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TITUS 3:1-15

Today we finish up our study of the book of **Titus**. We've seen that Paul had left Titus in Crete to

- establish and organize churches
- expose and refute false teachers
- and encourage and equip the saints.

The Bible teaches that the Christian life is **progressive**.

A person hears the Gospel, and he is convicted that he is a sinner. He realizes that he is helpless to save himself.

He believes in and accepts Jesus Christ as His Savior as his Lord and he is born again.

At that moment, the Holy Spirit comes to live within him and he is as saved as he will ever be!

But, does this person know all there is to know about the Christian life and godly principles?

Does he know Bible doctrine?

Does he know correct Christian behavior?

The Bible teaches that just as new born babies must **progress from milk to solid food, so must a new Christian.**

Some new-born Christians have an insatiable hunger and an unquenchable thirst for the Word of God from the very beginning!

However, other new-born Christians stay babies for years! Maybe they get caught up in school or career or marriage. **Something** or **someone** takes priority. Perhaps there is just simply no one around to disciple them, and they allow the flesh to overrule and override the Spirit.

But, you know, God never intended His children to stay babies. Just as there is something very sad about a child who doesn't develop and progress, there is something sadder about a child of God who doesn't develop and progress.

There should come a time in the life of every Christian when he gets serious about his relationship with Jesus Christ.

Salvation is the free gift from the Father to us by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ...we cannot do one thing to earn it... we cannot add to or take away from what God has made available to us at Calvary...**but we can surely stifle the work of the Holy Spirit, can't we?**

I said all that to simply say this...I believe we see in today's lesson a very **practical application of sound doctrine**. When sound doctrine is applied to our lives, and we seek to behave according to that sound doctrine, then the Holy Spirit is able to work in us so much more effectively.

In this chapter Paul gives us more standards by which Christians are to live.

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Folks don't want to be held to any standards, do they? We live in a day of "If it feels good, do it." and "How can it wrong when it feels so right."

Things have gone so far in our country, just in **our** lifetime, that to the average person, there are no absolutes. No right! No wrong!

Most Americans will tell you that they believe in God...but most Americans will also say, "**Don't impose God's standards on me. This is a different time...a different culture...those things don't apply today.**"

Well, God's Word tells us that God never, ever changes.

The many biblical teachings and standards...

- prayer in public schools...
- Bible reading in public schools...
- the Ten Commandments displayed on public or government property...
- nativity scenes allowed on display on government property...

The many biblical teachings and standards that our great country was established upon...

These are gone or are going!

And what do we have?

A society of broken homes

- materialism, greed, "self-expression", addiction of all kinds...
- violence in the schools, violence in the streets, violence in the homes...
- abortion...
- immoral and perverted sexual behavior...
- gay marriages condoned and encouraged by the courts...

Has this taken our heavenly Father by surprise? Is He up in heaven pacing back and forth saying, "Oh, I surely didn't know this was going to happen." No, **God is sovereign...and God has called His children to be salt and light in a wicked world.**

And that's what the book of **Titus** is all about. This book was written to teach you and me how to live a Christian life in a pagan world.

So, with all that in mind, let's look at

Verses 1-2...

We live in a day when no one thinks a thing about how they speak of the president of our country. To hear some folks talk, President Bush is a bumbling idiot and a liar and betrayer of our country.

And those are some of the **nicer** things that are being said.

God's Word tells us that we're not to do that. We are to, according to these verses, be subject to rulers, to authorities, and we're to be obedient...we're to be ready to do good...and we're not to malign anyone, or be contentious...we're to be gentle and show consideration.

Paul is telling Titus to remind the people of Crete that this is the way a Christian is to conduct himself as regards his government.

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Let me ask you...do you always agree with your president? Is our president always right? Have all our presidents been exemplary? Of course not! But, God's Word tells us in these two verses what our response is to be to those in authority over us.

Well, I want to ask you...is this an easy thing to do? When Bill Clinton was president, was it an easy thing to do? God didn't tell us to do this only when we agree with our president. He didn't tell us to do this only when our party is in office. So, how can you and I be the kind of Christian God is calling us to be?

Well, I want us to think of **four ways** God has given us...

We can be that kind of Christian because we're not what we used to be.

Verse 3...Remember the context of this verse...what has gone before it...

I think Paul is saying, "You have to understand that sometimes those in governmental leadership are foolish and disobedient and deceived, and enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, and we hated one another...**but you need to remember that we used to be like that, too.**"

Remember the popular song and movie of the '70's..."The Way We Were?" Well, **verse 3** tells us the way we were, and it's not a pretty picture, is it?

When we look at this list of how unbelievers are, does it surprise us that our world is as it is today? Does it surprise us that violence abounds and immorality flourishes and all manner of sin thrives?

Does it surprise us that we live in a world where most folks are blind to **God's truth** and **God's standards** and **God's will**?

Weren't we the same way?

Not only can we be the kind of Christian God is calling us to be because **we're not what we used to be**...but

We can be that kind of Christian because of what we are right now.

Verses 4-7...

Any time you see the word, "but" in Scripture you know that it indicates a contrast! And what a contrast there is between **verse 3** and **verses 4-7**!!

I want us to look at eight aspects or facets of salvation that Paul gives us in this one sentence...we're just going to look at each of them quickly, but keep in mind every one of these is from God and God alone!

1) God's kindness...

What a kind and generous God we serve! When we really stop and think about it, we don't know much about this sort of kindness in the human realm, do we? How many of us would give our only Son so that others could be saved?

2) God's love...

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When did God love you and me?
Romans 5:8 tells us: **"But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."**

3) God's grace... **"not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness..."**

We did **nothing** to earn our salvation! We have been saved by grace though faith and not of ourselves...it is not of works...it is God's grace gift to us, so you and I won't boast!

The Bible tells us that God looks upon our righteousness as nothing but filthy rags...and if He looks upon our deeds of righteousness as nothing but filthy rags, how must He look upon our deeds of **unrighteousness**?

Praise God His grace is sufficient to save us no matter what we've done!

4) God's mercy...

We've said it before...Grace is God's giving to us what we do **not** deserve.
and mercy is God's **not** giving to us what we **do** deserve.

We do not deserve salvation...we do deserve wrath and judgment. And God in His sufficient grace gives us salvation, and in His infinite mercy, God withholds from us wrath and judgment.

5) God's regeneration...

What did Jesus tell Nicodemus? "You must be born again." We are washed clean by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and we are regenerated by that washing.

God's Word tells us that when we were yet in our sins we were dead...but when we come to Jesus, He washes us clean and makes us alive!

6) God's renewing...

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold new things have come."

What or who renews us? Paul tells us it's the Holy Spirit who renews us.
"The Lord is able to do exceeding abundantly more than we can think or ask"...how? "according to the power that works within us..."

What power? The power of the Holy Spirit!

7) God's substitute...verse 6...

Not one of the other facets of God's great salvation would be ours without the substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Never take for granted the **salvation** God has given you.
Never take for granted the great **kindness** and **love** and **grace** and **mercy** that God has extended to you while you were yet a sinner!

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Never take for granted His **forgiveness** and His **cleansing** and His **sacrifice!**

And if this salvation, this so great salvation is not yours...it can be! Be sure, be very sure, you're saved!

8) God's justification...verse 7...

This is a court term. It means that court has already been held and the sentence has already been decided and now the verdict is rendered.

And God looks at me

who is a sinner **by nature**

and who is a sinner **by deed**

and yet who has **trusted Jesus as my Savior and Lord,**

and He looks at me in all of the sin and stain of my life, and He says, "**Because of Jesus, the God of heaven finds you not guilty!**"

We've all heard "justification" defined this way: "*Just as if I'd never sinned.*"

And the amazing thing to me is that a little child who comes to know the Lord Jesus...a little child who hasn't lived long enough to have really sinned a lot is justified and an adult who has committed some grave sins in his life are both **totally and completely justified!**

Not only have we seen that we can be the Christian that God has called us to be **because we're not what we once were** and **because of what we are right now, but**

We can be the Christian that God has called us to be **because we're not what we once were** and **because of what we are right now**...but also...

We can be the Christian God has called us to be because of what we're called to do right now...verse 8-11...

God's Word says He wants us to be careful to engage in good deeds. We're not saved by our good deeds, but Paul tells us in **Ephesians** that we are saved unto good deeds that **God has already ordained us to walk in.**

We're to **do** certain things and we're to be careful **not** to do certain things...

Verses 9-11...

Now, when we look at this list of "don't's" we may think these things really don't apply to us today. And some of them don't...but the principles do.

We're not to engage in foolish controversies...we're not to spend our time in silly controversies.

And we're to avoid wasting our time on genealogies. I believe this is more a matter of Paul's telling us not to spend nearly as much time in digging up our dead ancestors than we do in leaving a godly legacy for our living descendants.

And we're to reject a factious man...why? Because such men are perverted and sinful.

I believe the energies and time of the child of God should be spent on far more edifying things than **controversies, genealogies, strife and disputes about the Law and spending time with those who are factious and argumentative.**

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One last thing...

We can be the Christian God has called us to be because of what we're going to be in the future...verse 7b...

One day we're going to get an inheritance. We're joint heirs! We're joint heirs with Jesus! Many times when an estate is divided there is friction within the family. But, not **this** inheritance. The property hasn't all been divided up yet, but **one day it will be...and all the heirs will be in agreement.**

One day, God will evaluate **our walk with Him.**

One day, we will be judged, **not according to whether we're lost or saved, but according to our deeds.**

One day, what **we've done in the right way with the right motive for Jesus on earth will be rewarded in heaven.**

The Bible describes several different crowns the believer can and should earn. We mentioned this several weeks ago.

These crowns aren't for you and me to keep and flaunt.

These crowns will be given back to the One who gave them to us.

We will willingly, joyfully lay them at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

I believe that's what this lesson is teaching us. The Lord wants you and me to walk in such a way as to earn rewards...

- not medals to wear or display in a case...
- not letters of commendation to show or read to others...
- not accolades from men...

but crowns given to us for deeds we have done in Jesus' name...**crowns that we will give back to Him!**

One day, we'll see Jesus and we'll spend eternity with Him forever! ...according to the hope of eternal life.

Paul told Titus that those who have believed God are able to walk before God and also before unbelievers by

- remembering what they used to be before God saved them...
- remembering what they are now that they're saved...
- remembering that God has ordained works for them to do...

And also by remembering that God has given us a future that is full of hope.

Well, in closing let's look at

Verses 12-15...

In the last verses we see Paul mention several people who had been with him in the ministry. Paul is concerned for their needs.

You know, we need to learn sound Bible doctrine from Paul. We need to apply that doctrine to our lives...

But, there's something else we need to do. We need to learn from Paul's example.

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Paul surrounded himself with friends. Some of these names aren't mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. But, Paul knew them.

And Paul knew their strengths and their weaknesses.

Paul knew their needs.

Paul knew how they could minister to others and he knew how they needed others to minister to them.

It had taken time and effort for Paul to get to know these folks. He had studied them and their talents and their deficiencies and their personalities. And this tells me that you and I should do the same.

We should scratch below the surface of our friends and acquaintances in the faith. And we should affirm them in their strengths and we should attempt to meet their needs. If Paul could do these things as busy as he was, surely we can, too.

Let me ask you something...if we're saved and if we follow Paul's example and if we learn sound Bible teaching and try to pattern our lives after it, are we then exempt from life's trials?

No, but I do believe that as we walk in those good works that God has prepared for us and as we seek to learn all that God would have us know, then when trials come our way,

He will uphold us by His righteous right hand...

and He will keep our feet from stumbling...and the world will be amazed at our strength and our perseverance and our peace.

I read recently that when Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State that he once told a reporter what worked for him in a crisis...he said there must be a reservoir of knowledge that is already there.

Kissinger said that when a crisis comes one doesn't always have time to go to the "manual."

And I believe you and I can apply this to the Christian life. Certainly when a crisis comes up we must go to God's Word...but what if we must respond quickly? We must have a reservoir of knowledge of sound Bible doctrine already in our minds...so that we can draw upon that reservoir of knowledge and act according to the will of God.