

Tito 3:4-7

Sermon by Marco deFelice, for Faith Bible Church,
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The value of a gift is largely dependent upon two things. It's value is dependent upon how great a sacrifice it was to give the gift, and it's value is dependent upon how great is the need of the one receiving the gift.

If a billionaire gave another billionaire \$100,000, in reality, it would make almost no difference to the other billionaire whatsoever. It would cost the giver very little, and the one receiving it would have no real need for it.

If instead someone gave his entire life savings to a person in a poverty-stricken country who had been handicapped in an accident, and was without any help, without any family, and who was dying of hunger, and that savings was sufficient for that person to have adequate food and shelter and medical care for the rest of his life, but, it cost the one giving it everything, and put **him** into terrible poverty for the rest of his life, that gift would be of immense and indescribable value.

And so, to understand the value of a gift we must understand first of all what that gift costs the giver, and secondly, what is the condition and need of the one receiving the gift.

When we consider the gift of salvation, the cost is infinite and beyond fully comprehending. The very Son of God, in whom all the fullness of the deity dwells, left his glory, became a man, and suffered death on a cross taking upon himself our sin, and suffering the wrath of the Father as payment for the sins of all those that he would save. So the **cost** is infinite and beyond understanding.

In Titus 3:3, as well as in many other passages, we learn something of the tremendous **need** that we had for that salvation.

Last week's sermon ended on Titus 3:3, which describes that which was our condition before God saved us. Of course, the details of our sins varied from person to person. But in more ways than we realized, that verse is a true description of what was the condition of our hearts. Let me read Titus 3:3.

3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. (Titus 3:3 ESV)

That is who we truly were.

Only if the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, can we begin to truly understand that this is a true description of what we were before God saved us. We were in terrible darkness, we were ruled by our sins, and it was so much a part of us that we did not even realize it. It was only when the Holy Spirit came and began to convict us of sin that we truly began to see who we were. And it was only when God showed us our sin that we began to recognize our need for a Savior.

In our sinful condition, sin being our very nature, we were without any hope of salvation. It was absolutely impossible for us to change our condition, because not only could we never be good enough, our very nature was that of sinners. We sinned because we were sinners.

If God had left us to ourselves, we would have lived our lives as terrible slaves to our sin, and then, we would have stood before Jesus Christ at judgment to be condemned to eternal torment in the lake of fire.

But, I thank God that the passage does not end there! Verse 3 is followed by verses 4 to 7. May God's Holy Spirit guide us today as we examine the wonderful, profound and merciful truths which we find in these verses. Follow as

I read Titus 3:3 - 7.

3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 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, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:1-7 ESV)

Thanks be to God for the wonderful truths in these verses. May He open our eyes to understand them more and more.

Having laid out for us in verse 3 what our condition was, starting here in verse 4 God reveals to us the incredible truth of what God did to us in our lowly estate. Notice that this verse begins with the word “**but**”. This verse begins by contrasting God's character with our character. We have just seen that we were slaves to sin, hateful and full of envy, the very opposite of love. But listen to how this verse describes God.

4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, (Titus 3:4)

What appeared? The goodness and the lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared.

God's very nature is one of goodness. Goodness

is the opposite of what we were. Goodness is a predisposition to do good. It means not doing good out of duty, not doing good for ulterior motives, it is one doing good because it is his very nature do good. To do good is to give of oneself, to sacrifice oneself, to dedicate oneself for that which is truly beneficial to others. Goodness is a synonym for love. God's goodness is his nature of truly loving. And God's goodness appeared to us when we were evil, lost in our sins, in spiritual darkness, deserving only punishment.

In addition, God's lovingkindness appeared. This word is similar to goodness, and also describes the character of God. The word lovingkindness describes the tender affection of one who dedicates himself to caring for people. It describes not only what one does, but even more so, the heart and affection with which one does it. It describes a great love for humanity, together with a generosity to do what is needed to bring good to others. These two words are close synonyms, and describe the tender heart of God, a heart which is given to doing good.

The thing that is absolutely amazing as we consider the goodness and lovingkindness of God is that it was not towards lovable people, it was not toward those who were seeking God, it was not toward those in whom was some value or some goodness, or anything which would have been attractive to a holy God. Rather, the goodness and lovingkindness of God was poured out upon evil sinners, rebels against God, people who were children of wrath. The lovingkindness and goodness of God appeared to **us**, in the depths of our sins.

When God looked upon our condition, he did not see potential in us, he did not see goodness hidden under our sin. Rather, God saw us for who we truly were: terrible sinners. Indeed, if we were able to see the depth of sin in each other's hearts, I daresay that it would be impossible for us to love one another. **We** can only

see the evil that others **DO**. We cannot see the evil hidden in the heart. But in spite of the fact that God sees the evil inside of us, the heart of God is such even seeing the very depth of our sins, he loved us, and his goodness and lovingkindness appeared to us.

Oh thanks be to God!

The verse continues, and declares that “*the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared!*” In our lost estate, our very nature being that of sinners and rebels against God, we desperately needed a **Savior**. And indeed, thanks be to God, God is a Savior, he is our Savior! God, in the person of Jesus Christ, is our Savior, the One who Saves us from our sin, and from the wrath to come.

There’s one more thing to consider here. **WHEN** did the goodness and lovingkindness of God appear to us? It was when the Holy Spirit opened our eyes to understand the Gospel.

The truths of the Gospel were already there. Perhaps you had heard the Gospel many times. But, until the Holy Spirit opened your eyes, you did not see your sin, and you did not see the goodness and lovingkindness of God. It had not yet appeared to you.

But if you are saved, there arrived that moment in which the Holy Spirit opened your eyes. You saw your terrible sin and your rebellion against God, you saw judgment looming before you, you saw your hopeless estate.

But then, there appeared to you the goodness and lovingkindness of God, in the person of Jesus Christ.

Praise God that we have a sufficient and loving Savior. Thanks be to **GOD** that He caused his goodness and lovingkindness to appear to us.

He saved us

Let’s continue in this passage.

Follow as I read vv.4,5 together. We want to

look at verse 5.

4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 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,

5 οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων τῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ὧν ἐποιήσαμεν ἡμεῖς, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸν αὐτοῦ ἔλεον ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς, διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου,

This verse talks about **WHAT** God did. He **SAVED** us. It then describes by what was **NOT** the means by which He saved us, and then, by what means he **DID** save us.

God **SAVED** us. God saved us from our sin, he saved us from the **WRATH** to come. We were under the wrath of God, guilty for our sins. We were slaves to our sin, sin was our very nature, and it was impossible for us to change who we were. It was impossible for us to free ourselves from our sin. We were slaves. We were condemned, we were without hope.

But in that hopeless, desperate condition, God saved us. He saved us from our sin, he saved us from our guilt, he saves us from his eternal wrath. He saves us **FROM** the wrath to come, and **TO** eternal life in his presence.

Without salvation, eternal torment awaited us. With salvation, eternal joy in the presence of God awaits us.

How God did NOT save us

This verse tells us the means which did **NOT** save us, and the means by which God **DID** save us.

What was the means which was incapable of saving us? I'll read the first part of v. 5 again.

"5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness,..." (Titus 3:5)

It was absolutely impossible for us to save ourselves with works done by us in righteousness.

This was because we had no true righteousness in us.

Our good works, which were always stained by our sins, could never have saved us. Stained as they were by our sins, they were like filthy rags to God.

We HAD no good works done in righteousness. In our condition, we could do nothing to save ourselves. Left to ourselves, we were without hope.

According to his mercy

God saved us, NOT because of works done by us in righteousness, but, according to his own mercy. Let me read v.5 again.

"5 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," (Titus 3:5)

God saved us according to his MERCY.

There was nothing in us which caused God to save us! God saved us because of his precious, wonderful, tender, loving **mercy**! Oh thanks be to God for his mercy. God's mercy is that tender heart that he had toward us in the terrible condition of our sin and rebellion. God's mercy caused him to desire our good, in spite of the fact that we deserved only punishment. God's mercy caused him to look on us with favor and tenderness, when all we deserved was for him to look upon us with wrath.

God's mercy was so great that in order to save us, he poured out upon his Son Jesus Christ that wrath which we deserved. Oh how costly was the mercy of God towards us. How rich is his mercy.

How He Saved us

Let me read verse 5 again, for it shows us not just the reason that God saved us, which was his mercy, but the **means** by which he saved us.

"5 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," (Titus 3:5)

God saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

This passage describes the washing of regeneration, by which God causes us to be born again. We were dead in our sins and our trespasses. We were not just weak. We were dead. It was in that hopeless condition that God caused us to be born again.

In John 1:11 to 13 Jesus talks about those who were born, not by the works of man or the will of man, but by God. Jesus is describing those who have become children of God. Listen as I read.

*"11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.
12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:11-13 ESV)*

In Ephesians 2:1-4, we read that God made us alive when we were dead in our sins. Listen as

I read.

“1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” (Eph 2:1-6 ESV)

Thanks be to God for his kindness and mercy and love by which he made us alive in Christ, when we had been dead in our sins and trespasses!

Titus 3:5 also declares that God saved us by the **renewal of the Holy Spirit**.

Regeneration speaks of the act by which God made us alive in Christ. **Renewal** describes the **progressive sanctification** that God accomplishes in us through the Holy Spirit. We are renewed day by day, we are renewed every time we confess sin and are forgiven and purified. We are renewed as God progressively conforms us to the image of Jesus Christ. All of this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit

Verse 6 tells us more about how God gives us the Holy Spirit. Let me read verses 5 and 6 together.

“5 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, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,” (Titus 3:5,6)

God poured out the Holy Spirit upon us richly. God gives lavishly. He gives without limit.

We could say so much about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comforts us, he guides us, he teaches us, He empowers us, He gives us spiritual gifts, He seals us, and so much more.

God doesn't just give us a small measure of the Holy Spirit, he poured him out upon us richly. That word richly means abundantly, it means in great measure. God has richly and abundantly poured out his Holy Spirit upon us, so that we are filled with the graces of God through him.

I pray that we would see more and more all that we have from God through the Holy Spirit. All of God's blessings come to us on the merits of Jesus Christ, and by the means of the Holy Spirit.

And note that God poured out the Holy Spirit upon us richly **through Jesus Christ our Savior**. Again, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all active in our salvation. Thanks be to God that we have the Holy Spirit in abundance, and that is through our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

Heirs According to the hope of eternal life

We still need to look at verse 7. Grammati-

cally, verse 7 is the purpose clause of what God did in verse 5. I want to read the first part of verse 5, and then skip the middle part, and go to the purpose clause of verse 7. Follow along with me.

“5 he saved us,... 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:1-8 ESV) (REPEAT)

God saved us so that we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life, and that, being justified by his grace.

God saved us, which was his eternal plan, having predestined us before the foundation of the world, so that we might become heirs, heirs according to the hope of eternal life. We are not heirs of an earthly inheritance which then passes away, we are heirs of an eternal inheritance, which will never pass away.

Let me read what 1Peter 1:3-5 tells us about this inheritance.

“3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1Peter 1:3-5 ESV)

Our inheritance is imperishable, it is undefiled, and it is unfading, and will never lose its value, and it is kept totally safe in heaven for us. And

more than that, **we** are guarded through faith for that salvation, for that eternal and wonderful inheritance, which will be revealed to us when Jesus Christ returns!

There is no earthly blessing which is in any way comparable to our eternal inheritance in the very presence of God! All earthly problems will be totally and eternally forgotten, swallowed up in the full and eternal joy which we will have in the presence of God, all because of Jesus Christ.

God himself will dwell with us, his tabernacle will be with us, and we will see his face and rejoice and worship him for all of eternity!

This is that for which God has saved us.

And that salvation is ours because we are justified by his grace. Our justification, our salvation, is not by our works, our justification before God is totally by grace. It is entirely on the basis of the perfect and complete work of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. We are saved, we are justified, by grace! And being justified by grace we are now heirs of our inheritance, which is according to the hope of eternal life. Our inheritance is for eternal life in the presence of the Father!

Conclusion

And so, in light of what God teaches us in this passage, how should we then live?

If you are a child of God, you have abundant reason to abound in thanksgiving, whatever your earthly situation is today. Indeed, we are called to abound in thanksgiving, and above all, we should thank God for the spiritual blessings which we have in Jesus Christ.

If you are a child of God, I urge you to always reflect upon what was your hopeless estate, and then, to consider the goodness and lovingkindness and mercy and grace of God to us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Oh may these truths be the object of our thoughts and meditations today, and every day, as we

await his appearing.

And if you are NOT a child of God, if you are still in your sin, under the wrath of God, I urge you to flee to Jesus Christ, the only One who can save you from the coming wrath.

Thanks be to God for a great Savior, and a great salvation. Thanks be to God for his goodness and lovingkindness and mercy, all through Jesus Christ, our Lord.