

Grace and Regeneration Titus 3 verses 4-7

Introduction and Background

Titus was part of Paul's Apostolic team. He is mentioned a lot in the letters to the Corinthian Churches. Titus is a pastoral letter by Paul to Titus, who was leading a Church. The tone of the letter is all about Church and Church leadership and how to live lives worthy of God. This letter is instructional about Church life and has huge relevance for us today.

In this chapter Paul is reminding Titus to lead his Church in loving understanding with the government of the day and anyone they have dealings with. He says that they are to understand that the people currently outside the Kingdom of God are like they were, before Jesus changed their lives. They are therefore instructed to live in relation to all people in this understanding way.

Paul then explains what has happened to them as believers who have trusted in Christ in bringing salvation. These four verses explain what has specifically happened to bring them to a knowledge of Jesus and we share in this if we are born again people of God today. My message today is looking at these verses which were read out to us.

Verse 4: 'When the kindness of God our Saviour and His love for mankind appeared..'

Here Paul is referring to the time when Jesus was revealed to the whole world, beginning at his birth. Jesus appeared, as a baby but this baby was the living Son of God, fully God and fully man. God's loving kindness, translated as 'goodness', was demonstrated that He sent His only son (**John 3 v 16; Romans 5v 8**), in our helpless state when we were sinners.

He is also more personally referring to the time when the revelation of Jesus appeared to them personally.

God took the initiative towards us first, He made the first move to rescue us, knowing that not of ourselves we could reach him in our sinful state. Paul states, '**God our Saviour**', as it was through Jesus, becoming our Saviour that we would know His kindness and love. Jesus came at the right time in God's plan to reach out to the world. ***Sin is what we need to be saved from. We cannot be a Christian unless we have never acknowledged you are a sinner and need Him.***

The historical factors are there; a one Empire, a one common language and at a time when the nation of Israel had lost all hope of a Messiah. In the midst of this apparent silence from God, Jesus appears and he comes unexpected and in unexpected way.

The advent narratives demonstrate from the start that this King was for all people for all time.

Application

God has not kept His distance, He appeared in time to bring us back to God. He has made the first move and always does.

In the quiet think about Christmas coming and how He came for us. Think about your own salvation; when you first became His child, recollect that now in the silence.

Verse 5a: 'He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness but according to His mercy.'

Of ourselves we are unable to deal with our sin and reach God. Our tendency because of our fallen nature, (which began in the Garden of Eden through Adam's sin), is to sin and go our own way or rebel.

One of the unique things about our faith as Christians is that we do not have to work or achieve to attain His grace, favour or forgiveness, we only have to receive it. **John 1 v 13** says, '**But as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become the children of God.**'

There nothing inherently good in us, only what God has placed there. Because of the fall we have original sin in us from birth. We can do nothing to be good enough to be accepted by God; all have sinned and fallen short of His standard (**Romans 3 v 23**).

We therefore we cannot reach a Holy God in relationship. Our own good works and attempts at being right with God are like, 'filthy rags.' Grace is showered upon us and then faith comes. He gives us faith to believe it is not our work but totally His.

It is our sin which separates us from access to Him. The sin question was dealt with by the Son of God; Our Saviour on the cross. It is only in the redeeming work of Christ can we ever come to a knowledge of God and a relationship with Him. It is only through His goodness, kindness and mercy that we have become God's children, as we turn to Him in repentance.

Our good works are the outcome of our salvation and are not a reason for it (**Ephesians 2 v 22**). **2 Timothy 1 v 9**- Paul tells Timothy that we have a holy calling, which is not according to works but according to His own purpose and grace.

Application

It is not good enough that we do good things, people in the world do those all the time. This does not make us Christians. We can attend church services, get involved in stuff but if we still do not know the reality of the revelation of God in our lives we are not His. We are just 'groupies.'

Verse 5b-6: ' .. by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ Our Saviour.'

In the Greek it literally says, 'He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.' We need to be saved..

'REGENERATION'/'REBIRTH'- These terms refer to the same process but the words from the Greek have been chosen to express this in different ways in different translations of the bible. Both new birth and spiritual regeneration involves the communication of a new life.

The new birth, replacing the old life with that of something new, brings regeneration. It brings a renewal or revival to our Spirits that were dead. Regeneration, which is the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, who washes us thoroughly from our sinful nature and cleanses us. The new life we have after being regenerated is a clean one, we have been washed, soaked.

The result is that we are alive, really alive. Jesus says He has come to, '**give us life and life in all its abundant fullness.**' (My own paraphrase) (**John 10 v 10**).

There has been a change but how? This verse tells us how God did His work of salvation in us. Two things. He brought us salvation through an interaction of the Holy Spirit of God on our lives and impact of God's word of truth, the gospel convicting us.

As a result there is a new state of affairs, things have changed from within. We have new life and we are no longer dead but alive to know Him; **'Once I was blind but now I see.'**

This is a new state of things as a result of Jesus' work, through the power of the Holy Spirit. A new people a new kingdom. A people reborn and regenerated.

Paul in **Ephesians 2 v 1** says, **'And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.'** (or **Titus 1 vs 15-16- we are corrupt...**). Our spirits were dead, they could not see or reach God; our eyes were blind. At our conversion, the Holy Spirit of God came into us and washed us, regenerated us, re-started us and renewed us.

Illustration: An old rusty car....our spirits are corroded with sin and are dead. Until the car is regenerated in its engine it will not function to what was intended by its designer/creator.

Jesus talks with Nicodemus in **John 3 v 3**, about this. He declares, **'Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'**

Or in Paul's words in **Ephesians 2 v 4-5**, **'But God being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, made us alive together with Christ...'** In the AV it says, **'You hath he quickened.'** It is like our hearts have been re- started. We are new creation (**2 Corinthians 5 v 17**). Our eyes are open, we see things differently. People outside the Kingdom cannot see this, until their eyes are opened too..

Application

1. Have you been born again of His Spirit? Paul says that the Holy Spirit has been poured out on us 'richly.' **Romans 8 verse 9b: 'But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.'** What counts is whether we have been transformed into a new creation (**Galations 6 v 15**)

2, This passage also stresses the continual operation of the indwelling Spirit of God at work in a believer. It is His present and continuing work which began in the new birth.

Have you changed in your life since you were first converted? Can you see how God has worked in your life? Yes we are all in process as the passage before us implies. If that is the case there will be some evidential change. The regeneration of the Holy Spirit's work in us brings us change and it starts at our rebirth or conversion.

His love never changes towards us and we cannot do anything to prevent that if we are His children who are born again of His Spirit. **However, God loves us too much to allow us to be as we are and stay as we are. God wants to bring change to us, our lives and relationships.**

We can become complacent and lazy, thinking we have reached it, we cannot learn anymore. This attitude can come from a sense that in the past you have tried, you have been disappointed, it might be God has let you down and not come through for you in some area.

But God never finishes with us. He wants us to grow and change and be the people He has called us to be. **God always wants to do a new thing in your life.** Paul warns us in Hebrews that we can be come spiritually dull and don't seem to be listening (**Hebrews 5vs11-12**). We should be working towards Christian maturity and wanting to share things about God with others.

I would challenge you to think of the changes God has brought in your life since becoming a Christian, can you see them? Our testimony is only as fresh as today, because every day He wants to write a new chapter. What has God shown you this week about Himself and you and the stuff he wants to do with you?

Verse 7: 'That being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.'

As a result of what God has done by His Holy Spirit we are now justified, just as though we had never sinned. We have been put back in the right relationship with God. Jesus has justified us before the Father.

The Spirit is revealed to us and our own spirits know; the transfer has taken place. Then we are given a sense of adoption as His loved blood bought children. But it does not end there- we have been made heirs, we have an inheritance in Jesus which we will discover in the eternal life He can now give us. We as His children will live forever with Him. This is our hope and inheritance.

Romans 8 verses 16-17: 'The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.'

Application: The implication of being His child and heir

- A) **There is no such thing as universal salvation (we will all be saved in the end), if there was Jesus would not have bothered;** this is an heretical idea not found in the truth of the word of God. Some will be saved and live with Jesus forever and some will not. This is not an excuse to make us feel proud or superior because if we truly understand what God has done, we know we are not worthy. It is reminder to us too as we relate to the world around us on a daily basis to show some understanding of where they are at, **as they have not been converted and are unable to see.** People who are not His talk from a blindness that they are unaware of until He changes things. Ask God to show you where people are at.
- B) **Living the life before others and being distinctive.** We are His Children on Earth, it is our job to glorify Him in all we do. We need to reach out to others. Wherever we go we bring God's Kingdom, so we carry His presence wherever we go. We can bless others. We can know His power not only working in us from inner change and renewal but the Holy Spirit wants to impart the fullness of His presence on us with power so we can reach the world. We are His conduit. Paul encourages Titus to remind his flock to engage in good deeds (**Titus 3 v 8-11**). These are the outworking of the regeneration in our hearts. **Get on with the business of the Kingdom only. Avoid getting caught up in nonsense, even from another brother in Christ. Our focus is the Kingdom of God.**
- C) **Share the gospel.** In **verse 8** Paul wants Titus to be able to speak confidently about the things he has just shared in the previous verses so that the Church can respond. **We need to share the good news,** a lot of people these days from below 40 have never heard the gospel, they are from a generation of people who have not been church-ed or given the truth. They are often ignorant of it or ambivalent about it. **Illustration:** My resolve about the Kingdom

As followers of Christ, we have the Holy Spirit now dwelling in us. Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit so God can dwell now with men and women in order to change them and empower them to do God's will on Earth as it is in heaven. This is not just a feeling, this is a fact for believers.' Chris Nye in 'Distant God.'

Conclusion

- He has done it all. There is nothing we can do or could do to reach Him. Our original sin prevented us.
- The change of the new birth, of the regeneration of our spirits means we have been switched on and made alive. It is by His goodness, grace and mercy that He has done this. We are not worthy of it but in Christ we have been made worthy; we have been made something of value in Him.
- Are you born again? Do you know in your spirit that you are a child of God?
- Have you admitted you are a sinner and really turned in repentance towards Him.
- Are you living a life worthy of that calling? How?

Unlike other religions, where good works are central to success, Christianity proclaims the glory of Jesus Christ and His work and the good work of His followers become the beautiful dust stirred up in our following Him wherever He goes. Christians are not earning their salvation with their good deeds, they are working it out (Philippians 2 v 12). Since Christians believe that the work of salvation has already been accomplished by Jesus and that there is nothing left for them to do to contribute to this work, they are now free to unselfconsciously love and serve others without worrying about recognition or reward. They will be vindicated in heaven, even if they are violated here. Jared C. Wilson in 'Beautiful Dust.'

We talk in this Church about being 'Fully alive.' Let us not have that as our slogan and be like the Church in who appeared alive did the right things but were really dead spiritually. The only thing which makes us fully alive is the power of the work of the Holy Spirit in us and through us to others.