

A Community of Contrast, Part 1

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[0 : 00] so the apostle paul is has written a letter to titus this young minister looking after this fledging church in crete and uh we're sort of nearing the end of titus this letter and paul says something fairly outlandish to titus he says listen titus can you remind them to be submissive uh to uh you know be nice to do good would you would you do that and i think you can imagine titus reading this and going paul these guys are literally pirates like you don't understand do you know have you heard what people say about cretins right and paul's like yeah so tell him if you could tell him just to say nice things to each other avoid quarreling so that's verses one and two it's this exhortation it's this like do live well do good now thankfully paul follows that up with this uh practical uh some practical theology and some encouragement and what a theology what a what an amazing this verses four to seven like when i'm when i first read this passage i thought what is this this is it was like a little treasure tucked away in titus this amazing incredible summary of the gospel all tucked away in this little red book of the bible so paul follows up this exhortation to do well to do good with this incredible theology so let's have a closer look at the whole passage so firstly paul says remind them would you remind them which is what most sermonizing is it's reminding people and it has to be because we forget the truth you know we see the greatness of god and we forget and lots of scripture especially the old testament a lot of that's about you know it talks about uh god's people uh being reminded to remember and you know that ancient israel one of their big downfalls was sort of a bad spiritual memory now it's not intellectually forgetting things you know i think we can i think at any point i could ask you sort of about salvation and about grace and you'd probably come up with a fairly decent answer to it i will i you know i i would do that if jordan asked me i think but you know as we live out our daily lives i think it seems that the truth of what god is like and our forgiveness in christ that kind of can sort of slip from our minds it's not an intellectual problem as i said i think it's a spiritual problem it's a spiritual problem our hearts resist truth which is why teaching and preaching and listening to sermons during the week reading the word is is so incredibly important you know i do this stuff for a job and you know i can hear a great sermon on sunday i can preach a great sermon on sunday and monday morning at 10 o'clock you know i'm like trying to earn my salvation again now one of the things that we forget i think as christians one of the things that slips from our minds is how we're supposed to live this is what paul is talking to titus about he says remind them firstly remind them to be obedient to rulers in that society so this is crete so they're under roman rule for us it'll be the federal local government uh the police force etc so paul says you know there's an authority that's over you this is ordained by god be under that authority it doesn't mean we can't be critical but we should abide by the law this is how christians are supposed to live if you want to sort of fill it out a bit more look at romans 13 but the basic gist of it is the society needs structures in order to function and that's that's god's idea he delegates some of that authority to to earthly systems and structures society we need order that's not the only thing the bible has to say about this of course and if you take the whole bible into account you know sometimes uh we do have to

disobey the government when when what the government asks is incongruent with god's law a good example is in acts 5 when the disciples are told not to preach by the state and they do it anyway anyway paul's big interest here is not developing this kind of there's a slight tangent it's not developing this grand kind of theology around our relationship with the state it's more uh paul's big interest here is uh is is about christians being good witnesses christians living uh cross-shaped lives lives that demonstratively reflect hearts which have been changed by the gospel and what better picture than that what what better picture than than pirates kind of you know showing themselves to be the best citizens in crete what an amazing picture right what an amazing witness moving on he also says remind them speak evil of no one avoid quarreling be gentle show perfect courtesy towards all people that's verse two cretins paul says titus tell them tell them to uh live lives of contrast tell them to embody the highest of relational virtues because this using the words of chapter two it adorns the gospel it puts the gospel on display that's what happens when when christians do this i remember back in new zealand like i don't know like 15 years ago or something something like that i'm in a i'm in a uh uh i'm in a flat which is like a you know like a house that single people live in together like a what do you call it like roommates you know and in a place called kingsland i'm in the lounge room i remember this so vividly i'm in the lounge room and i've just heard the most scandalously juiciest gossip about a friend of ours so i'm living with four other guys so i come back to the house and i'm like guys you are not going to believe what i've just heard and i'm like what shut up you know so anyway my friend gene comes home and he walks in the door and we all go gene gene did you hear what happened to let's let's call him bob okay did you did you hear what happened to bob did you hear what bob did and and i'm thinking he's going to be so eager to hear this because it's scandalous and he goes um so do i do i need to know this are you going to tell me something like gossip about this person do i actually need to know this i'm like no probably probably not i guess i remember i have this such vivid memory of this because i remember thinking right yes ah christianity should probably should probably have a go at that sometime so verses one and two it's uh it's this high moral call and then verse three it's kind of strangely encouraging i think paul's saying to titus like i know what you're thinking this is this is a tall order for your guys to do these things but do you remember what we were like before christ interrupted our lives verse three he says we ourselves i love that we ourselves you know what it was like we ourselves we were foolish we were disobedient we were led astray we were slaves to various passions and pleasures we passed our days in malice and envy we hated others you know these words here these are big these are big things foolish right foolish foolish foolish foolish in the bible means it doesn't mean stupid it means not having spiritual understanding it doesn't mean unintelligent a foolish life is one um that is lived without regard to god so you know there are very foolish people lecturing at universities and they're very wise people with

intellectual disabilities next paul says we were once disobedient it's a second word disobedient towards god that's the implication here which is uh this is an act of self-assertion which is the opposite of salvation we were led astray in an attempt to live lives for ourselves ironically just kind of do it do what everyone else is doing so we become slaves slaves to our desires alistair talked about that last week really well and then this it kind of just sort of ramps up passing our days in malice envy hatred it's not a pretty picture do you remember that titus paul says do you remember what your life before christ there is hope there is hope for your guys and here's what that hope is and that's verses four to seven four to seven god's glorious response to our malice and envy and foolishness and hatred just slide your eyes over those verses there like in the english version that we have it's it's one long sentence in greek it's one big sentence very dense and it'd be hard to sort of work out exactly what's the the key parts of it except that uh except for this like any proper sentence there is a main verb main subject and object you know what i mean by that yeah so what do you think the main verb is main subject and object and main verb is of verses four to seven have a little look there it's verse five in the greek the whole sentence hangs on he saved us so everything else everything else hangs on that those three words he saved us everything else comes under that we were once foolish disobedient slaves to our passion he saved us and all the stuff before and after that kind of fills out that idea so let's let's have a look at filling that idea out there is a why he saves us and that's the disobedient but we've just been talking about that's why that's why he saved us we needed to be saved there's the source of that salvation that's verse four god appeared god did something there's the grounds for that salvation not because we're great but because of god's mercy there's the means of that salvation we're regenerated and renewed by the holy spirit in verse five there's the goal of that salvation that we might become heirs and have hope of eternity with god that's verse seven so let's look at those just in a bit more detail just as we finish here okay verse four but when the goodness and loving kindness of our god savior appeared he saved us that's the source of salvation salvation did not originate in us if i was preaching 20 years ago i'll talk about the new age movement and i'll talk about how there's the lie of the new age movement that salvation is with within us and we need to find the divine spark etc but today i think the new age movement is a bit kind of past i don't know if people are that into it anymore but it has morphed into just general kind of modern western thought what i mean by this is it's kind of run of the mill now the guts of the new age thing which is this um that there is a false life in a real life and a false life is is a life uh lived submitting to other people's ideas this is the kind of the new the new age modern western thought right like don't don't don't lead that life don't follow what other people say you should live don't you know like religion and that kind of stuff find your own way

you know real life according to modern northwestern thought i think is this quest for personal authenticity that's what salvation looks like it's i'm unique you're unique more importantly i'm unique you know uh you know every part of our life is unique let's express that uniqueness somehow i was having conversation with friends last night and and somehow we started talking about gender you know it was interesting conversation i said well how would you define gender and they said it's the sex that you identify with as opposed to an anatomical sex well it's the sex that you you make a decision on what sex you want to identify with and i thought it was a great example of kind of pacific northwestern ideas about how you can sort of just pick and choose about what's truth and what's reality so the idea of christian salvation in this context is scandalous because it says no you can't actually save yourself you can't remake yourself that quest that you're wrong that's just a bit narcissistic and selfish that's a bit and and it's kind of a bit useless christian salvation means that god took the initiative and gave himself because we couldn't nor did we want to the source of salvation is god it's not us the grounds of salvation is mercy verse 5 he saved us not because of works done by us and righteousness but according to his own mercy god saved us because he is good not because we are good and it's a simple truth but i've already said it's one that slips from our minds i was listening to a guy called dick lucas this week who's my new favorite preacher has like a he's about 85 now if you can listen to his stuff online he's fantastic he's an english preacher he talks about speaking in a school one day english high school and assuming private boys school i guess they'd sort of roll out the the vicar once a year to do a bit of a talk to the boys you know and he said he had 20 minutes and he gave he gave what he said was the simplest most straightforward gospel presentation that he could and he said at the end of it the headmaster gets up and and thanks him and says it's just like i always say god helps those who help themselves so the headmaster didn't didn't want to didn't want to hear the message of grace didn't want to hear the message of mercy because it contradicts our deepest humanistic convictions the conviction widely held that is if there is a god if there's actually a god i'm probably good enough let me read the passage again he saved us not because of works done by us and righteousness but according to his own mercy heaven will not be full of self-made men and women it would be full of people who received god's mercy so the source of salvation is god the grounds of salvation is mercy the means of salvation he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the holy spirit whom he poured out on us richly through jesus christ our savior i love that poured out that wonderful poured out friend of mine said uh uh friend of mine in new zealand this is our classy new zealanders are so he said my wife i was having a shower my wife came in with a couple cold water and splashed it on me the next night i splashed 10 liters of cold water on her yeah it's not funny over here obviously but pretty funny in new zealand so i was thinking about this when i was reading this port it's pouring out of the holy spirit richly isn't that wonderful wonderful picture right so these two words regeneration and renewal

[20 : 16] be gentle and show perfect courtesy toward all people amen amen amen amen amen
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