

March 21, 2010

Titus 3:4-5

Alright good morning and welcome back. Take out your Bibles if you will and turn to Titus chapter 3 with me. We are working our way through our study of Titus together. This letter is of course a compact blueprint from God for how to establish God's church. God's blueprint for its purpose, its leadership, for life within the church, and for its relationship with the world outside. In fact we have been looking the past few weeks at how to answer the question "what is a proper Christian response in the midst of a pagan culture or society?"

God gave us in chapter 2 the purpose of that response – to make the truth about God our Savior attractive in every way. In chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 we saw the actual game plan that we are to follow in our interaction with those outside the church. In verse 3 we saw the key to that response – remembering our condition outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ. And last week we celebrated how verses 4-7 tell us how God changed that condition.

And I mentioned last week how we could spend the rest of this year unpacking the glorious truths of those verses. Relax – we aren't going to do that, but we are going to take a few weeks to look at this together. For a couple of reasons – first of which goes back to the purpose of Titus. Remember this is God's blueprint for establishing His church. And as much as he gives us practical stuff in this letter in so many ways, **the heart of the foundation of God's church is the TRUTH. The doctrine of the Word of God. Specifically the incredible truths of SALVATION.** So it makes sense in this letter that God would have Paul unleash those for us. And it would make sense then that we spend some time looking at them.

The second reason is more assumptive and practical. Most of you in here would claim to be Christians. Great. Most of you probably have a good handle on what you think that means. Great. But if I were to grab this microphone today and come down these steps and randomly ask you to share with us what you would say to lead someone else to Christ – or what you would say to explain what being saved means – what would do? Let's try it.

Just kidding – not going to put you on the spot – but my guess is that most of us panicked right then. Because even if we know we are saved – our ability to really take what we know and express it is a little shaky. In fact – the details of what we really know are more fuzzy than we'd like to admit. That's why this is important. How can we believe in something we can't express – not explain – but express? And I want us to know the glory of our salvation so like Peter says in 1 Peter – we are always ready to give an answer for the hope that we have.

This morning I've asked Govind Manapakkam to come share his story with us. Many of you know Govind – he has been here for a couple of years now – I baptized him earlier this year – and I want you to hear what God did to bring him to that point.

Before he comes though, let's remind ourselves of why we are here today. Let's go back to **verses 3-7 of Titus chapter 3.** TEXT

Govind – you come and share how that has happened in your life.

Thank you so much, Govind – we praise God with you at what He is doing in your life. What God did for Govind – what God has done for all of us who are truly saved – is what this passage in Titus is all about – **SALVATION is the overarching theme of verses 4-7.** Verse 5 is the main point when Paul simply says "He saved us." And we'll look at several of the truths and the doctrines in this section together – regeneration, election, justification, grace, salvation itself – but today I want us to simply focus in on what Paul traces all of it back to. What we saw in Govind's testimony – **what Paul traces it all back to is the kindness, love, and mercy of GOD.**

Go back first to **verse 4** where he says, *"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us..."*

If you are born again – if you were wakened from spiritual death and given eyes to see and ears to hear and a spiritual sense to taste the Jesus is supremely satisfying – if you were given faith to trust in Him – **if you are saved – it is by the KINDNESS of God.** It was the kindness of God that caused him to effect a saving plan. The word there is **chrestotes** in Greek – it means **kindness or GOODNESS – literally a goodness of HEART.**

Paul uses it in **Ephesians 2:7** when he says *“[God made us alive in Christ] in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”*

This kindness means that God has a concern in His heart toward people in misery – **it is the benevolent nature of God. God is INHERENTLY good.**

You can see that truth all through the Word, but it is summed up pretty concisely in **Luke 6:35** where Jesus is teaching and He says: *“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”*

That is the essence of this nature of God – He is kind – even to ungrateful and evil men. It is His nature to be kind and patient to undeserving sinners. The Bible says He lets the rain fall on the just and the unjust. 1 Timothy 4:10 says He is the Savior of all men – not because all men are saved eternally but because temporally He saves all men from the instant death and damnation that we deserve after the first time we sin or have an evil thought. God is good.

And that kindness – that goodness in the nature of God has a purpose. **Romans 2:4** asks *“do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?”*

God is good and God is kind in order that men may have time to REPENT. And so our salvation comes back to the nature of God – to the kindness of our saving God. And people listen to me – the bigger your conception of God, the more amazing this is. God is the Creator of the universe – He holds the galaxies in being – He governs everything that happens in this world from the fall of a sparrow to the change in your hair color. He is infinite ---- and He is kind – and because of this kindness we were born again.

But secondly, Paul explains God's nature behind our salvation with the word love. **If you are saved, it is by the LOVE of God.** *“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared...”*

Now that is a very generic term for us – in English love has almost lost its value. But the word here in Greek is a very interesting one. It isn't a work usually associated with love in the New Testament. It is the Greek work **philanthropia** – which of course gives us our word “philanthropy.” It is only used one other place in the Bible but it means **compassion, an eagerness to deliver from pain or distress because of a STRONG AFFECTION.** That's the idea – a strong affection.

God is kind toward ungrateful and evil man and His kindness causes Him to have a strong affection in which he acts in pity and compassion. Really detailed concept here. The best picture of what it means is best expressed in the story of the prodigal son in **Luke 15.** You know the story and in the illustration, God is the father and we are the son – the unworthy sinner. And the unworthy sinner comes back toward the father and in **verse 20** Jesus says *“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”*

That's the heart of God. **The heart of God is not RELUCTANT to receive the sinner** – He isn't distant or stoic. **He** runs and throws His arms around the sinner and **embraces him** and kisses him **because in His nature is not only that kindness** – in His nature is that philanthropia – **that COMPASSIONATE love and strong affection for man.**

But what Paul says next is so crucial. He says *“when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared...”* – what does that mean? It means that if the kindness and love of God we just talked about stay there in the being of God and don't come down and take human form among us, they would not save anybody.

Here – just like we saw back in chapter 2 verse 11 and just like we saw in 1 John 4 – **this is a reference to the INCARNATION of Jesus Christ.** It isn't that God's kindness and love hadn't been seen in all kinds of ways before, but **the full, visible, personal manifestation of the kindness and love of God came in the PERSON of Jesus Christ.** He was all these things in human form – the eternal God made visible. And when He appeared – the rest of verse 5 – He saved us.

Listen to me – our salvation is owed to the historical work of Christ. We've seen this time and time again but **salvation** – new birth – is not a vague spiritual change disconnected from history. It is **an objective HISTORICAL act of the Spirit of God connecting us by FAITH to the historical, incarnate APPEARING of Jesus so that the life He now has as the crucified and risen Savior has become our life because we are in Him.** Salvation happens because Jesus came into the world as the kindness and love of God and died for sin and rose again.

But there is one more key word – one more key quality of God – of the nature of God – that Paul brings out here that we need to see behind our salvation. The rest of verse 5 says, *“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.”*

Mercy is an awesome word. It is different than the word grace that you see down in verse 7 that we'll talk more about later but as John MacArthur explains: “Grace relates to guilt. Mercy relates to misery. Grace relates to the state of the sinner before God the judge. Mercy relates to the condition of the sinner in his sin. Grace is a judicial concept that forgives the crime. Mercy is a compassionate concept that helps the criminal recover. Mercy looks at misery, grace looks at guilt.”

And here in Titus, he is talking about mercy – that we were saved because of God's mercy, not because of righteous things we had done. **If you are saved, it is by the MERCY of God.**

Church – I love you – but listen – you made no contribution to your salvation. You had no capacity to make a contribution. In no way did you earn it or deserve it. We were hard and resistant and spiritually dead. **God would have been JUST to pass us by – to save no one.** Do you understand that?

But as **Ephesians 2:4-5** explains: *“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions...”*

Paul himself didn't get this at first. Remember how before his conversion by faith, Paul himself had spent his life trying to accumulate enough religious righteousness to accomplish his own salvation. You can see it in Philippians 3 – why don't you turn there with me. In **Philippians 3** he says:

Look, *I was circumcised the eighth day* - when it comes to ritual I had the ritual. I was *of the people of Israel.* I was *of the tribe of Benjamin.* - I had tribal privilege as well as racial heritage. When it comes to being a Hebrew I was *a Hebrew of the Hebrews.* - What does that mean? I was a traditional orthodox Jew. When it comes to the law I chose to *be a Pharisee* because I wanted to take it to the n-th degree. When it comes to *righteousness*, there wasn't one thing in the law for which anybody could hold me blamable. I had done all of it. I had covered every conceivable human base of righteousness and then I realized it was all rubbish. And all those things that once were counted gain to me, he says, *I count it loss for the sake of Christ...* manure, dung, rubbish, garbage, trash, filth. The best of the deeds that I have done were nothing but trash. - He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, that's trash.

Then in Philippians 3:9 Paul says, I threw it all aside for the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord *“and [to be] found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”*

And that's mercy...that's mercy. **We DESERVE wrath, we RECEIVE salvation.** Why? Because **God is kind and God has compassion love which is EXPRESSED in mercy toward miserable sinners.**

See God knows our tendencies. He knows that we tend to think that if something good happens to us, it must be because we did something good. So he warns us here – don't buy into it.

Listen – whether you were saved as an adult like Govind and were able to see and understand from your own life experience from the outside in what Paul is explaining here or if you were saved as

a child and simply believed the truth when you were taught it and through continued spiritual growth and education came to see the same thing from the inside out – this is how it happened.

God was merciful to you – undeserved, unearned, uninfluenced, mercy expresses God’s amazing kindness and God’s amazing love toward sinners even though He is perfectly holy. Sovereign mercy led God to kindly and lovingly grant forgiveness and eternal glory to pitiful sinners and that’s what it means when Paul says “He saved us not by righteous things we had done but...” – by His kindness – by His love – by His mercy.

That is the very NATURE of God.

The next time you wonder about His kindness – look at your SALVATION. The next time you wonder about His love – look at the CROSS. The next time you wonder about His mercy – look at your continued saved LIFE.

When we see where it starts (in the heart of God) – and we know where it ends (in our salvation) – there is nothing that can shake the reality of our God and His worthiness of our worship. That’s where the explanation of your salvation begins – the heart of God – the kindness, love, and mercy of God our Savior.