

March 14, 2010
Titus 3:3-4 (-7)

Alright good morning – so glad you are back today! Grab your Bibles and turn to the book of Titus. If you are looking at your watch thinking wow, Brett is up there way earlier than normal – you are right, don't worry. Reality is that everything that we do in our worship service is worship and as often as possible it is all connected together so that we have a corporate worship experience with our Savior around the truth of His Word. Today, where we will end up in our look at the scripture will be best responded to in corporate praise and celebration together. So let's move that direction.

Let me just remind you of the general tone here in chapter three again. The church that Paul is writing to Titus about on the island of Crete existed in a completely pagan culture. The non-Jewish world knew nothing about the Bible – about Christian values – about godly mercy and justice. There was no history of 'cultural Christianity' so there was no Christian influence on behavior.

So these churches were in direct contrast to everything in the framework of life in that society. Now given that understanding, there are many people today in churches who would say what the early church should have done was to make its primary agenda to impact the culture – to get the nations where the church was growing to adopt some kind of politically Christian policy – to put some biblical morality or value system into the societal code.

But they didn't do that. The early church did not concern itself with what the code of the nation was. It was not preoccupied with social behavior or trying to influence culture politically, judicially, or legislatively. **The early church existed to do one thing and that was to reach lost people with the GOSPEL – to move people to LIFE in Christ. That was and that is still the church's PURPOSE – that is why we are in the world.**

Listen to what David Rambo, who was the president of the Christian and Missionary Alliance when he said this, said *"God expects us to be salt in the world but let's do it in the context of God's redeeming love for all men and women. We must focus on the gospel, proclaiming it winsomely to secular people rather than alienating them on matters that are not central to our message."*

In other words – we've got to get on with what we are supposed to be doing. Billy Graham echoed the same theme when he said *"So long as the gospel remains the gospel and the church the church, so long as the church of God is in need of reformation, the world [in need of] mission, and one last person [in need of] salvation, there will always be a future for those who seek to define themselves by the gospel itself."*

We cannot become the enemies of the very people we seek to win to Christ. That's what we began to see in God's blueprint for the relationship of God's church to the world around it last week. What Paul was concerned about is that these churches – **God's blueprint for the church's relationship with the world is that we be able to demonstrate to our society that God SAVES people from sin. And the primary way we do that is with a saved LIFE.**

If I were to tell you that Dr. So and So cures people from cancer, you're going to ask me "Really? Who did he cure? Let me see him?" If I were to tell you that Dr. So and So makes blind people see, you're going to say "Really? Who did he give sight to? Let me see her?" And if I'm going to say to you, God is a saving God who delivers men from their sin and all the hopelessness that goes with it, you're going to say to me, "Really? Show me what a saved person looks like and I'll know whether you're God can do that."

See reaching our world – reaching your world – isn't about cleverness or gimmicks or entertainment or marketing or finding the cultural hot buttons and pushing them. People are saved because a sovereign God redeems them when they hear the powerful testimony of the gospel. We reach them by showing what a saved person looks like and it is so compelling that they want to find out whether God will save them the way He saved those whose lives they've seen.

And that's what this letter of Titus is about – it is God's blueprint for his church – to make sure God's church is in a position to do that. Chapter 1 was about the right leadership – got to have godly elders in leadership. Chapter 2 was about how the Christians are to live in the church – how older men, older women, younger men, younger women, slaves, everybody is to live to put God's saving power on display so that no one can malign the Word of God in verse 5, to silence the critics in verse 8, to make the truth that God is a saving God attractive in every way in verse 10. So we are to be a people eager to do what is good for the glory of our Jesus in verse 14.

And then you come to chapter three and we see that the world is to see our transformed life not only in how we treat each other, but in how we live in the society itself. So last week we studied **verses 1 and 2** – where Paul writes: TEXT

See what makes the gospel believable is not contentious Christians or protesting Christians or politicizing Christians, not Christians who want to curse and damn the media to hell or blow up their politicians. What makes Christianity attractive is people who are covered in the righteousness of Christ and manifest His love.

And in order for us to do that, in order for us to live in verses 1 & 2 – **in order for us to have a proper Christian response to and in a pagan society, we must remember our FORMER CONDITION.** Look at **verse 3** with me. TEXT

Now notice before we take that apart right quick – Paul doesn't say that at one time you were (dot dot dot) as if he's addressing Titus and the believers on Crete alone. No, he says, "but we too" – he includes himself. We've got to start there today. So whether you are a pastor – staff – deacons – teachers – leaders – members of the church – you that have served God for many years – don't hesitate to join in this humiliating confession today. This is true for every single one of us.

He says we too were foolish, disobedient and deceived.

We were **foolish**. We thought we knew – so we would not learn. We thought we knew better than God – we imagined ourselves to be better judges of what was good for us than God. We refused heavenly warnings because we dreamed sin was pleasant and profitable. The word literally means **without knowledge, without understanding**. In other words – **completely IGNORANT. We didn't know what we were DOING.** **Ephesians 4:18** says basically the same thing – that the Gentiles "*are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.*"

You'd think that there is something so reasonable about biblical morality that smart people who study carefully would come to wise conclusions, but they – we – cannot overcome our depravity. No matter how educated, how many PhDs we have - we're blind, ignorant, darkened – foolish.

And then he says we too were **disobedient**. Of course we were disobedient **to GOD and as a consequence to all authority instituted by God**. There is in the heart of man a rebellion – it is bound up in our fallenness as a people. That's why you spank your kids – to knock the rebelliousness under some control. But where the Spirit is not, disobedience runs amuck. As MacArthur says, "*Obedience is distasteful to the obstinate.*"

Then thirdly Paul says – we were **deceived**. This is a great word. It probably doesn't mean what you initially think it means in this context. The word for deceived here literally gives us our word "planet." But he's not making a comment on our obesity – you know "we too were dumb, disobedient, and big as a planet" – that's not what he's saying obviously – but it is the idea of **having no ANCHOR** – not being moored – just wandering around in space. We roam at our impulses – **nothing holds us down – nothing quantifies our lives – nothing qualifies our lives – we just live by what we FEEL.**

Which is why what he says next is that we too were **enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures**. Passion there is really the word **LUSTS** which is all about desires – and in scripture

about **desires for what is forbidden or for in a manner that is forbidden.** So it might be for money, for sex, for power, for food, for alcohol, for drugs, for who knows what all. And he adds **pleasures** to the passions – pleasures gives us the word hedonism – that that is what drives us – we are driven by our pursuit of pleasure – **we lived for what makes us FEEL good** – we followed our passions and pleasures.

And the result he says is that we live **in malice and envy**, being hated and hating one another. Malice is literally just plain wickedness but it has the idea of **malicious WICKEDNESS that wants to hurt or harm or take at any price.** **Envy is that ill will that wants to CONSUME others.**

So look at this – what do we have?

We were ignorant and disobedient people. And because we didn't respond to the truth – we wander all over the place being led only by our own passions and pursuing only our own pleasure – whatever those may be individually. We spent our whole lives on this kind of thing to the extent that we have evil intent toward everybody and just what we want and don't care who pays the price. Which leads ultimately to the end of verse 3 – **being hated and hating one another.**

So SELF-CENTERED that we hate anyone who is an obstacle or a problem or who disagrees with us or stands in our way or takes issue with us. And ultimately we come to the place where deep down we hate everybody but ourselves because that's where depravity ultimately leads. **The ultimate agenda of fallen man – of fallen us – is PRIDE and pride ISOLATES us from everybody else.** That's the picture.

Now how's that for an encouraging stroll down memory lane? Thanks Paul – appreciate that. Why would Paul point that out here?

Because it is so important. First of all like we talked about last week when it comes to slandering the authorities and rulers over us. Connect all that God just reminded us of about who we were to the authorities in this pagan society. I mean really – what do you expect people like that to come up with? Seriously – what kind of system do you think they are going to create? Just keep watching. We're there.

But before we get wrapped up in anger or sadness or fear. Before we rush off to mistreat the pagans who offend us – who are destroying the last remnants of Christian influence. Before that - in divine wisdom, God through Paul says remember your own depravity.

Whether you were a small child when you were saved or an adult – or before you get into thinking “I wasn't like that” – listen God says – yes you were – or you WOULD HAVE BEEN.

As Charles Spurgeon said, “we ought not to take credit to ourselves because of our freedom from evils into which we have no chance of falling. We have not been so bad as others because we could not be. A certain boy has run away from home. Another boy remained at home. Is he, therefore, a better child? Listen – he had broken his leg and could not get out of bed. That takes away all the credit of his staying home. Some men cannot sin in a certain direction and then they say to themselves, “What excellent fellows we are to abstain from this wickedness!” Sirs, you would have done it if you could, and therefore your self-praise is mere flattery. Had you been placed in the same position as others, you would have acted as others have done – for your heart goes after the same idols.”

If we are going to have a proper Christian response in a pagan culture, we must remember our own former condition. Nothing is worse than smug self-righteousness. Nothing is worse than Christians sitting around damning all of the unconverted people because of the fact that we're better than they are. Listen people – the only reason you're not one of them on the way to hell is because of God's grace. We've got to remember that. And that's what God gives us next in verses 4-7. Those verses

are one long sentence that sweeps over the reality of salvation to remind us that the only reason we're different is because of God – not because of us.

Not only is a right view of our PAST necessary for a proper RESPONSE to our world, it is also necessary for a right view of SALVATION which is the only hope for our world. Look at those verses. **Verses 4-7.TEXT**

The only reason you're an heir and the only reason you have a hope of eternal life and the only reason you've been justified and made right with God and the only reason that you have come through Jesus Christ to receive the Holy Spirit and the only reason you've been reborn, renewed and washed – the only reason you've been saved is because God is merciful. That's what he's saying.

Those verses there in Titus 3 are a goldmine for us – we could spend probably the rest of this year and beyond in those words. They span across the great truths of salvation. I'm not going to take the time today to delve in too far, we'll look at it more in the days to come, but for now I want us to feel the impact of what God is saying. Follow me through them again.

Salvation was INITIATED by God – verse 4 – “when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared” – the initiative is with God. He came into the world showing His kindness and love in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. **He SAVED us** – again – His initiation. Not on the basis of something which we had done that was so righteous or good that it earned our salvation – no – but **because of His MERCY.**

He washed us, He gave us new birth, He renewed us through the Holy Spirit. He poured out His Spirit on us through Christ. He justifies us by His grace. He made us heirs and gave us the hope of eternal life. It is all from Him. Praise His Name!

Now – knowing that, can you look at the unbeliever in the world and culture around us who is still just like we read in verse 3 – just like what we would be like – and understand, he's not like me because God has not done for him what God has done for me?

When you are repulsed by the media and their anti-Christian agenda – when you are repulsed by the homosexual activism – the destruction of the family – the farce that passes for justice – the inequality of oppression and opportunity – the deception of politicians and ruler - the degradation of our youth – of women – of the truth – whatever it might be – **Can you look at our society and simply say, “They are that way because God has not yet SAVED them. I'm the way I am because He has saved me.”? That is the perspective we MUST have.**

A proper view of who we were or could be is crucial to a proper response within our pagan society and a proper response to our salvation.

Just close your eyes for a minute and really listen to this truth. Listen – eyes that have wept over our own sin will always be more ready to weep for the sins of others. If you have judged yourself with candor, you will not judge others with severity. You will be more ready to pity than to condemn – more anxious to cover a multitude of sin than to punish a single sinner. Folks – right where you are at – is that experience the heart of your response to our world? Have you wept over your own sin? Have you rightly judged yourself with candor? Is that the where your response to the lost comes from?

Open your eyes and look at me. In all humility and seriousness, if it is not - I wouldn't give much for your supposed salvation - if there is not created in you by your salvation a tender heart that can truly say:

Everyone needs compassion – a love that never fails.

Everyone needs forgiveness – the kindness of my Savior.

For He is the hope of nations.

God's blueprint for His church is that we might shine our light in our lives – in our responses to the world - so the whole world can see that we sing – we live – we are saved – by the risen King.
And his name is Jesus.

“When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us. Not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.”

That's what I want us to respond to right now – both individually and corporately – I want you to respond not only to truth about who we were outside of Christ – but to the truth of our salvation.
Respond to the grace of God in Christ.
Respond to the mercy of God that saves us.
Respond to the forgiveness of God that makes us what we are – children of God forever.

Let's celebrate today that by grace, our God is mighty to save!

(Corporate responsive singing in worship)

Adam – wrap up:

God's blueprint for His church's response to a pagan society requires us to see SALVATION as the only hope for our world and our LIVES as God's plan to reach them.