

God Saved Us  
Titus 3:4-7  
ABC 3/7/21

Last week we looked at Titus 3:3 as Paul told Titus what we all were before salvation. 3

It's an ugly picture, isn't it? But even in vs 3 there's a note of hope. What is it? **We too were once...**

What does that tell us? We're no longer that way. We can now live out vss 1-2.

How did we move from vs 3 to being able to do what vss 1 & 2 say? Because of our text today.

What happened? *But God saved us!* In these 4 vss we see the glorious gospel. 4-7

In the simple phrase, **He saved us**, we have the core of the Christian faith. It's all about God saving sinners. The word **saved** can mean physical deliverance. It was a word used to describe rescuing someone from danger or keeping them safe from harm. It's used in this way in Mt 8:25, where the disciples were in a storm on the sea of Galilee & cried out, **Save us, Lord; we are perishing!** So **saved** speaks of rescuing someone in imminent, grave, & serious danger. In the spiritual sense, which is how the NT usually uses it, it has the idea of being rescued from sin & its power & penalty. It's being preserved safe & unharmed from God's just wrath & eternal punishment.

1. God Saved Us Remember, Paul's telling Titus to teach the Cretans how to live. In chpt 2 it was how to live within the church. In chpt 3 it's how to live in an ungodly world. They were to remember the only reason they're different is because **God saved** them. They aren't to live with smug self-righteousness, looking down on everybody with a condemning attitude. They weren't to live hostile to a pagan culture, contentious, fighting, demeaning, & abusing the people in it. No, they were to realize the only reason they're not a part of that culture is because **God saved** them. We too must live in our culture with mercy & compassion & recognize the tragic condition of the lost of which we once were. Don't resent them. Don't hate them. Don't treat them with contempt or unkindness. Don't feel superior or smarter or better. Because we were once the same as they are. But God **saved us**. This phrase, **He saved us**, states the truth that salvation is totally God's doing. Paul's emphasizing the independent, uninfluenced sovereignty with which God saves. We couldn't do anything about our condition. We were hopeless, dead in our trespasses & sins. We could do

nothing & yet **He saved us**. Paul gives 7 facets of God saving us & they all flow around the phrase, **He saved us**.

#### **A. By His Kindness 4a**

**Kindness** is genuine goodness & generosity of heart. Our salvation from sin & death came wholly from God's **kindness**, His loving, compassionate, & gracious concern to draw us to Himself & redeem us from sin forever. It's God's innate nature to be kind to undeserving sinners. He is patient, forbearing, & good. In Lk 6:35 Jesus said, **love your enemies, & do good ... & you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful & evil men**. Rom 2:4 tells us not to **think lightly of the riches of His kindness & restraint & patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance**. The **kindness** of God had to lead us to repentance or we'd still be in vs 3. When you understand how truly lost we were, God's **kindness** is truly amazing. God found us. While blind, He made us see. One way we show we have His nature & are His children is when we show **kindness** to those who don't deserve it or to those who hate us. The foundation for our showing **kindness** to others is that we have experienced the **kindness** of God the Father. He is kind & His **kindness** reaches out to unworthy sinners like us. He saved us by His **kindness**.

#### **B. By His Love 4**

The reason that God loved this evil world & sent His Son wasn't that the world was so loveable. It was because God is so loving. The fact that He loved sinful rebels such as us shows the magnitude of His great **love**. Salvation is based on God's **kindness** & **love**. **Love for mankind** is one word in the Greek from which get our word *philanthropy*. But the way the Bible uses it of God goes even deeper. It's far more than thinking of others & helping them out. It includes a deep affection, fondness, compassion, & an eagerness to deliver someone from pain, trouble, or danger. This **love** goes beyond emotions & finds ways to express itself in actions (Acts 28:2). This is a practical love. God is kind toward sinful people & His **kindness** causes Him to have a **love** out of which He acts in pity & compassion. Think of it: There is God in His glory, perfectly holy. Here in the world is sinful man & it's God's nature to be kind to fallen man. Out of that kindness comes God's **love** & compassion. The **kindness** of God & His **love for mankind appeared**. When did they appear? Just as

in 2:11, it's a reference to the incarnation. It isn't that they'd never appeared before. But the full, visible, personal manifestation of the **kindness & love** of God came in the person of Jesus Christ. **The kindness of God our Savior & His love for mankind appeared** when Jesus Christ, the eternal God, took on human flesh & entered this world to die as the substitute for our sins. He was **kindness & love** incarnate. He was the eternal God made visible. & all of the Father's attributes that loved sinners were made visible in Jesus. If you ever wonder whether God loves sinners, look to Jesus & what He did for us. We couldn't rescue ourselves. It was the **kindness & the love** of God that appeared in Christ that started that rescue operation. **For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son ...** (Jn 3:16).

### **C. By His Mercy 5a**

The Greek word order reads *not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy He saved us*. This is saying as strongly & clearly as possible that our salvation wasn't based on anything we'd done, would do, or could do. We make no contribution to our salvation. In no way can we earn, deserve, or contribute to our salvation. Our rescue & transformation, our deliverance from sin, death, & hell come from God & God alone. Every religion but Christianity teach that somehow our good works play a part in our salvation. But the Bible plainly & frequently denies that our works have any part in saving us. Is 64:6 tells us all our righteous deeds are as filthy rags in God's sight. Paul told Timothy that God...

**has saved us & called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose & grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death & brought life & immortality to light through the gospel** (2 Tim 1:9-10).

Here Paul credits salvation to God's **mercy**. Our salvation isn't something we do, it's something God does for us & to us & in us because of His mercy. His kindness caused Him to **love** & His **love** caused Him to be merciful. **Mercy** has been defined as *the self-moved, spontaneous loving-kindness of God which causes Him to deal in compassion & tender affection with the miserable & distressed*.<sup>1</sup> **Mercy** has also been explained as the withholding of what we deserve (which is God's

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<sup>1</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert

wrath & punishment) whereas **grace** is the giving of what we don't deserve (eternal life). Sometimes they seem almost synonymous. We deserve wrath, we receive salvation. We are saved by God's **mercy**, not by our merit. By Christ's dying, not by our doing. God was merciful & His mercy led Him to kindly & lovingly grant forgiveness to sinners & that's what it means when it says He saved us by His **kindness**, by His **love**, & by His **mercy**.

**D. By His Regeneration & Renewing** The critical aspect & center of this passage is vs 5. God **saved us ... by the washing of regeneration & renewing...** This is the cause of our salvation, what the Triune God does, not what we do. **Washing of regeneration** refers to the new birth, of being born again. When God **saves us**, He raises us from spiritual death to life (Eph 2:5). We were as active in being born again as we were in being born the 1<sup>st</sup> time. In other words, God is active & we are passive. We don't choose to be born again any more than Lazarus chose to come from death to life when Jesus cried out, **Lazarus, come forth** (Jn 11:43). Js 1:18 plainly states, **In the exercise of His will He, God, brought us forth by the word of truth....** The new birth is God's doing, according to His will.

**Regeneration** isn't a word for an ongoing or repeated activity. It refers to an entirely new reality. It's used in Mt 19:28 where Jesus says to His disciples, **Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon 12 thrones ...** The context is the future kingdom when everything is made new. It speaks of this as **the regeneration**, like a re-birth of creation (Rom 8:14-23). **Regeneration** is a one-time thing. But **renewing** is an ongoing work. In Rom 12:2 it says we are to **be transformed by the renewing of your minds**. There it's a continual transforming renewal. Here in Titus it's tied with the saving work of the Holy Spirit. This **renewing** begins at **regeneration** & continues through life until we see Jesus & become like Him (1 Jn 3:2). While God creates the new nature by the power of His Spirit, we must walk in the Spirit & be transformed through God's Word in order to experience this ongoing renewal. Again, here's the picture: We are sinners dead in our trespasses & sins, hopelessly lost. We can do nothing to save ourselves. God comes to us & regenerates us & gives us life. & in the

process washes & cleanses us. The old life was filthy, a dead, decaying, vile corpse. But now, by God's work, it's washed & regenerated in new birth & constant renewal. & this is...

**E. By the Holy Spirit** Salvation demonstrates God's **kindness, love, & mercy**. It demonstrates His power to give life, cleanse, & renew, which He does by the Holy Spirit. The effect of **regeneration** is new life. & that new life emerges out of new birth which is effected by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who regenerates renews us. 2 Cor 5:17 says, **if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature**. Paul also writes, **do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God** (1 Cor 6:19). We are whole new creations, we walk in newness of life, we have put on the new man. Life is totally renewed. It's not like it used to be in any way, shape, or form. We have a new identity. We have new longings & desires. That's the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Of course, there's some mystery as to how this all works in relation to our own heart & will. One attempt to explain it is the Westminster Confession of Faith, which speaks of God...

*enlightening their minds spiritually & savingly to understand the things of God, (Acts 26:18, 1 Cor 2:10,12, Eph 1:17-18) taking away their heart of stone, & giving unto them an heart of flesh; (Ezek 36:26) renewing their wills, &, by His almighty power, determining them to that which is good, (Ezek 11:19, Phil 2:13, Dt 30:6, Ezek 36:27) & effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: (Eph 1:19, Jn 6:44- 45) yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace. (Ps 110:3, Jn 6:37, Rom 6:16-18).*

The *Articles of Dort* explain it this way. God's regenerating grace doesn't...

*abolish the will & properties of the will, or violently constrain it, but doth spiritually revive it, heal it, rectify it, & powerfully yet gently bend it: so that where formerly the rebellion of the flesh, & stubbornness did domineer without control, now a willing & sincere obedience to the Spirit begins to reign; in which change the true & spiritual rescue & freedom of our will doth consist...*

How exactly these great theological truths intersect is something my little brain struggles with, but I still believe what the Bible says. Salvation is of the Lord & anyone who believes will be saved. Salvation is all of God & yet we choose to place our faith in Him. But even that faith is a gift of God to us.

The fact that God loved sinful rebels such as we were shows the magnitude of His great love. Thus, salvation, regeneration, & renewal aren't based on our good deeds, but rather on God's **kindness, love, mercy, & grace** working in us through His Holy Spirit. Isaiah 53:6 says we all like sheep **have**

**gone astray** turning whichever way we want to go (that's what our will & choices get all of us, the wrong way). We're in need of a Shepherd to rescue us as we'd never go the right way without Him carrying & leading us to green pastures. We're described as lost in need of someone to find us. We don't find the Savior; the Savior finds us. We're described as captives who have no way to pay our own ransom & not even aware of our bondage. We're described as slaves to sin with no hope of freeing ourselves by our own will power or works. Our only hope is for a Master to choose us & redeem us from the market place of slaves to sin. We're spiritually blind & unable to see & in need of a miracle if we'll ever see the Lord. We're spiritually dead, insensitive, & immovable by spiritual things (Eph 2:1). We're motionless, lifeless, & hopeless (12). Our natural heart is evil, corrupt, deceitful, desperately wicked, depraved, & incurably sick. Yet God **saved us...by the Holy Spirit whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior** (6). Every Christian receives the Holy Spirit which God has poured out on us **richly**. This language is similar to Acts 2 that quotes Joel's prophecy about the Holy Spirit being poured out. Through the work of Jesus in saving us, the Holy Spirit is **richly** poured out in our life. When Paul speaks of **the washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit** it's reminiscent of the ministry of the Holy Spirit prophesied in Ezekiel 36. In vs 25-27 God says,

**Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, & you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness & from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart & put a new spirit within you; & I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh & give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you & cause you to walk in My statutes, & you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

Notice the removal of our stony heart & the implanting of a new heart & spirit from God, which causes us to obey Him. This isn't heart renovation, it's heart replacement. Notice also the repeated, **I will**, by God which results in that we **will be careful to observe His ordinances**. So we don't think we had something to do with this, vs 32 says, **"I am not doing this for your sake," declares the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed & confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"** It goes on in chpt 37,

**The hand of the LORD was upon me, & He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD & set me down in the middle of the valley; & it was full of bones. He caused me to pass among them round about, & behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; & lo, they were very dry. He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" & I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones & say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' "Thus**

says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life (1-5).

Vs 11 continues, Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up & our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' "Therefore prophesy & say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will open your graves & cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; & I will bring you into the land of Israel. "Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves & caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. "I will put My Spirit within you & you will come to life, & I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken & done it," declares the LORD (11-14).

This is primarily about a future regeneration of the Jewish nation, both physically & spiritually. They'll be restored to the land & to their Lord. There are some unique promises given to Israel here, & the fullness of Israel's spiritual regeneration won't be fulfilled until the end times conversion of Israel that Paul speaks of in Rom 11. But until that day, the NT is also clear that the spiritual benefits of the New Covenant & promised ministry of the Holy Spirit is experienced on a personal level by all believers, Jew or Gentile. **The Holy Spirit** gives us spiritual life, sustains our spiritual life, empowers our spiritual life, & guarantees our spiritual life will become eternal life, because He is the seal, or guarantee of it (Eph 1:13-14). When we understand something of what the Holy Spirit has done for us in **regeneration** we must be moved to say, *Blessed by God that the gospel of Christ is one of sovereign, efficacious, irresistible regeneration.*<sup>2</sup>

**F. Through His Son** All of this, Paul says, is **through Jesus Christ our Savior**. Titus 3 has all 3 members of the Trinity involved in this grand work of salvation. God the Father (4), Holy Spirit (5), & Jesus (6). This entire renewal by the Spirit comes through God's generous, rich, & abundant) pouring out made possible **through Jesus Christ our Savior** (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; 10:45). The whole of the Godhead, Father, Son, & Holy Spirit, join forces in accomplishing our salvation.<sup>3</sup> Notice God saved us by His **kindness, love, & mercy**. He saved us by the **washing of regeneration** & by the **renewing** of the Holy Spirit. & God saved us **through Jesus Christ our Savior**. We wouldn't even have this list without this one, would we? The person & work of Jesus made all aspects of salvation possible. That's why Peter said, **this Man, Jesus, delivered over by the predetermined plan & foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death** (Acts 2:32). Jesus

<sup>2</sup> John Murray

<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes & Bryan Chapell, [1 & 2 Timothy & Titus: To Guard the Deposit](#), p 362

came to pay the price for sin & to conquer death. God's justice had to be satisfied & the wages of sin is death & somebody had to die. Jesus paid the wages. He satisfied the justice of God, the price was paid, death was conquered & it's through **Jesus Christ our Savior** that He saved us. We were saved by the substitutionary & atoning sacrifice of **Jesus Christ our Savior**. His death in our place & for us is the means, the only means, of our salvation. Because Jesus paid the price for our sins, they are graciously removed. God's justice is fully satisfied & His **kindness, love, mercy, regeneration, renewing, & grace** are enabled to act. We don't deserve to have our sins removed, to be forgiven, to have Christ's own righteousness credited to us, to be given heavenly citizenship, to be justified, sanctified, & one day glorified in the very presence of our gracious Savior & Lord. We have all of this because **He saved us**. Finally, He did this...

**G. By His Grace** In other passages, the **being justified** in vs 7 is said to be by faith or as in Eph 2:8, **by grace through faith**. Here in Titus it's *because of grace* or *on the basis or grounds of grace*. God's **grace** is the reason, the instrument that saves us, because of the work of Christ, His life, death, & resurrection. Faith is technically the means, not the cause of our salvation. It's the channel, what salvation is through. Paul doesn't even mention *faith* here because His emphasis is so fully on God doing the saving. To be **justified** is for God to declare the sinner righteous because He imputes the righteousness of Jesus to us at the instant we believe (Rom 3-4). God doesn't justify the sinner by crediting faith to us as our righteousness. No, the merit of Jesus, His perfect righteousness is credited to us *through faith in Christ*. As Paul says here, justification comes to us by God's **grace** & is in no way earned by our faith. Salvation is **not on the basis of deeds which we** have done, but on the basis of God's **kindness, love, mercy, & grace**. God's **grace** pardons & forgives & saves us by the sacrifice of Jesus. **Grace** takes the righteousness of God & imputes it to us, puts it to our account, declaring us righteous & just in God's eyes because Jesus has made atonement for our sins. He paid the price & therefore our sins are removed, justice is fully satisfied, & God's **kindness, love, mercy, & grace** can act freely. We are justified by His **grace**. We don't deserve it. We don't deserve to have our sin removed. We don't deserve to be given the righteousness of Christ. We don't deserve to be just before God. We don't deserve to come into His presence. We don't deserve



heaven. But God's **grace** gives it to us because God's justice is satisfied in Christ & He declares us justified.

It's not your faith that saves you. It's Christ that saves those who have faith. The object of faith is what's critical & that's Christ alone, not Christ plus anything else. We can't be righteous by our works. We must be declared righteous by God's work. It's not merely *not guilty*, as our courts might say. This is instead a declaration that someone is innocent & righteous. This is possible because Christ's perfect righteousness has been credited to us & our guilt & sin was paid for by Jesus in this great exchange & divine transfer. God **made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him** (2 Cor 5:21).

**2. The Result** at the end of vs 7 of all of this is that we would be **heirs according to the hope of eternal life**. He saves us for what reason? That instead of living in the fear of death, hell, & under the power of sin, we might be **heirs of eternal life** & live in the hope of heaven. In other words, He rescues us to change our eternal destiny & to fill our hearts with **hope** instead of dread. To make us, as Paul says, **heirs of God & fellow heirs with Christ** (Rom 8:17), to give to us, as Peter says, **an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, & will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you** (1 Pt 1:4). All that is Christ's is ours. We don't experience it all in this life, but it's laid up for us in heaven, as secure as the promises of God. **Hope** doesn't carry any uncertainty, but that our inheritance is still in the future & not yet fully realized. We are **heirs**, written in the will of God. If you're an **heir**, you should live accordingly. Gal 4 gives us insight into this.

**When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; & if a son, then an heir through God** (4-7).

Let's close with Eph 2, which puts everything together as well as any text in God's Word.

**But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us *alive* together with Christ (by *grace* you have been saved), & raised us up with Him, & seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; & that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast** (4-9).

This is what makes God so amazing. While we were dead, He made us alive. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. We aren't rescued because of our response, incentive, or initiative. We respond because we were given new life by God, by His initiative & intervention. The One we once resisted becomes irresistible & we're made willing to believe. Yes, we exercise faith, but even that isn't of ourselves, the whole thing is the gift of God. There's no way we can boast or take any credit for any part of our salvation because it's all of God. He rescued us, regenerated us, resurrected us, raised us up, ransomed us, redeemed us, replaced our sinful heart, & re-created us. Nothing in ourselves can account for this. God must impart in us a new nature. Nothing in us could cause our **regeneration**. It's a supernatural work of God. Nothing in us can account for this. That's why Jesus told Nicodemus, you need a new birth & unless you're born again you won't see the kingdom of God (Jn 3). This is what's going on in Titus 3. This is how degenerate sinners become regenerate. This is how slaves of sin are saved. This is how the blind are given sight. This is how the spiritual dead are given spiritual life. This is what inspired the famous hymn by John Newton, *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, & grace my fears relieved*. It was all of God & His amazing, wretch-saving, lost-finding, sight-giving, heart-teaching, fear-instilling, soul-relieving, safe-keeping, danger-protecting, home-leading, praise-inspiring grace. All of this results in the most immense & amazing benefit to undeserving sinners. We're made **heirs**, joint heirs with Christ of all that God possesses according to the hope of eternal life. Why? How did this happen? Did we do anything? No. God felt kindly toward us. He loved us compassionately. He showed us mercy. He washed us from our sins. He gave us new life. He put His Holy Spirit in us. He graciously poured out His righteousness upon us & made us heirs of future glory forever in heaven. He did it all. Paul's message to Titus, these Cretan Christians, & all the rest of us is that as we're living in a godless culture we're not to sit in self-righteous condemnation of that culture. Instead we must be grateful that God in His sovereignty saved us. Don't look at the world as the enemy. They're the ones we're to reach in love. Just as God saved us, it's His desire to save those around us. PRAY

Communion – Paul writes in Rom 5,

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; & we exult in hope of the glory of God. & not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; & perseverance, proven character; & proven character, hope; & hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. & not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation (1-11).

If God has saved you, remember Him with us through the elements of communion.

Bread -- **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** We remember His death for our salvation as we eat of the bread together.

Cup -- **Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him.** We remember His death for our salvation as we drink of the cup together.