

TBC – 4/6/03 a.m.

THE KINDNESS AND LOVE OF GOD

Titus 3:4-7

Intro: You probably have noticed that in both of our services today I am speaking on verses that are a part of our Bible memory work for this year. I don't know when I have enjoyed our memory verses more than I have this year, even though this is the second year that we have been through this particular book, *Bible Verses Everyone Should Know*.

One of the verses in my text for this morning, verse 5, is in Assignment 11, and my message tonight will be an exposition of Hebrews 11:6 which is in Assignment 12. And actually I have been asked to speak on Titus 3:5. But it is hard to get the full message of verse 5 without including the verse which precedes it, and at least the two verses which follow it.

As I began my preparation for this morning, the first thing that I did was to read through the whole epistle. It doesn't take long to do this with a short epistle like Paul's letter to Titus. I wanted to find out why Paul devoted this much space to what is really the Gospel. And most of you know without looking through the epistle again that this is the second such passage in Titus. In chapter 2, verses 11 through 14, he did the same thing. That is another Gospel passage. (Read.)

However, right from the beginning of this epistle, and running through the epistle there is an emphasis on two very important truths. The first is the Gospel, and the second is that there is definitely a change of life that is to be expected when one really believes the Gospel.

On the Gospel, note the first three verses of the epistle.

And then notice one of the requirements for a bishop, or elder in the ninth verse of chapter 1.

We see from the latter part of chapter 1, beginning with verse 10, that Paul was greatly concerned about the false teachers who were already in Crete, and you can see from verse 12 that the Cretans were not very best candidates for establishing a godly church on that island.

In chapter 2 Paul went down the line point out to him what changes believing sound doctrine should make on the lives of the older men, then the older women, and how they should teach the younger women. Then

he moved on to give instructions for young men, and finally servants. I don't know why Paul didn't address masters also, but it may be because there were no masters at that time who had been saved. But that is just a guess on my part. Paul wanted all of those people to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." By adorning the doctrine he meant that they were to show in their lives how they had been changed by the Gospel. And so he repeated the Gospel again in 2:11-14 followed by Paul's personal exhortation to Timothy.

It is good to notice that Paul does not draw a distinction between the Gospel and the Christian life. People do not have true faith unless their lives are changed.

At the beginning of chapter 3 Paul told Titus to remind the believers that they were to be subject to their governmental authorities, and to be humble toward all men, remembering what they themselves used to be. And that brings him to the Gospel again in verses 4 through 7, showing also in 8 that a godly life is inseparable from belief in the Gospel. And then in verses 9 and 10 he told Titus what he and the people in the church were to avoid.

The word "gospel" does not actually appear in Paul's letter to Titus, but nevertheless his emphasis upon the Gospel runs right through this epistle. And verses 4 through 7 are four of the verses where the Apostle was speaking specifically about the Gospel.

The first thing that I would point out to you concerning our text, is to call your attention to:

I. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN VERSE 3 AND 4-5a (Titus 3:3-5a).

Paul began what is chapter 3 in our Bibles by exhorting Titus to remind the people about being submissive and humble in their relationships with people in the world. And he explained in verse 3 *why* should be. And so he said, "For . . ." He was saying, in effect, that when you stop to remember what we were like before we were saved, then that should make us more patient and understanding of those who are now like we used to be. He was not excusing their sins, but he was seeking to quiet the criticism which often keeps us from being helpful to people who need the Lord. After all, the change that has taken place in our lives, is not to our credit. God has made the change; we didn't make it. All of us apart from the

saving grace of God are “foolish, disobedient, deceived,” and so on right to the end of the verse. Sin has done nothing to help any of us, but it has done plenty to ruin us.

But what made the change? “For” in verse 3 and “but” in verse 4 are important words to help us understand what the Apostle Paul was telling Titus.

I used to think that the word “appeared” here in verse 4 was speaking about the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. But that is not the point at all. Paul was talking about when by the preaching of the Gospel on the island of Crete, and the work of the Holy Spirit, people’s eyes and hearts were opened to the Gospel. They understood why the Lord Jesus Christ had come to the earth. They understood why He had died. They believed in His resurrection. It was an amazing revelation of the depth of their own need, and they had been drawn to Christ, and saved!

Paul used exactly the same word, “appeared” (ἐπεφάνη) in verse 14 of chapter 2. Paul was not saying that “all men” have come to understand the Gospel, but that as time as gone on “the grace of God has appeared to all (kinds of) men.” When “the grace of God,” or “the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man” appears to us, all kinds of lights go on. The Gospel makes sense to us. We understand why Christians have wanted us to be saved. But it is not until all of this *appears to us* that our hearts are open and receptive to the Gospel.

This is what Paul was talking about in 1 Cor. 2:9 and 10 where he wrote,
9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

You see, what God has revealed in His Word, has to be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. This is how we are saved. We don’t argue people into salvation. We give them the Gospel, and then pray that the Lord will give them understanding so that they will be saved.

I am sure that many of you remember when “the kindness and love of God toward man appeared” to you for the first time. The Gospel just didn’t make any sense before, but then it made all kinds of sense! It may not have happened in an instant of time, but you suddenly realized that the

Gospel you had not understood, and perhaps, like the Apostle Paul, had hated, suddenly became not only clear, but very, very precious to you. And you were saved! Perhaps you trusted in the Lord before anyone told you to. This is what we need to be praying for, and expecting, when the Gospel is being preached, whether to one person, or to a whole crowd. We pray, “Lord, make yourself known to the hearts of sinners.” I am not talking about some kind of a vision, but an inner conviction that the Gospel is not only true, but that it is the only Gospel of salvation.

This is what had taken place on the island of Crete, and so Paul had left Titus there to get a church established for the edification of those who had been saved, and for their testimony to others on the island in the hope that they would be saved, too.

Why were people in Crete saved 2,000 years ago, and why have we been saved? Was it because we deserved it? Was it because we were working for it – “by works of righteousness which we have done”? No, not at all. It was because of “the kindness and the love of God our Savior.” Or skipping down to verse 5 it was “according to His mercy He saved us.” Or going back to verse 11 of chapter 2, it was “the grace of God” that brought us “salvation.”

Paul used this same word “kindness” in Rom. 2:4 where it is translated “goodness.” Let me read that verse to you:

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Rom. 2:4).

Trench defined this word as that which pervades and penetrates the whole nature of God, “mellowing there all that would have been harsh and austere” (p. 233). God is kind and gentle and gracious toward those whom He is saving, as compared to the wicked with whom He is angry every day.

And it is easy to see evidence of God’s great love for His people in that, while we were like all others, sinners, ungodly, at enmity with Him, and yet before any of that was changed, Christ died for us.

When we add to these “His mercy,” which is mentioned in verse 5, we see that instead of leaving us in the misery which is always caused by sin, ending ultimately in eternal death, God extends His mercy to those whom He saves. He has delivered us from sin’s penalty by the death of His Son,

by which death we are also delivered from the dominion of sin here and now, and will ultimately be delivered from sin altogether when we are glorified, and made like our Lord.

But now we ask:

II. HOW IS OUR SALVATION DESCRIBED HERE? (Titus 3:5b-6).

Notice the two expressions at the end of verse 5:

- 1) "By the washing of regeneration."
- 2) "And renewing of the Holy Spirit."

What do they mean?

It seems that the Apostle Paul was using these two terms to express the whole of the work of salvation. The Greek word for "regeneration" is *παλιγγενεσία*, and it means *a new birth*. This word is only used once in the NT for people; it is used in Matt. 19:28 for the regeneration of all of creation. But the idea of regeneration is used over and over in the NT. Cf. John 1:12-13; 3:3-8 (where it is attributed to the Spirit of God); 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 2:29; 3:9. Also see 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:5; 4:24 and others.

This is a work of God, a work in which man has no part. Even the fact that we believe is evidence that God's work of regeneration has taken place since faith itself is a gift from God. It is called a washing because there is a thorough cleansing that takes place at salvation. Forgiveness is a part of the cleansing. This is not physical, but spiritual; inward and not outward.

The renewing of the Holy Spirit follows regeneration. Regeneration makes renewal possible. Regeneration takes place once and for ever, and it results in an immediate change. The renewing is a process. It is what we know as sanctification. Both are a work of the Holy Spirit. But we have responsibilities in connection with the renewal, such as reading the Word, seeking to obey the Word and submitting ourselves daily to the will of God. We seek the blessing of the Lord upon our renewal in prayer. These two expressions give us a wonderful picture of what it means to be saved, and what will always result in the life of a believer in Christ. This is salvation! And notice verse 6, speaking of this salvation: "Which He [meaning God] shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ

our Savior.”

Be sure to notice in verse 4 that our salvation originated with God. It is made effective in our lives by the Holy Spirit. And it is through our Lord Jesus Christ that we have been given the Holy Spirit. Already in Titus 2:14 the Apostle Paul has made it clear that it was only by our Lord’s death on the Cross that our salvation has been secured for us.

So our salvation is a work of all three Members of the Godhead. But now we come to the last point in our text:

III. WHERE DOES ALL OF THIS ULTIMATELY TAKE US? (Titus 3:7).

Having been justified, declared righteous, through the sacrifice of Christ, “we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

One of our passages in our memory work in Assignment 13 is 1 Pet. 1: 3-5:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5).

As wonderful as our salvation is as we know it now, there is more to come, and what is to come is better. Paul said, agreeing with Peter, that we are “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). Paul called it here, “the hope of eternal life.” He did not say that he hoped he had eternal life. That is not what he meant. “Hope” as he used it speaks of what is yet future, but it is absolutely certain. It is as the Apostle John said in 1 John 3:2-3, the hope not only of being with the Lord, but of being like the Lord, “for we shall see Him as He is.” Then we will really understand what it means that now we have eternal life.

Concl: I want to close with an illustration I have used before, but if you have heard it, I hope it will help you to hear it again.

During my years at Multnomah we had an annual missionary conference which missionaries from all over the world came together for a week of

great blessing. One of the missionaries had for years been the General Director of what is known now as The Evangelical Alliance Mission. He always had some unusual comments or illustrations for us. One year he told about seeing a sign posted outside of a building that was just being constructed. And the sign said this:

Under construction,
Open for observation,
But don't pass judgment until the job is finished.

And he thought to himself, "That is what a Christian is – under construction, open to observation, but we shouldn't pass judgment on each other until the Lord has finished the job.

Paul was speaking in this passage about a Christian during this period when we are under construction and open (sometimes, unfortunately) for observation, but how amazed we all are going to be when the work of salvation in all of us is finished.

Let those of us who are saved thank the Lord for that day we first understood the kindness and love-of-God our Savior first appeared to us, and we knew that God was dealing with us, and we understood the Gospel for the first time. How wonderful it has been to get to know the Lord more and more since that time! And how wonderful to know that there is more to come when we get to heaven and finally see the Lord.

But it has been my prayer in preparing for this service that if there are any present today who have not understood these things, but you do now, and perhaps for the first time the Gospel is clear to you, and you are trusting in Christ even before I urge you to do so. This is how the Lord works. Thank Him for showing you that it is not what you can do for God that brings you salvation. No one has ever been able to do that. It is what Christ did on the Cross when He died for our sins that secures our salvation, which leads to a life of continuing renewal as we walk daily in fellowship with Him and in submission to His will. And our hope is that someday the work will be finished when we are forever with the Lord.