



5. Grace to do good Titus 3:1-8

1 Remind your people to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey them, and to be ready to do good in every way. 2 Tell them not to speak evil of anyone, but to be peaceful and friendly, and always to show a gentle attitude towards everyone. 3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and wrong. We were slaves to passions and pleasures of all kinds. We spent our lives in malice and envy; others hated us and we hated them. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour was revealed, 5 he saved us. It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. 6 God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, 7 so that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for. 8 This is a true saying. I want you to give special emphasis to these matters, so that those who believe in God may be concerned with giving their time to doing good. (Good News Bible)

In our journey through Titus you will remember that I said there were four practical things that Paul wanted Titus to convey to the Cretans:

- Qualifications & responsibilities for elders
- Members responsibilities
- Outlines for godly living
- Church doctrine to be upheld in order to be pleasing to God

In the first few weeks we looked at the responsibility of leaders and then at the instructions to older and younger people, and their responsibility to one another, particularly for older people to be an example to younger. Last week I started to touch on the third area - godly living. We found that we should not just be an example to our fellow believers, but to those of us in the world around who have heard that we are believers and draw their own conclusions about Jesus as a result. Our passage this evening continues this theme.

In fact verses 1 and 2 are an anchor for both this week and last week. *Remind your people to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey them, and to be ready to do good in every way. 2 Tell them not to speak evil of anyone, but to be peaceful and friendly, and always to show a gentle attitude towards everyone.*

We saw last week how setting an example was not to be a typical Cretan (Cretans are always liars, wicked beasts, and lazy gluttons.) but to act in a way that was law-abiding with actions that set an example to the rest of society. Paul does not deal with how people should respond to injustice and corruption in government because that wasn't the issue here. Verse two amplifies verse one a little to stress that the doing good wasn't something token but something that reflects an overall attitude towards people. In other words, doing good wasn't just doing good deeds but giving good vibes to people as we do them. So Paul encourages Titus to tell the Cretans *not to speak evil of anyone, but to be peaceful and friendly, and always to show a gentle attitude towards everyone.*

- not to speak evil of anyone - this is an important part of doing good - being positive in both your actions and your speech. I've lost count of the number of times I've come across people in a church context who are great servants of the Lord - conspicuous in what they do to help people but they negate it all by showing a fundamental disrespect for the people they help by gossiping bad things behind their back. I'm sure when other people see this

they think the same as I do; why are these folk doing their “good deeds” - to show their love for the people that need help, or to build up their own kudos and reputation as a nice person? It’s amazing what selfish ends can be behind the best of deeds. Or worse, people do the deeds to score brownie points with God.

- to be peaceful and friendly - but there is more to not just speaking evil of someone, our attitude to them should be peaceful and friendly. Our aim is not just to do them a good turn because of sympathy, but out of a genuine desire to engage them.
- to show a gentle attitude to people - and our attitude should be gentle

The reason Paul says all this is that our actions should reflect our motives and our motives should be borne out of and reflect how God has dealt with us. You’ll remember last week that Paul briefly explores some motives in relation to slaves and we saw that our actions should reflect God’s grace, God’s holiness and our eternal hope. Paul builds considerably on this in verses 3-8 of chapter 3 and gives us a very compact and clear message of the Gospel.

Why should we do good to those who don’t know Christ? Verse 3 says it all - we were once like them.

Paul wants to emphasise this area to us. Our lives should be examples to others so they might witness us and want our hope. We were once like them, now we should show a different way.

Verse 3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and wrong. We were slaves to passions and pleasures of all kinds. We spent our lives in malice and envy; others hated us and we hated them. BUT 4 when the kindness and love of God our Saviour was revealed, 5 he saved us.

The difference was that when the kindness and love of God or Saviour was revealed, He saved us. And that remains the difference between us and the world - we have been saved - and they haven’t been yet. That’s why we set the example. God revealed His love and kindness to us. How do we reveal His love and kindness - verse 1 and 2 sum up how we should reflect to the world what God has already done in us. If we’ve been saved, we need to live like we’re saved. Yes, I know you know that already but there’s a big difference between what’s in our heads and how we actually live and it’s easy to sell out back to the world and live, if only a little, according to our passions and pleasures, and to show malice and hate others because they hate us.

So we act and live in a way that reflect what God has done for us. This passage is a superb outline of the Good News:

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour was revealed, 5 he saved us. It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. 6 God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, 7 so that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for.

Our Saviour Jesus poured out new life so generously. God's gift has restored our relationship with him and given us back our lives. And there's more life to come - an eternity of life! You can count on this. Titus 3:6-8

This presentation of the Gospel is a little bit more than in a nutshell but it an exceptionally clear one. It has all the elements of the message and what comes out is not what we’ve done but what God has done - here’s what that is:

- loved us
- been merciful to us
- saved us
- given new birth by the Holy Spirit (He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit)
- poured out the Holy Spirit on us

- put us right with God (we've been justified by his grace)
- given the hope of eternal life (we've become heirs having the hope of eternal life)

And you can see them all as a progression. It started when God revealed his love and kindness. This led to merciful actions that meant He saved us, but more than that, He made us new people, He saved us, He poured out His Holy Spirit on us. Now we are right with God and have the hope of eternal life. And there it is - what God has done for us. Let me focus a little on some of these statements.

Saved is a strong word here. It's not a word we tend to use so much these days; certain words go out of fashion and saved is one of those. One of the phrases of the 20th century that evangelists used was "are you saved?" Most people knew then what it was about but these days people look mystified (even Christians sometimes!) if you use it. More's the pity for that because it has a clear message to it. The Greek word *sozo* is a word that was used for saved, rescued, delivered from harm, saving them from ruin or disaster. That describes us and you can see that from the description in verse 3 of what we were (and what most people in the world still are) that God has saved us in a real way. It's not just as of words - He has saved us from certain doom and disaster. What is it about us that makes us afraid to present it not just to the world but even to ourselves.

Those without Christ are the opposite of saved - they're lost, facing eternal ruin, separated from God - a future of hell in hell. It's unpalatable stuff to talk about - but why? I had my car serviced this week. They told me that I needed new front brakes and rear tyres. I didn't ask the receptionist why I needed them. But if I had been stupid enough to ask she would have said that without brakes and dodgy tyres, I was quite likely to end up having a serious and potentially fatal accident. She would not have been the slightest bit embarrassed or coy about telling me. What a pity that we are so embarrassed about hell and the fact that those without Christ are lost that we never even talk about it much ourselves. It just doesn't make sense.

New Birth, rebirth or born again. That's another phrase there's a kind of embarrassment about in some circles. But like saved it actually accurately described what God has done for us in Christ. Actually I talked about the same principle this morning. God hasn't just rescued us, but He's made us alive in Christ. We are new people, born again, raised to life, a new creation. So if we're new, by implication we should live like it. The phrase here is particularly important. *through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us*. I say frequently that conversion is of the Holy Spirit. If you need a good verse for it, then this one does nicely. How do we get to be born again? How do we get new life? How do we get washed clean of our sinful life? Through the Holy Spirit. We can't make ourselves spiritually alive, we can't wash ourselves clean, but through the Holy Spirit we are born anew. That's how God does it. It isn't us; it's Him.

Poured out the Holy Spirit on us. This on the other hand is a phrase we don't use much. I find that since the renewal movement of a few decades ago that some Christians deal with things of the Spirit with deep suspicion. Oh dear! If I understand these words, living our Christian life without an understanding of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit is like trying to use Hoover without plugging it in first! The word poured is an interesting word. Poured suggests a couple of things to me. Firstly the idea that we've got a generous soaking. In this hot weather people like water fights don't they. Part of the fun is drenching somebody. We have a God who doesn't give His Spirit sparingly but pours Him out. The second idea connected with pouring is its connection with anointing. When God marked out special people like kings and priests in the OT, they got anointed with oil. Here we are as the people of God and God has made us special by pouring out His Spirit on us - we are His people.

These verses are a grace statement and the word grace features clearly. The GNB is not as good as the NIV here. The use of grace in verse 7 *having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs*. If you know your reformation history you'll know that Luther stood for justification by faith - we are justified (made right with God "just as if I'd never sinned") by an act of faith in a God who has made a way of righteously pronouncing that my sins are dealt with. But here Paul uses justified by His grace. What's right? We are looking at two ends of the same process. How is God able to pronounce us just when we call on Him by faith - because He had already made the decision by His grace to send His Son to die for us! We made a decision, but only because God

had made the way first. So by God's grace - His unmerited favour - we have been put right with God. The emphasis on God is very clear

He revealed Himself, He saved us, He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, His Spirit is poured out on us. It's all passive on our part - He's done that for us. So what about us. What part did we play? There's almost nothing about our act of simple faith - in fact Paul stresses that it's not *not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done (v5)*.

We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and wrong. We were slaves to passions and pleasures of all kinds. We spent our lives in malice and envy; others hated us and we hated them.

That's why we should no longer live in this way because God has made us something else. But not just to do good, but to do God - by acting in the same way to others by showing the same grace as He has shown us. And He's poured out His Spirit on us so we can be like that. That's why there's so little about personal faith here. We show grace to others - to the world - whether we think they deserve it or not. That was God's way with us - and we never deserved it.

So there's our conclusion - to be what we are in Christ because when we are, we show that example of Christ to the world and in turn bring them to Him.

Let's pray

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