect our needs, they also reveal the very love of God for man and God's unwillingness to let man go on in his sin.