

Titus3: 1-11 The Great Work of the Triune God in Salvation

These verses are very similar to 2:11-14. In 2:11 it is the grace of God that has “appeared” in Jesus Christ, and then applied by the power of the Holy Spirit. And this grace brings salvation from sin, as pictured in redemption, and also this grace brings cleansing from our sins. And because of his grace in Christ, we are trained to **“renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age”** (v. 12). And, we are “zealous” to do good works (v. 14).

In 3:1-11 we see the same organization. Paul describes the grace of God by emphasizing his kindness, his goodness, and his mercy to save us. In Christ, we are “washed through regeneration” and “renewed by the Holy Spirit” (vv. 6-7). We are not saved because we do good works, but instead, we do good works because of the great work of the Triune God. In both passages God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit work to save a sinful people. And this great work of God works in us so that we do good works. We work because HE works. If we meditate on these things, we always sing, “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.” What a beautiful gospel, the Gospel of our God!

With this in mind, I want to preach this passage two times. Part 1 this week we will focus on the work of the Triune God in salvation (vv. 4-7). And this will give us a strong foundation for next week as we consider the good works that follow (vv. 1-3; 8-11). And I want to focus on the particular work of the Father, the Spirit, and the Son, in that order. So let’s begin.

1. God the Father. Now, I realize, as we all do, there is great mystery here: three persons, all with the same essence. In the Bible, we often see certain works attributed to the Son, which can only be said of God. Jesus often receives worship and when it happens and he does not refuse it as the angels do. He forgives sins (Matt. 9:2). He also makes statements about himself that can only be said of God. This is why the Jews put him on the cross, **“making himself out to be God”** (John 10:33). Jesus is also described as creator in Col. 1:16. We can say the same thing about the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is the “power of God” as He works effectually to execute the will of God the Father. And, as mysterious as it is, each “person” of the Trinity is distinct. Let’s begin with “God the Father,” and his work in salvation.

Look back at Titus 1:4: **“Grace and peace from God the Father . . .”** And in our text today, salvation begins with God the Father. Look at v. 4: **“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared . . .”** And v. 5: **“HE saved us . . .”** And this, according to **“his own mercy . . .”** And then in v. 6, **“whom he poured out on us richly . . .”** Let me make a few observations here.

i. We see the authority of God the Father in salvation. He is the One who plans and initiates our salvation. **“Grace and peace”** come from Him! In 1 Cor. 8:6 Paul says, **“yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist . . .”** Mal. 2:10 says, **“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?”** Eph. 1:3: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places . . .”** GOD the Father is the ONE who sent the Son. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son . . .”** (John 3:16). 1 Pet. 1:1-2: **“To**

those who are elect exiles . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father . . .” And, speaking of the end of this age, and the coming of Christ, Paul says, **“Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.”**

ii. We also see the character of the Father in salvation. In this passage, we see goodness, kindness, love, and mercy. Look again at v. 4. **“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared . . .”** And then in v. 5: **“according to his own mercy.”** And of course all these qualities only come down to us as “GRACE.” V. 2:11: **“For the grace of God has appeared.”** God IS good! God IS kind! God IS love! And these qualities are displayed in his mercy toward sinners! We are saved because of the character of God.

And in v. 6, Paul says God is “rich” in such things. Let me ask, *“What does a rich person possess?”* Money . . . Gold . . . stocks and bonds and shares in mutual funds . . . houses . . . cars . . . professional sports teams . . . These are things I think of when I think of wealth. But, God, though He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, his richness is found in goodness, love, kindness and mercy that result in our salvation. **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved”** (Eph. 1:3-6).

2. God the Holy Spirit. Look at the 2nd part of v. 4. He “saved us” **“by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit . . .”** If you are to be saved it will be because the Holy Spirit, who is also God in essence, works in you to wash you and clean you, and make you into a new creation. This “work” is attributed to God the Holy Spirit, not God the Father. Here, Paul is describing the new birth, also called “regeneration.” Look with me to John 3. Here, I believe we see one of the most prominent religious leaders of Jesus’ day, Nicodemus. And he comes to Jesus by night, seeking to have a conversation with him. And Nicodemus recognizes Jesus’ miracles and his authority. And Jesus wastes no time saying in vv. 3ff: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he can not see the kingdom of God.”** Nicodemus, thinking in earthly terms, says, **“How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter again his mother’s womb.”** And in vv. 5-6 Jesus says, **“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which if born of the Spirit is spirit.”** And then Jesus illustrates what he is saying by talking about the wind. V. 8: **“the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”** And then Nicodemus says in v. 9, **“How can these things be?”** And Jesus says, **“Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”**

Here, Jesus speaks about the power of the Holy Spirit to make someone fit for the kingdom of heaven. Or to put it another way, to create anew. Or to put it another way, to cleanse and renew. Look back at v. 4. We are saved, **“by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”**

You see, from one perspective Nicodemus should have understood the new birth. He should have known to what Jesus was referring when he said a person must be born of “water” and “spirit.” Water is a picture of “cleansing” and this cleansing must be by the “spirit.” Nicodemus should have recalled Is. 44:3 as God says: **“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.”** He should have remembered Ezekiel who prophesied in 36:25-27: **“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from you uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh . . . And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”**

Brothers and sisters, this is what we see in the age of good news. This is the none other than the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant. 2 Cor. 5:17 says, **“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.”**

Application: This passage makes me pray for you and your salvation and for the salvation of those with whom I share. For salvation is a work of God, not of man. It comes from Heaven, not from the earth. This truth makes us completely reliant on the power of God to change us and work in us. Look back at v. 3: **“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and thing one another.”**

This truth tells us that the gospel is one of power to save and wash and make new. This means our warfare is spiritual. 2 Cor. 10:4 says, **“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”**

This truth tells us that we can work all day long, but if our works are not “in the Spirit,” covered by the blood of Christ, all is in vain. Look at v. 5: **“he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy . . .”** Have you ever gone to someone’s house and pulled a coffee or tea cup from the cupboard and the outside is beautiful, but the inside is stained. Well, brothers and sisters, our sins are the stains that cannot be cleaned merely by wiping with church attendance or giving to the poor or walking an aisle or many apologies or even water baptism. We must be washed by the power of the Holy Spirit. And renewal will only come in this way.

This truth tells us there is a difference between the people of God and the people of the world. See 1 Cor. 2:10 ff.

3. God the Son. Look at vv. 6-7 : **“whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”** If you read the OT you will notice that the ONLY savior is God. Is. 45:21: **“Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.”** Yet, here, Jesus is our “savior.” Oh, the beauty of the incarnation: God the Father, sending God the Son in his great plan to save his people, to deliver them from the bondage of sin.

Here, Paul give us the picture of God “pouring his riches upon us” in the person and work of the Son. Have you ever tried to take a shower from a dripping faucet? What’s that like? One of the things I remember about my time in Mexico as a young man was bathing time. I lived with one family who did not have a shower. And it was very cold in the winter (around freezing with no heat). And sometimes, I would go a few days without a shower because of the whole process. You had to boil a large pot of water and then mix it with cold water from a reservoir under the front porch to make enough hot water for a shower. Well, I had very short hair and a smaller body to wash. But, I would take one small bowl and pour it over my head just enough to wet my body and then take the soap and wash. And then, instead of using a small bowl to pour many times over my body, I would take the entire basin of water and hold it up over my head and pour SLOWLY until it would run out. It was glorious! It was the best 30 seconds ever.

In the same way, God pours not just a basin of water, but ALL of his riches upon us. And these riches are found in the Son. In Col. 2:3 Paul says: **“ALL of Gods treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ.”** Now, we cannot exhaust the riches of God in Christ. The pouring over us of the wisdom and knowledge of Christ is as infinite as the treasures of God’s grace. And, in v. 7 he says, **“by his grace we are heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”** The pouring of God’s riches in Christ do not stop as a good shower does. It continues eternally! God will continue to pour forever his riches in Christ. This is Paul’s praise in Eph. 1:3 ff. **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with EVERY spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world . . . In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he se forth in Christ . . .”**

In our passage today, Paul highlights the work of the Son in justification. Look at v. 7 again: **“so that being justified by his grace.”** To justify means to “declare righteous,” “not guilty” in the sight of the God. And God does justify, but only because of the work of the Son. This is the cross! This is why he came! In his humility, in his incarnation, God the Son took on flesh, He lived a sinless life. God could never convict him of wrong doing. He was sinless! And He laid down his life as a sacrifice in the place of those who believe in him. God laid upon him OUR sins. And for those who believe in Jesus, God gives us his righteousness. He poured out his wrath and judgement upon the Son. And this was infinite judgment; everything our sins deserved. He “descended into hell.” And God accepted this sacrifice, a pleasing aroma to Him. And for those who believe in Jesus, God pours out ALL the blessings for salvation. And therefore, **“now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”** (Rom. 8:1) Oh, the beautiful work of the Son in salvation! Let me end with some applications.

Application: The immediate application is v. 8. The triune God saves us . . . And because of this great salvation, we are **“careful to devote ourselves to good works.”** Beloved, if these things are true, if God the Father has so richly poured his riches upon us by sending the Son, who “gave himself for us to redeem us” (2:14) and to give us a right standing before God, and the Holy

Spirit applies this work by the “washing of regeneration and renewal,” WE ARE DIFFERENT! We are his “peculiar” people, zealous for good works.

Application: Look at v. 3: “But . . . he saved us. This word “but” is always in reference to what we once were. **“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.”**

Application: ALL the riches of the Father come down to us in the Son. Therefore, look unto the Son in the Scriptures. They point to Him.

Application: To the non-Christian, I will recall the words in one of Peter’s sermon: **“Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus.” “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago”** (Acts 3:17-21).

Application: We cannot work to gain our salvation. Salvation belongs to God. At the end of the day salvation is the work of God, not us “cooperating” with God.

Application: These doctrines promote the greatest praise and worship. We see this with Paul in Eph. 1:3-14. In Col. 3:16 he also says: **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”**

In closing I will quote from Matthew Henry. He says: *“There is an order in acting, as in subsisting. The Father begins, the Son manages, and the Holy Spirit works and perfects all. God (namely, the Father) is a Saviour by Christ, through the Spirit.”*

And because of these great works, we are sanctified, set apart for good works, to which we will turn next week.