

Salvation In A Siege

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[0 : 00] We're going to look together a wee bit at the passage that Ebi read for us back in the letter that Paul wrote to Titus. And I want to read again, verses four to seven of chapter three that you can see up on the screens.

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, 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. We're going to look at this together. Let's just pray together very quickly as we start.

Father, we thank you so, so much for the Gospel. We thank you that Jesus is our true friend, our wonderful Savior. We thank you for everything that you've done for us in Him.

And we pray that as we talk about that just now, all of us would grow in our understanding of the Gospel and deepen in our love for you. Amen. So our title today is The Big Adventure. And we're going to be using that title to help us think and learn about how the Gospel works. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus has come to save us. And so we're going to work through this big adventure together.

[1 : 21] I'm going to need lots of help from the boys and girls as we do that. And we're going to go through five stages. We're going to think about how we have been made for adventure. We're thinking about how that adventure has been spoiled by sin. Then we'll look at how we've been saved by Jesus, how we're being renewed by the Holy Spirit. And last of all, we'll think about being ready for the biggest adventure of all. So first of all, we're going to think about the fact that we are made for adventure. And to understand this, there's two crucial things that we need to know and understand. The first and one of the most important lessons that the Bible teaches us is that humanity is made for adventure. So we're not made to stand still. We're not made to do nothing. And we are absolutely not made to have a boring life. God made us for adventure. And to help us understand this, I'm going to bring our adventurer up. His name is adventurer Phil. Up you come. So Phil, if you can just stand here, we're going to get you ready for the adventure that you have been made for. So we are going to give you a rucksack. So you've been made ready for adventure. Okay. And it's various things in this rough, rucksack that's going to help you. We are going to give you a cap so that you're ready for the weather. I might have to make it bigger and up a little bit. I'm sure it'll be fine. There we go. A cap. Nice. Sunglasses made by that famous designer Arnold Clark. Lovely, Phil. Nice. And then a witty to keep you company so that you're happy and cheerful on your way. So Phil can just wander around here, this beautiful world that

God has made exploring and enjoying this great adventure that God has given to us. And that's what humanity's made for. We are made to enjoy many wonderful things like food, made to appreciate the beautiful creation out there. So you imagine today you can see out the window right there, there is beautiful blue sky made for wonderful achievements like catching food in your mouth.

Phil, this is just great. Made to accomplish great things. And you see that in humanity, we've accomplished so many magnificent things. We've been made to have so many great experiences. You think of all the stuff that happens in life that's brilliant. That's what God has made us to enjoy, to experience these wonderful things. And most of all, God has made us to enjoy precious and beautiful relationships. Relationships with one another as family and as friends. And most importantly of all, he's made us to enjoy a beautiful relationship with himself. And this is so incredibly important. This is one of the biggest differences between the Bible and any other secular worldview that a non biblical worldview and particularly a non-theistic worldview, a worldview that doesn't take any account of God, sees humanity primarily and first and foremost as being made to survive. And that's the great goal. And the whole world is understood in that context that we're trying to survive. The Bible tells us that we've been made for so much more than that. We've been made to thrive and to enjoy so many of the good things that God has given us.

So as Phil comes back into the middle, we've been reminded that we have been made for adventure. However, that adventure has been spoiled by sin. And that's the second big truth that we have to know and understand from the Bible. So we've been made by God, made for something beautiful, made for adventure, but that adventure has been spoiled by sin. And we need to recognize that if we're going to understand ourselves and if we're going to understand the world around us. Our adventure has been ruined because of sin. And so humanity has sinned against God. And in doing so, we rejected him as our Lord and King. We chose to turn away from him. We chose to go our own way. And all of that has left humanity, us and the world around us badly broken. So the world that was so beautiful for adventures now full of things that will make us stumble, things that will get in a way and cause us to fall and all sorts of things that ruin the beautiful world that we've been made in. And so as Phil wanders around, there's all these stumbling blocks that he can fall over now and that he's struggling with. And we've been left with many, many burdens to carry. So as you come back over here, Phil, he's got this wonderful rucksack that was full of things to help him. Now it's full of burdens. So I'm going to put some stones in his rucksack. There's one, there's that old piece of tar. We can add that. There's some concrete here. So we can add that to the rucksack. You can turn around so people can see it better. I've got a few more stones here to add, a couple of lumps of coal. We can put them in all these burdens that Phil now has to carry. And so the world around us is broken, stumbling. There's all sorts of burdens on his back. Not only that, sin has left Phil deaf. Does anybody have ear defenders? Does anybody have any ear defenders?

Do you have some Mary? You bring them out for me? How'd you come? Sin has left Phil deaf. Okay, and the hat's spot. And it's also left him blind. Does anybody have a welding mask?

[6 : 56] Look, sin has left Phil blind. Phil's actually already blind with his glasses. But this just adds even more to the effect. Thank you very much, Mary. So then Phil's now blind. So Phil cannot see where he's going. He cannot hear. And instead he's wandering around in this broken world.

But most seriously of all, sin has brought death into our experience. And sin has meant that Phil is now tied. Tied on his own. And even if he wanders this way around a little bit, he's still tied.

And it might loosen him and allow him to wander a little bit. But all the time, he's tied. And over here, we have this big black hole. David, you can spread them out more neatly for me. A big black hole called death. And so as Phil wanders around in life, now he is struggling and stumbling.

Now he can't hear clearly or understand the world around him. He's blind. And all the time, death has got a grip of him. All the time, death has got a grip of him. And so that's the situation that sin has left us in. And everybody is in this situation. Everybody is. And the reason we know that is because sin affects all of our lives. And it affects our lives in two ways, because we ourselves make mistakes and we do things that we wish we didn't do and we know are harmful.

And also it means that we suffer because the consequences of other people's sin affect our lives. And that's something that we can all experience at different stages in life, but just rubbish things happen in life. And it's all because of this, sin has made a mess of the world.

[8 : 57] And I've often said this, this is one of the easiest things to prove in the Bible. It's so easy. You just take out your phone, you click on BBC News, you look at what's going on in the world, and it's just abundant proof that everything that the Bible says about sin and the brokenness of sin is real. That's the situation that sin has left us in. Adventure of full, you can have a rest, you can sit down for a moment. You can lift your mask if you want to see, but there we go. Take a seat. We'll come back to you in a moment. All of this is described very well by Titus, by Paul in his letter to Titus. So you see that there in Titus 3, he talks about our condition. He's speaks about it's been foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing your days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. Now that's the kind of verse where we can read it and we kind of think, well, I know this, I can definitely think of people who are like that, but I'm not sure I'm like that myself. But it's the kind of verse which if you stop and think about, you realize, actually, I am those things. And so you think about being foolish, you think either any times in your life where you've done something, you've thought, oh man, I wish I didn't do that. I wish I hadn't done that. I've done that. Other times when we're disobedient, maybe we know we've been asked to do something, or we've been told, don't do that, and yet sometimes we're just attracted to it and we do it. Other times when we're led astray, so a good way to ask that question, other times when you've had to change your mind and you've thought, oh man, I'm so glad I didn't do that. That's because we get led astray. There's times when we're slaves to various passions. Now that's a bit of a funny face, slaves to various passions and pleasures, but what that really is talking about is when something can have control over you, when you can't stop thinking about something, you can't stop doing something, and it's controlling you. And you might think, well, I'm not really like that, but how many people in here will not check the Scotland score tonight? We all want to check it. You want to watch it? You want them to win. Anyway, that's another story. Passing our days in malice and envy. The word malice just means badness. Sometimes we're all guilty of that. Envy. I think all of us are guilty of that. I am.

And then it speaks a bit of hate, people hating one another. And that's a big problem that the world faces as well, so much so that the government has been trying to bring in laws to try and stop people hating one another. Because even today, with all the advancements we've made, we still struggle with hate. And all of this is reminding us that this problem of sin is so serious. It affects everyone. It affects every part of life. It's something that is inescapable. It's inescapable.

And we know that's true because death has a grip on everybody. And so it's the most urgent problem that we need to think about. But the amazing message of the Gospel is that God has not abandoned us. And Paul talks about that. Look at the two of the verses that Ebi read for us.

Titus 2, 11. Titus 3, 4 to 5. Now, there's a very cool word that appears in both of those verses. And I want you to find it for me. I'll give you a clue. It's not the word God. And I'll give you a clue. It's not the word the. It's another word that appeared. Can you see? Is that a word that appears in both verses? Appeared. I just told you it. Can you see it there? It talks about the grace of God appearing and the goodness and loving kindness of God appearing. And all of that is emphasizing the fact that, yes, this mess is real, but God has not abandoned us. Instead, He sent His Son to save us. And that's the next stage of our adventure. We're saved by Jesus.

So, adventurer Phil, back up you come. And when you're standing here, now remember the grip. Death's got a strong grip on him. Let me use this way around. Okay. So wandering around, gradually getting pulled closer and closer. Don't move too much. Just walk on the spot. Walk on the spot. That's more effective. Excellent. And so, we're stuck under this grip.

[13 : 19] Jesus, though, has come to save us. And all of that salvation is accomplished through the cross. And we have that right here. Here is the cross.

And in so many ways, the cross is what the whole of the Bible is about. Everything in the Old Testament is pointing towards the cross. Everything in the New Testament is explaining why the cross is so important. And it's the central point of the Gospel, which is why, in so many ways, it's the great symbol, the visual symbol of Christianity. And in terms of how God saves us, there's various things that happen. And I want us to work through them one by one, so that we can see and understand just what Jesus achieves on the cross and just how he saves every single person who puts their trust in him. And all these different stages that we're going to go through work together to deal with the problem of sin. So the first thing that happens is that God calls us. And in order to do that, he takes the ear defenders off. He takes away our deafness.

So as we call Phil, Phil, Phil, he can hear. You just stay that way still, but you can hear, can't you? You can hear these ears are working. He hears us. We call that effectual calling. God is calling us and it has an effect. Phil, Phil, Phil, he's hearing it. At the same time, God opens our eyes so we can see. So the helmet comes up. Now, Phil has gone from being deaf and blind to being able to hear and to see. And that's what we call regeneration, because when we talk about being blind to being having sight, what we're really talking about is being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive. And that new life means that Phil can now hear and he can now see.

And the result of that is Phil realizes where he is. He sees the problem of sin and he realizes where he needs to go. He can see the cross. And the next step that that involves is that he turns around. And so he turns from heading towards death, turns around to look to Jesus. We call that turning around repentance. And he looks to the cross. And we call that faith. That faith brings him to the cross.

He comes to the cross. At the cross, the burden on his shoulders comes off. And instead, it's placed on the cross. And that's one of the most important aspects of Christianity. You can take the ridiculous stuff off your head as well now. The burden that is on us, our sin, is placed on Jesus on the cross. But something absolutely incredible happens, because the power of the cross is so great that that line gets cut. And Jesus rises from the dead.

[16 : 38] No longer does sin and death have any power over Jesus and over all who trust in him. All our sin is placed on him. All the burden comes off us placed on Jesus. But that's not the only thing that happens because not only does the burden come off, Phil, not only is our sin placed on Jesus, Jesus' righteousness is placed on him. So I've got a harness somewhere that I need.

I've become, you bring me the harness. And we want to think of this harness as the righteousness. Brilliant, thank you. That is placed on Christ. Now, I think that's a children's harness. Breathe in and put it on, Phil. You'll get it on. So we need to think of that harness as Christ's righteousness being placed on us. So it's just a great exchange. All our mess, all our brokenness placed on Jesus.

And all the perfection and security and goodness of Jesus's righteousness is placed on us. And we call that justification, whereby we are declared righteous, no longer condemned. The power of death is broken. And the great result of that is that we are adopted into God's family. And this means that we now have a new security. Almost there, Phil. I should have loosened the straps. This is actually very good. That's close enough, though. That's fine. You can sort it out once I hook you on.

So Christ, God the Father through Jesus, adopts us into his family. We are now safe and secure in him, keeping that tight. And so you see the difference. No longer is Phil bound to the rope that's pulling to death instead. He is connected to Jesus, adopted into God's family.

He's heading on the path to life. Now, there's some really important things for us to think about in terms of all of that together. The key thing that I want you to see is that all of these things, all of these aspects of God's salvation are all different things connecting together in order to save us. So you can take a seat again, Phil, for a wee moment. We call this, now this is going to sound all fancy, but it's really not, but we call this the *Ordo Salutis*, which is just Latin for order of salvation. And what that's explaining to us is simply how there's various key things that fit together in terms of what the cross achieves. And we mentioned them all and we could see them in Phil's adventure. He was called. And so the earmuffs were taken off, the deafness removed. He was regenerated. His eyes were opened so he could see where he was and he could see where he needed to go. He turned in repentance, trusted in Jesus by putting his faith in him. And as a result of that, his sin was placed on Jesus. Jesus' righteousness placed on him, and he was then adopted into God's family, safe and secure forever. And the key thing I want us to recognize is that all of these fit together and it's really helpful to break down and identify each one because the Bible does that. And it helps us to see the fullness of what Jesus achieved on the cross. And that's something I want us all to understand just how absolutely amazing the cross is because it does all of these things. It means that we can see and it helps us to turn and to trust in Jesus. It takes away all of our sin and it adopts us into God's family. And that means that every aspect of our problem is being solved. So sin has left us deaf, God fixes it. Sin has left us blind, God fixes it. Sin has left us pointing in the wrong direction, God turns us round. Sin has left us doubting and thinking that we know best. The Gospel turns us to Jesus in faith.

[20 : 38] Sin has left us guilty. The Gospel forgives us and justifies us. Sin has left us lost and alienated. The Gospel adopts us into God's family. And it's all because of God's amazing grace, which is exactly what we read in Titus. The goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared and saved us. Not because of work done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy. And here we see some of the words, through the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out richly on us through Jesus Christ, our Savior, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs. That's the language of adoption according to the hope of eternal life. Everything's changed because of Jesus, for all who trust in him. So if you are a Christian, or if you become a Christian, it means that you are no longer under the power of death, no longer blind and deaf, no longer lost. And instead we have a new identity, a new security, a new hope, and a new adventure begins. And that takes us to the fourth stage, whereby we are being renewed by the Holy Spirit, because it's so important to remember that the journey and adventure to being a Christian doesn't just stop when you become one. In fact, it just starts. And that's one of the amazing things about being a Christian is that it doesn't just mean that all your past is dealt with. It also transforms your future and gives you something amazing to live for and bring so many blessings into our lives. And the next step of that, in terms of our order of salvation, is what we call sanctification, which is a process whereby step by step,

Jesus makes us more and more like him. He makes us more and more into the people that he wants us to be. And that's teaching us about life as a follower of Jesus, which I want us to also think about. That life involves many privileges and responsibilities, and it brings many triumphs and challenges. But to help us with that, God gives us many blessings. So gone is the old rucksack full of sin. And instead, we have new blessings and privileges to help us with our adventure. So let's see what we've got. We've got a map to guide the way. And the map that we use as Christians is the Bible. Got a walkie talkie so we can talk. That, of course, is the gift of prayer.

We've got various things to keep us safe compass to help us know the way. Gloves, if we're cold, high vis jacket so that we can be seen. And we've got a torch just in case we're struggling. Now, all of these things are just examples of stuff that's helpful, that there's a journey we go on as Christians, and God provides for us so that he can guide us along the way. And that provision is very, very important because sometimes the journey is hard. And so on this side, we have the kingdom of God, the path with your life. Sorry to say this side, we've got the realm of death.

No offense. And do you think these chaps are happy that they've lost Phil? Not at all. Not at all. Not at all. Now I've lost one of my tools. Yes, John, you tie that onto the end of that. Meanwhile, you tie that onto the end of that. One of the things that happens is that we face attack. So Phil is walking along to walk in the spot. And there are people ready to demonstrate what attack looks like. Because sometimes we face doubts. And sometimes we face attacks.

Let's see what's happening. Oh, Phil's, he's under attack. He's under attack. Keep attacking him. Oh, and that's what can happen when we go along as Christians. We have doubts and we have questions.

[24 : 29] Good shot. Very good. Keep going. We have doubts. Sometimes things go wrong. So good shot. Sometimes we feel sad. Sometimes things, sometimes things worry us. Sometimes things go wrong. Sometimes people hurt us. Sometimes we can feel very, very discouraged. Direct hit. Well done. So this is what can happen in our Christian lives. We can be under attack. And sometimes it can feel as though the kingdom of death wants to get us back. And it's pulling us hard. But the key point is that Jesus will not let us go. And sometimes there can be a lot of tension. And we're being pulled and pulled and pulled and pulled. You can let it go. It's okay. We're being pulled. Keep pulling. Come on, death. Oh, look at that. Which side is stronger? That side. Always stronger. Always stronger.

And so yes, the journey of the Christian life can sometimes involve challenges. Sometimes it feels like we're under attack. And sometimes it feels like we're being pulled back. Sometimes it feels like we're being pulled back from where we came from. But this connection to Jesus, what we call our union with Christ, is utterly unbreakable. Never, ever, ever can that be broken. And it's reminding us that all the time God is helping us, supporting us, and building us up. And so part of the Christian life is where we have to face these challenges. And when Paul talks about it here, he actually talks about being trained by God in that life of following Jesus. And you know, anyone who knows anything about training will know that sometimes training can be hard work and difficult, but actually worthwhile, because it makes you stronger and more equipped, whether that's for football or for running or whatever it may be, the same is true in terms of following Jesus. We get trained by God through these challenges and all the time he keeps holding us. The experience of discipleship can bring difficulties. You see that in the church in Crete, where Titus was the minister. They were battling with controversies, discussions, divisions, falling out over stuff that doesn't matter, having all sorts of debates and quarrels about stuff that was unprofitable and worthless. And then there was division and separation between people in that church. And you saw people fall out and getting worked up over stuff that is unimportant. And we all know that that is something that has happened again and again and again in the centuries since those are the kind of challenges that we face. But we're being reminded that we need to avoid these things, keep looking to Jesus, keep on following him. But sometimes as Phil, our adventurer goes on, sometimes he'll feel weak.

And although he's heading in the right direction, he can feel like he's stumbling and struggling and battling. There's one more thing that God gives us. And you all need to come up here to demonstrate it. You need to come up boys and girls because there's one other thing that we have.

Up you come, up you come, up you come. And when you're all together around Phil, help him up. He's down on the ground struggling. Up you come. You need to get alongside him, get your arms underneath him and help him up. Because the one big thing that Jesus also gives us in our life of discipleship is friends. Companions who are also on this journey. Because I don't have enough harnesses and ropes and rucksacks and everything else. But for all of you here to demonstrate what it's like to be a companion of Phil, you also have a rope and a harness connecting you to Jesus. Because everybody who trusts in Jesus has the same security, the same link. You're on the same journey, you're going along together. And that's why church is so important. That's why church is so beautiful.

Because we are to work together to help one another along the way as we follow Jesus. You guys can go and sit down again. Phil can take a seat. I want us to see that Paul actually talks about this in Titus. Because at the very end he talks about his friends Artemis and Titicus.

[28 : 58] And he talks about them coming to Nicopolis. And he wants to see Zenas and Apollos. And he says, all who are with me send their greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. And that's just a beautiful picture of the wonderful family that God brings us into. That we are to support one another and help one another. It's so important that as a church we stick together. That's why today is so brilliant. Because as a church family we're all together. That is exactly how it should always be. And if ever a church is not sticking together, if ever a church is not supporting people, then the church is failing in doing what it's supposed to be doing. Because this is exactly what God is building. We go through all these ups and downs together. That means that as Phil carries on his journey, this rope never breaks. And he's able to persevere even though there's trials and struggles. And that's why the next step in our order of salvation here is what we call perseverance. And that means that God will never let us go even though there are struggles and difficulties in stumbling. We will persevere. And one of the reasons why we know that we'll persevere. And one of the reasons why we know that Phil will always continue on the journey safe and secure bit by bit. Moving forward towards one day going home with Jesus is because one thing you discover after you become a Christian. And as you go on this journey you discover that God has loved you forever. And that's why the start of the order of salvation is God's choosing to love us, to save us. And the Bible speaks of that in the language of election. But that's to express the fact that for all who trust in Jesus, it's not something that they started. It's something that God started.

And we love him because he first loved us. And so we go through this great order of salvation. Jesus accomplishing all of this through the cross. All of it happens because we are united to Jesus. That's really the great doctrine that ties it all together. And there's one final step that goes here. Lordification when Jesus takes us home. Now what I really wanted to do today was I wanted to put my sons up there and I wanted to get them to hall fill up there. But I thought not even I'm that crazy. So but if I could do that, it would point to what it's like that actually we continue this journey, we stumble on it. Sometimes the last part of the journey can be the hardest because our bodies are wasting away and we know more and more of the struggles and difficulties that life can bring. But Jesus is great promise is that he is going to take us to be with himself. And his great promise for all his people is a new creation. And that takes us all the way back to the very start. That this creation was made to be brilliant. Sin has ruined it in the new creation. Jesus restores it. And that's why you must never think you must never think of heaven as this kind of dull weird place where people are playing harps and having awkward conversations. That is not what heaven is going to be like. Heaven is actually a new creation and new heavens and a new earth. And do you know what it's going to be? It is going to be the biggest adventure of all. And there all who trust in Jesus can enjoy the beauty of the creation that

God has provided. We can enjoy the fellowship and friendship that he made us to have with one another. And most of all we can enjoy and know his love forever. And every believer whether it's those who've come before us, those who are no longer with us, those who are here today and those whom God will raise up in the generations to come, every single one will be there.

And you can be there too. And the amazing thing is that all God asks of us is to trust in him. If you look at Phil, Phil did nothing except wander around aimlessly.

God is the one who did everything. Jesus is the one who carries all the burden. And all we are asked to do is to put our trust in him. And so the question I want you to think about the rest of today is as we go back from where we started with all the mess of sin and when we talked about being blind and deaf and we talked about turning and we talked about following and walking. When we talked about this adventure, what stage of the adventure are you on?

[33 : 44] And if you're over here, Jesus is calling you today and all who put their trust in him will know the fullness of everything that is promised. Amen.