

# The washing of Regeneration

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Date: 24 February 2019

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, as the Lord enables us, let us turn back to this portion of scripture we've read, the letter of Paul to Titus in chapter 3.

And we may read from verse 3. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing your days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

The letter was written around 65 AD, and Paul's last letter was written a year later.

[ 1 : 50 ] The second epistle of Paul to Timothy was written, we think, about 66 AD. And Paul had the welfare of his people, the churches, very close to his heart.

That's why we see him writing this particular letter and other letters also. He's writing to this associate of his by the name of Titus, a co-worker in the gospel.

And he had left him in Crete, it says in chapter 1 at verse 5. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

It looks as if the church in Crete was very young, and the apostle Paul directed Titus to go there and bring order into the church to appoint people as elders who are going to rule over the congregation in Crete.

And he comes through the letter highlighting throughout chapter 1 the kind of people, the Cretans, where?

[ 3 : 32 ] In verse 12 of chapter 1, he says, And Paul says, This testimony is true.

Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. He wanted the word of God to be influential in the lives of these people.

They didn't know much about the gospel until the time that they were converted. And they needed to be shown the way forward, to be given direction as to how to live.

And of course that is true of us all. Even if we have had a Christian upbringing, certainly there is an outward aspect to our lives that conforms to general gospel principles.

But when the gospel becomes precious and personal to us, then we need to have the influence of the word of God working from the inside of us, so that our thinking be like the psalmist.

[ 4 : 47 ] The words I quoted in the prayer, One thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain, that all days of my life I may within God's house remain, that I the beauty of the Lord behold, may, and admire, that I in his holy place may reverently inquire, that that focus would continue in our lives.

And the Apostle Paul here, writing to Titus, he says, you instruct these people in Crete as to how they ought to live.

Of course, coming to chapter 3, Paul isn't talking as somebody who has always been perfect himself. And he puts himself into this third verse of chapter 3.

And he says, we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and so on. But he says, a day came when the salvation of God came into our experience.

And because it has come, we want to live for the Lord in a way that glorifies him and magnifies his great name. So under three headings, first of all, the words of verse 3, the way he describes a life

without God, a life lived in worldliness and in sin.

[ 6 : 17 ] Secondly, the way God intervened in his life and the life of God's people at the beginning of verse 4. But he said, when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared, he saved us.

And he goes through that section there explaining what it means to be saved. And then thirdly, he reminds them again that they are saved in order to live in a God-glorifying way.

In verse 8, chapter 3, the saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

He comes back to that theme again. He asks them not only to talk the talk as it were, professing faith, but living according to what they profess.

and that is appropriate for me this morning and maybe for yourselves to remind ourselves that there is a particular path to walk and the practicalities of godly living we need always to take note of and seek by God's grace to live in a way that magnifies his name, living according to the word of God.

[ 7 : 52 ] first of all then a few words on verse 3 of chapter 3 where he describes the sad condition of the unconverted man whoever he or she might be.

For we ourselves he says were once foolish. well maybe you wouldn't categorize yourself as foolish if you are still unconverted.

Maybe you've got a degree in something. Maybe you've got a PhD in something. But regarding your moral status before God this is what he says that you are foolish.

The word foolish here I believe is talking about not just lack of intelligence but the fact that you are constantly being seduced by the power of sin drawn away from the Lord drawn away from the paths of righteousness.

If you read in Proverbs chapter 1 verse 22 the writer there says O ye simple ones how long will you love simplicity?

[ 9 : 19 ] He's talking about people who were drawn almost constantly away from God towards the things of the world the things that gratify the flesh the things of time and sense without any real reference to eternity at all.

we were once foolish the apostle Paul says we were disobedient another word for disobedient here could be unpersuadable however much a minister may seek to persuade you of the truth of the gospel of the glory of Christ of the loveliness of Christ you just refused to be persuaded because your heart was closed against it your ears were shut against the sweet sound of his voice you were unpersuadable disobedient then he says you were led astray led astray well there are powers abroad that would seek to draw us away from the Lord always there is the lust of the eye there is the lust of the flesh and there is the pride of life as the scripture says elsewhere the eye draws us after things that gratifies our carnal nature and we ourselves because of the carnal nature we possess we seek to gratify ourselves with anything and everything apart from the word of God apart from a holy life and this is what the apostle here is saying led us three and we were slaves to various passions and pleasures passions and pleasures enslaved us maybe you're the last person in the world to admit today that you are enslaved by what you're passionate about maybe it's football maybe it's something else but you're so passionate about it and the reason you're so passionate about it is that it's got you in its grip you are enslaved to it you can't break the influence and the power of it in your life because sin runs through your very veins and it pleases you to be passionate about anything and everything apart from being passionate about the Lord and then it says we were passing your days in malice and envy it's as if he's going further and further into the darkness with the way he's describing his condition in sin passing your days in malice what horrible people they were envious of one another malicious towards one another and then he says coming to the end of verse 3 hated by others and hating one another it's as if there was an atmosphere of competition and one upmanship and hatred of the person who got won over you there was a constant kind of tension in this darkness in this situation where sin ruled in your life I was reminded of this when I was trying to prepare yesterday that there was a time near the beginning of the world's experience where in Genesis chapter 6 verse 11 the Lord describes society or the world as being filled with violence wasn't filled with peace was filled with violence animosity hatred of God and then you come through the New Testament and another verse there in 1 John chapter 5 says that the world lies in wickedness or in the evil one that's the picture he draws in verse 3 of the person who is still in sin the world that is lying in wickedness but secondly coming to verse 4 it begins with that marvelous word but but when the goodness and loving kindness of God

our

Savior appeared what an amazing contrast we have from the darkness of verse 3 the misery of verse 3 the discouraging nature and atmosphere that pervades verse 3 now he comes and he says there's a contrast here and what's contrasted with verse 3 well we find in verse 4 that the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared what an amazing verse that is given the state of the world given the state of our own souls and lives by nature that the Lord would draw near to us and appear to us in goodness and loving kindness with an intention to save us and that's what happened where did this goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior first appear but I'm going to say that it first appear in a promise in the book of

[ 15 : 36 ] Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 shortly after man had sinned in the garden of Eden and the Lord said that there was going to come of the seed of the woman him who was going to bruise the head of the serpent and on repeated occasions throughout the Old Testament this appears again and again the prospect of a Savior coming into this sad and broken world a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and she shall call his name Emmanuel God with us not God against us but God with us and in Isaiah chapter 9 unto us a child is born and unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor the Mighty God the Everlasting Father and the

Prince of Peace and in the fullness of times Jesus Christ took human nature to himself conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary and born of her yet without sin and when you read the account of the Lord's birth there you find that the angels in heaven rejoiced and indicated to the shepherds there in their fields in Bethlehem unto us this child has been born unto you is born this day in the city of David a saviour who is Christ the Lord this is an expression of the goodness of God to fallen man of the loving kindness of God to a lost and broken world

Jesus Christ the saviour of sinners has come and you know when you read in the Bible you find this amazing statement he came that is Jesus Christ came unto his own but his own received him not what a shame what a terrible response to the goodness and loving kindness of God what did they say we will not have this man reign over us yes they said that they also said crucify him crucify him Pilate the Roman government said governor said will I release to you Barabbas not this saviour and they said we want Barabbas the man who is a law breaker crucify the saviour of sinners and when he came it says in verse five he saved us now this talks about the finished work of

Christ when he came into the world he finished the work that the father gave him to do in order to reconcile his elect people to himself he saved us he gave his life as a ransom for many having lived a perfectly holy life having magnified the law and made the law honourable in every thought and word and action of his life he came then to the cross and he offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile his people to God and he finished that work and the father by raising him from the dead on the third day publicly acknowledged his satisfaction and pleasure at what Christ has fulfilled on behalf of his people that's what the beginning of verse five states describes in three words the finished work of

Christ it is finished but then he goes on in the verse and he says it's not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to his own mercy all this is according to the mercy of God and the experience we have when we believe in Jesus Christ is that we are washed by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit now these are amazing words just like to mention a couple of things in relation to them this is what is personal to those who believe in Jesus Christ they are washed by the washing of regeneration that's the first thing it's as if he has painted the blackest possible picture of our state in sin in verse three and it's as if he says you stand in need of being washed sin contaminates sin leaves you so impure in your mind in your attitudes in your life in private and in public you need a washing and the washing that God sees fit to bring about in our lives is the washing of regeneration the washing of regeneration this is talking about the effectual working of God's

[ 21 : 49 ] Holy Spirit within us when he brings the new birth to be a reality you remember when the Lord had an interview with Nicodemus one particular evening Nicodemus said to Jesus we know that you are a good man come from God and so on and Jesus said he cuts straight through all that Nicodemus was talking about he says except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God that's what this is talking about the washing of regeneration we have to be born with water and of the spirit born from above washed by the caring gracious merciful hand of God people say to others tidy up your act get your life together people who are living recklessly and carelessly well this

is the biggest tidy up of any act that's possible speaking with all reverence

God brings the water of regeneration into our experience and we are cleansed from our sins and then he talks about the renewal of the Holy Spirit it's as if he makes a new creation of us in this bringing us alive in a spiritual way he makes us a new creation in Christ Jesus when we are united to Jesus Christ by faith we are no longer who we were or what we were we have a different outlook we have different desires we have different longings we have a different language different petitions different lifestyle all together because he has made new creatures of us he has given us to know in our own hearts that eternal life and we see the renewal of the

Holy Spirit well it's amazing that God sees fit to draw near with such failures as we are when the Holy Spirit comes just as I was talking to the young folk earlier on Jesus Christ has finished the work he's gone into heaven and exalted at the right hand of God the Father but he has sent his word by his spirit into our midst and may each of us feel his movement his motion drawing us to himself may we feel and know in our own hearts the Holy Spirit poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour if the Apostle Paul were to talk about his own personal experience he could have said clearly and he did say so that the Lord met him on the road to Damascus on one particular day and the Lord opened his eyes to behold himself in all the filth of self righteousness and the failure of his life but the Lord revealed himself to him and he said Paul said who are you Lord I am Jesus whom you are persecuting it is hard for you to kick against the gods and Paul says Saul says Lord what do you want me to do see the way his heart changed his heart had turned around because the Holy Spirit now had turned him away from sin with a hatred for sin and to God renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour but he goes on and there are a thousand sermons in these verses but I really felt drawn to bringing them before you this morning

I'm just touching as it were the surface of them so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life justified by his grace Saul of Tarsus thought at one point that according to the righteousness which is in the law that he was blameless that he could stand his ground in the middle as it were of heaven and declared to God and all the angels of heaven he is righteous on the basis of how carefully that he had lived himself but that's not the way people are justified before God all our righteousnesses the Bible reminds us are as filthy rags whatever you think of your righteous living yourself the Bible says if you're not believing in Jesus savingly all your best acts and best thoughts are as filthy rags there is sin twisted into all that you do and say and think you can't help it that's the way you are that's the way we are by nature but you see it says here that we are justified by his grace it is because

[ 27 : 59 ] Jesus Christ has finished the work on our behalf if we truly believe in him the righteousness of Christ is made over to our account and we are justified by him or by God in him because God is gracious to us and we receive the grace of God and you see well the apostle here really is giving them very deep theology although they are very young Christians well he is same thing with the apostle to the Romans same thing to the the apostle to the Philippians and to the Colossians to the Ephesians talking deep theology to highlight to them the glory of what has taken place in their experience and all their life they'll be thinking about the glory of what God has done in their life and in their experience getting to know more and more of the grace of

God and the kindness of God towards them and then heirs according to the hope of eternal life one of the commentators mentions here that to become an heir of what God has prepared for us in heaven we have to become sons and daughters we have to be adopted and that's part of what has happened in the experience of these people here the blessing of God has brought effectual calling into their life they have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ they have been adopted by God into his family and now they have an inheritance waiting for them they are heirs according to the hope of eternal life heirs of

God and joined heirs with Christ heaven awaits those who believe in Jesus I go to prepare a place for you he said at another time and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself but where I am there you may be also heirs according to the hope of eternal life and then he says in verse 8 the saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works this is the practical outworking of this marvelous theology that the apostle has been expounding to them he's spoken about the darkness of their unconverted days in verse 3 and then from verse 4 onwards he's talking about the goodness and loving kindness of

God our Savior appearing in the promises in the person of Christ in the finished work of Christ and in the work of the Holy Spirit as he applies to his believing people the redemption purchased by Christ making them heirs of God according to the hope of eternal life but then thirdly and finally we are saved for good works in order to live for God and for Christ in this world if you look at the beginning of chapter 3 he says they remind them that is to the church in Crete to be submissive to rulers and authorities to be obedient to be ready for every good work he's talking to these people who have tasted that the Lord is gracious and he wants them to be good citizens in the community submissive to rulers and authorities he wants them to be good citizens of the church submissive to the ruling of the church ruling of the word of God as dispensed by the church and through the church and each of us must take that on board and then he goes on if you look at chapter 2 verses 6 onwards the same kind of practical aspect to the teaching likewise urge the younger men to be self-controlled show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works and so on he's talking to the younger men how they ought to live to be self-controlled and he says to Titus himself as a young man show yourself a model of good works in your teaching and in your life and then in verse 9 he's talking about servants or slaves they are to be submissive to their own masters in everything they are to be well pleasing not argumentative not pilfering and showing all good faith and so on talking about people who are servants in the homes or servants or slaves working in the fields the biblical ethic applies to them in their own particular sphere of labor and then there's an interesting word towards the end of verse 10 so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our savior the word in the Greek there is the word from which we get the [ 34 : 13 ] English word cosmetics so that you may adorn the gospel it's as if you put the gospel on to beautify your life you are submissive to authorities submissive to those over you only then are you going to beautify and adorn the gospel which you profess and then he goes on in chapter 2 verses 2 and 3 and 4 just going backwards because he's talking to the older men to be sober minded dignified and self controlled sound in faith and in love and in steadfastness not leaving anybody out younger men he's spoken to the slaves he's spoken to now the older men and then verse 3 in chapter 2 the older women likewise to be reverend in behavior not slanderers or slaves to much wine to teach what is good and then coming to the young women train the young women to love their husbands and children to be self-controlled pure working at home kind submissive to their own husbands that the word of

God may not be reviled and so on well he covers every single one of us as it were whoever whoever we are if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious if we profess faith in Christ our responsibility devolves upon us to live according to the rule that he has left whether we be older men younger men older women younger women slaves whoever we are we have to be submissive to the word of God because he himself revealed his love and glory and kindness to us in coming into the world and he made such an impression upon his elect people that they yielded to him in love and that they gave themselves to him heart and soul and life now and forever more remember the group in the old testament who made their allegiance to David known in these terms thine we are

David and with thee are we thou son of Jesse it is yours we are Lord and it is for you we are Lord in every aspect of our lives in the privacy of our home in the secrecy of our personal lives in our public commitment in our public interaction whatever we do wherever we are because we are blood bought we have to magnify him who has bought us at the price of his own blood that we might live for him and magnify him in every detail of our life from day to day the life of sin the salvation from sin and the responsibility of those who are saved to live a godly life  
Amen let us pray amen