

Article 3: It's the Truth

God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Therefore, when the Son of God was conceived and born for you as a man, having lived a holy life as the second Adam and the obedient Son of the Father, having offered Himself as the sacrifice for your sin, having arisen, He sent His apostles.

“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’” (Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus “opened” the minds of His disciples. Understanding was given to them. Repentant hearts. Faith in the Savior. Reliance not on the things of this life, but on righteousness and the kingdom of God. “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). Soon even Saul, the most infamous enemy of the Gospel of Jesus, was converted and by the Holy Spirit Saul (now Paul) was made its chief proponent and defender. Through Paul the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake was preached to Lydia, “and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to the things spoken by Paul” (Act 16:14). She was baptized and her household. Through Paul the Philippian jailer was saved.

“‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all of his. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.” (Acts 16:30f)

When one examines closely what is written, it is wonderful to see the way of the Lord as expressed in Scripture. They spoke “the word of the Lord” to him. Of what did Paul speak but of the holiness and righteousness of Jesus Christ, of His death and resurrection for the sins of all people—and of Baptism. For “immediately he was baptized.” New life and eternal salvation came to that entire household that night. Even so, when in Acts 8 Philip the Evangelist came alongside the Ethiopian eunuch in his chariot, Philip “preached Jesus to him.” What did he speak about but the suffering and dying Lamb of God who had been led to the slaughter, who is risen, by whose stripes mankind is healed—and of Baptism. For “as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?’” (Act 8:36) And the man was born from above into the kingdom of heaven, born of God.

Salvation from sin and death and hell is for everyone in the world. God is no respecter of persons. Jesus Christ died for all, the Just for the unjust. Salvation is for you and for your family and for your neighbor near and far. That is the message the disciples of Jesus proclaimed from the beginning, when they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Peter said it so plainly on Pentecost, “Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are afar off . . .” (Acts 2:38-39).

“He calls with a call that fetches men out of their cells into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. He calls with a call that many reject, for He takes no prisoners in His company. God came to set the captives free. There can be pain as we hold back, clinging to the chains, but the chains are broken and He would have us free.” -- Dr. Norman Nagel

But God does not save us from our evil ways in order that we might continue in them. Christian people are filled with mercy in order that they might show mercy to those around them. Such is the vocation of everyone born from above. Be merciful as your Father has been merciful to you. Bear your neighbor’s sins by forgiving them and seek justice for all, especially the elderly and unborn, the orphan and widow.

How can a Christian survive this evil age? God has given into your hands the Holy Scriptures. These are His ongoing miracle on earth, for they speak truth in all things, delivering the promises of God. From beginning to end they speak of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, the only name given among men whereby man must be saved (John 5:46; Luke 24:44). They tell of His way.

“To me He said: ‘Stay close to Me, I am your rock and castle. Your ransom I Myself will be; for you I strive and wrestle. For I am yours and you are Mine, and where I am you may remain; the foe shall not divide us.’”
Hymn - *Dear Christians One and All Rejoice* v. 7

Pastor Thomas Olson