

He Saved Us

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Now, will you turn with me, please, to the passage we read in Titus, chapter 3, and looking especially at verses 4 to 7. Titus, chapter 3, at verse 4.

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.

We get a short insight, or a slight insight, into conditions in the church in the Apostles' time, towards the end of his life, as he came to write these letters to Timothy and to Titus.

We find him saying, for example, why he had left Titus in Crete, in the island of Crete, as you find near the beginning of the letter there, at verse 5 of the first chapter.

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. And then he gives some specification as to what elders' qualifications are, in terms of their character, at least.

[1 : 31] But he also reveals to us that in those days he was giving directions to the likes of Titus against false teaching that had already started from within the church and was making itself known in a very damaging way.

For example, in verse 10 there, you can see from verse 10 of chapter 1, for there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. In verse 13, this testimony is true, therefore rebuke them sharply.

That they may be sound in the faith. And you can see from that that the apostle, in giving directions to Titus, was saying to them, some circumstances require sharp rebukes.

You can't just go about them in a cozy kind of conversation. You simply need to come straight to the point. And, of course, that's still the case. So he's telling us that's something of the conditions that Titus was facing, circumstances which he ministered.

[2 : 44] So Paul is giving him these directions and that counsel. And so in chapter 3, we come to see that he's saying, remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, to show perfect courtesy to all people.

It's reminding him again of the lifestyle that ought to characterize the people of God. But then he does say that this is, in fact, based upon a contrast between what we were, he says, and what we now are.

For he says, we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray. He's not leaving himself out of describing what a sinful lifestyle or an ungodly or a Christless lifestyle is.

He says, we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy.

But then he makes this contrast. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared, he saved us. In other words, what you read from that in terms of a principle for a practical use is that as you take this for at the beginning of verse 3 and what follows on, and then there's but at the beginning of verse 4, that's really the theological basis on which our practical Christian life has to be founded or set.

[4 : 19] Everything we do practically has to be properly based upon a theological basis. The theological basis is that we are now saved.

In verse 6, he saved us. Having once been the kind of people he describes in verses 3 and 4, now he's saying, verses 2 and 3, now he's saying, but he now saved us.

So you always remember that too, that you don't actually begin thinking of the practical issues of a Christian life by thinking of these things themselves, what things you're to do practically, how you must, as he says here, be very busy in good works, and all of that's important.

They have to be based on the proper theological foundation of salvation in Christ. That comes first. The works then follow on from that. So he's giving us this wonderful description and definition of being saved.

He's saying he saved us in verse 5, and that's really the key, the central emphasis in these verses, if you like. He saved us, but he tells us that he saved us out of something.

[5 : 30] He saved us out of his own love and mercy. In other words, he tells us where this salvation came from. Where does it originate? Where does it come from?

Well, he's saying he saved us out of his love and mercy. When the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared, it is according to his own mercy that he saved us.

So these three things, his goodness, loving kindness, mercy. It's out of that, as that flowed toward us, that we came to be saved by him. Secondly, he saved us by regeneration and renewal.

Now the apostle is giving us some very chunky theology to deal with, and it's important that we deal with it, although we're going to deal with it all too briefly today. Not just that he saved us out of his love and mercy, but verses 5 to 6, he saved us by regeneration, the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

And thirdly, he saved us so that we would be adopted by God, or the outcome of that salvation, or very much part of it. But it's put here as something that is God's purpose and aim in saving his people, is to make them his family, is to bring them into the grace of his adoption by which they come to be his children, so that being justified, verse 7, by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

[7 : 02] Becoming an heir means being one of God's children who then have the right to property, the property of heaven, the inheritance of heaven.

That's God's purpose, and that's God's intention in saving his people. It's towards having that inheritance in their possession and forevermore.

So he saved us out of his love and mercy. He saved us by regeneration and renewal, and he saved us so that we'd be adopted by God. Let's just briefly work our way through these three main headings.

Now he's saying here, But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God, our Savior, appeared, he saved us. And we add to that the reference to mercy there as well.

According to his mercy, he saved us. The goodness and lovingkindness of God. Two important related terms to describe God and who he is and what he's like and what he's done.

[8 : 06] We are saved out of the goodness of God. We attribute our salvation to the goodness of God, to the fact that God in his goodness showed his goodness to us in saving us, not in condemning us.

And when you think about God being good and described as being good, one of the things you say from that is there is nothing opposite to good in God.

Even the best person in the world, the best human being, you would say that's a really good woman, that's a really good man. But you can never say that there's nothing opposite to goodness in them, that there's no shred of badness at all in them.

But with God, there is no ungoodness in God. There is nothing other than goodness. When you think about God being good, he's good without any shade of ungoodness in him whatsoever.

And that itself is a great thought, that when we pray to God who is good, we're praying to this perfect goodness. We're serving this perfect goodness.

[9 : 15] We have been saved by this perfect goodness. And how that contrasts with the ideas that people have of God, as you often find in the world in which we live, God being accused of so much that is completely untrue, of course, and against what his word, what the Bible tells us.

I had a text there just last week saying, God doesn't exist and he's homophobic. And my response to it was, well, if something doesn't exist, how can it be anything, including being homophobic?

You see, the futility of that thinking of the world, the illogical thinking of the world, the darkness of the thinking of the world, the thinking that says, this is what God is like, this is what I think he's like,

and therefore that's what he's like if he exists.

No, he's saying, when the goodness of God appeared, nothing unlike goodness exists in God. That's who you're dealing with. That's your confidence and encouragement that there are no shades of goodness. There's nothing sort of in between goodness and badness in God.

[10:31] He is perfect goodness. And that's what he says, our salvation has come from or out of. But he also uses the word loving kindness. Before we look at that, you remember Moses in Exodus chapter 33.

He came to God with a specific request, and it's an amazing request in many ways, for someone like Moses who knew God so well, who knew God face to face, as the Bible says, he came to God and said, Lord, I beseech you, show me your glory.

Show me your glory. What a prayer that is. What a request that is. For any human being, even the likes of Moses, to come to God and say, Lord, show me your glory.

How did God respond? Did God say, I can't show you my glory. My glory is mine. It's my property. No, God says, I will make all my goodness pass before you.

And you go into chapter 34, where God actually made that happen. And it tells us that God passed before Moses. Couldn't see him visibly.

[11:42] There was a representation of him. But the thing especially for Moses to note was that God passed before him, speaking to him out of that occasion and saying, I am the Lord, the Lord.

The Lord who is good, merciful, compassionate, forgiving. That's his glory. That belongs at least to his glory, you might see.

Lord, maybe not all of his glory, of course. But what he's saying to Moses was, you've asked me, Moses, show me your glory. Well, I'm going to show you my glory. I'm going to show you my glory through my goodness, through my forgiveness, through the emphasis that I'm going to give you on God being forgiving and kind and gracious.

That's the God we deal with today. Not the God of the atheistic world, not the God of the humanistic world that exists around us. That's why we want to show this God to these people around us.

That's why we have to show him his goodness, as we'll see, show him his goodness through the life that he gives us to live. And then he says loving kindness.

[12:52] We need to hurry on through these terms. They've all got so much packed into them. The goodness and loving kindness of God. Well, loving kindness is a good translation of it. It's not just a revelation that God is loving as well as good.

It's loving kindness because there's an emphasis, you see, on God, not just being a God who is loving, but loving in the sense of doing good, essentially, in the sense of acting kindly toward us.

That's why loving kindness is such a good way of describing this word. That Paul is using. It's just one word, loving kindness. It's the word from which you get this, the word we use now in English, philanthropy, which is really reaching out in acts of mercy or of kindness to people.

Well, this is the word in Greek. It's philanthropy. Philanthropy. It comes from this word that describes God here. God is philanthropic in the sense that he shows his love by acting practically in kindness towards us.

So, you see, it's not just love in theory. It's love in beneficent love, love that does good to people. That's God.

[14:12] And that's from the God from whom our salvation has come. It's out of that source that our salvation comes. But then he says, when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared.

Appeared. And that's a word that Paul uses a number of times with regard to Jesus coming into this world, the Son of God, the incarnation, the Son of God becoming man.

He appeared. He was revealed. And God is revealed because he, of course, Jesus is God and God the Son from all eternity.

And coming into this world, taking out human nature, is itself God revealing himself to us in a remarkable unparalleled way. There is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God coming into this world, an amazing revelation of God to us.

He appears. In Jesus Christ. He is made manifest to us in Jesus Christ. When you look at Christ, you're looking at God's heart, at God's mind, at God's goodness, at God's loving kindness.

[15:28] It's appear. He appeared. And it means that that goodness of God and that loving kindness of God is seen in Jesus Christ above every other way in which God has revealed it.

And it wasn't that there was no revealing of his goodness, of his grace, of his loving kindness in the Old Testament days before his Son became incarnate and took our human nature.

But think of it something like this. The Old Testament has evidence, indeed, you can read there easily enough, about God's goodness being shown, about God's loving kindness. The psalmist praises God for his goodness and for his loving kindness frequently.

But think of it as something like a statue of somebody famous or important that's been commissioned and hasn't quite yet been formally revealed or formally dedicated, whatever the word is you use.

And until that time, you often find such a statue would be shrouded, covered with some sort of covering of cloth or canvas, something, so that you could see something of the outline of it.

[16:39] You could see something of the shape of what that statue is going to be like. You can perhaps make out one or two features through the covering, but you can't see anything like the finer detail of it.

But then when the day comes and that covering is removed, then you can see the detail. Then you can see the face. Then you can see the posture of the arms or the hands or whatever.

And it's much more detailed what you see. Well, it's like that with God and his goodness and his mercy. Indeed, everything that has come to be revealed in Christ, it's God, as it were, taking the veil off the Old Testament, taking the covering away, through which we can see but not see all that much compared to the New Testament, compared to Jesus himself.

And there is Jesus for you today in the Scriptures. It's God unveiled. It's God with a shroud taken off, if you like. As he says in John chapter 1, as John says, the only begotten one or the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him.

No one has seen God at any time, but he has now come to be seen. Through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. And not only has he come to be seen in Jesus Christ, he's come to be seen in detail.

[17:58] It's God's heart that's revealed to us. The one who is in the bosom, in the heart of the Father, he has come and revealed that heart to us in himself.

You see, the goodness and the loving kindness appeared. And that's the basis, that's the source, that's the origin of our salvation.

And then he saved us. Not because any works of righteousness, which we did, but according to his mercy. According to his mercy.

We'll just need to look at that in passing. According to his own mercy, he saved us. So the words, he saved, they go along with, he saved us out of his goodness and loving kindness which appeared.

He saved us not because of works done by us. You could translate that not because of any righteousness, righteous works, we ourselves have done. The emphasis there is on we ourselves.

[19:00] That's not the source of our salvation. Our source is in the mercy of God. It's according to his own mercy.

Not our own righteous acts, but his own mercy. And when you see according to there, it really has something of the idea, if you think of a question, how wide is God's salvation?

How wide is that he saved us? How wide does that reach? What extent does that reach? Well, what you take from this verse when he says according to his own mercy is the salvation that he has given us or is offering to us is as wide as his mercy.

It's as wide as his mercy. Can you measure that? Of course you can't. However wide God's mercy is, his salvation is as wide as that.

And that's no small thing, is it? It's an incredibly wonderful, large salvation. You know, the chorus, the younger children sing, it's so true, isn't it?

[20:16] my God is so big. And that's what it's saying, my God is so big. And it's out of that bigness, out of that wonder of God's being as good and loving kind, loving kindness and mercy, he saved us.

But he saved us, secondly, by regeneration and renewal. Now, this is another complex phrase in many ways, a lot of theological terms used in here.

But let's see if we can just go through it so as to open it out a wee bit. If we take by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, if you take the word washing and then take the following words to be a description of that washing.

So he's saying he saved us according to his own mercy by the washing. What type of washing is it? It's the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. The whole thing goes together like that.

It's the washing and it's the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. And of course, when he mentions washing, Paul is talking about the kind of thing that sin is.

[21 : 37] That's in the background of it, though he doesn't have to specify it here. He specified it elsewhere. All you've got to do is go to Ephesians in chapter 2. When he talks about washing, he's talking about something that's presupposed, something that is supposed.

Before you can wash something, it has to be dirty. It doesn't make any sense to wash it otherwise. What God is saying is our sins actually mean we're filthy in his sight.

whatever sins we are guilty of, we may see them as small or insignificant. The world may actually redefine sin altogether for you as it does, but God is still saying, I see you as filthy and you're in need of being washed.

And we can redefine that all we like, whether it's to do with marriage, whether it's to do with human behavior, relationships, or individual morality, whatever it is. the world of our day has actually taken words from the Bible and totally misused them.

Because, for example, you'll find certain lifestyles set under the banner of God is love. And it's you traditional Christians that are wrong in not accepting lifestyles that you can actually put under the fact that God is love.

[22 : 52] So he accepts everybody. He's loving towards all human beings. Yes, he is. But he still says you need to be washed. You cannot just take a lifestyle that Paul is describing in this very context itself.

We ourselves were once foolish. We were disobedient. We were led astray. We were slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy and so on.

Go to Ephesians 2. Go to other letters of Paul. You'll see this is what he's saying. All of these sins, as you see a sinful lifestyle, whatever the world may say it is, whatever it's redefined as, however much you put it under the banner that God is love, God is saying, you're filthy and you need to be washed.

And the only washing that can actually do for you is the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. The washing that comes from God's own work, from the Holy Spirit's energy and activity.

Regeneration really means bringing to life what is dead. Ephesians 2, you were dead in trespasses and sins.

[24 : 12] Regeneration is God coming and bringing what was dead to life. And renewal is a word that then, very closely attached to that, you could say that's the life that is brought about by regeneration comes to be found in every part of that human being.

conscience, mind, everything to do with the inner workings of our soul as well as the use of our bodies.

The effect of that new life is renewal. Regeneration creates the life. Renewal is the extent of it throughout the whole person. And that's so much part of what it is that God has done in saving. He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. Both regeneration and renewal are products of the Holy Spirit.

You see what he's saying next? Which or whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior. You're a Christian here today.

[25 : 23] You don't have a tiny trickle of blessing from God. God has poured out his Holy Spirit upon his people.

You don't have tiny bits of the Holy Spirit living in you. You have the Holy Spirit himself poured out upon us, he says, richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

On the basis of what Christ has done, as the psalm puts it in Psalm 68, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. He led the powers that held us captive in sin, he led them captive. Why? So that he would receive gifts for men. So that the Lord God might dwell amongst them. That's, you see, taking us into the New Testament of the Holy Spirit coming to live in us as God's people.

It goes back to what Christ has done. But that Holy Spirit coming to live in us brings with him this life, this new life. He regenerates, and he regenerates in a way that renews the whole person.

[26 : 38] People often ask the question, what is a Christian? Well, here's the answer that Paul gives to it. A Christian is not simply someone who goes to church regularly, good though that is.

A Christian is not somebody who can repeat the Bible, you know, with chunks of the Bible off by heart. That's a good thing, too. A Christian is not just somebody who lives a decent, civil, and commendable lifestyle, who avoids excessive behavior.

That's good, of course, as well. A Christian is a new creation because all of this is to do with the new birth, regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

That is the washing with which God washes his people from their sins. Nothing else can do that for you or for me. As we come today to confess our sins to God, as we come to worship Him and give Him thanks, this is what we're giving thanks for, that He has saved us, that out of His goodness and loving kindness and according to His mercy, He saved us, and that He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, and that He does so in an abundant and rich way for us.

are you saved today? I'm asking, do you think you're saved? Are you defining salvation for yourself?

[28 : 25] That shows the richness, the fullness of that salvation. salvation, and He did it so that we would become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

There are big chunks of theology there, as I said. I hope it's opened up for myself and for yourself today, how wonderful I think it is to be saved, what a terribly empty life it is without being saved, how important it is to understand what it means to be saved, saved, but above all things, how important it is actually to be saved, as God Himself defines that for us.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank You that You are the saving God, and that the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, has appeared to us preeminently in Your Son.

We thank You today, O Lord, for all that has been accomplished in Him, the way that You sent Him into this world to die that death of the cross, and on the way to it to show a perfect obedience, to manifest the goodness and loving kindness of God.

Lord, we thank You today for the measure of understanding we have of these things. We pray that You would help us to know that washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit so that we can truly say that the whole Trinity is involved in our lives.

[30 : 14] We thank You today for the prospect of that inheritance that we possess and have a hope towards the fullness of. We thank You that it rightly belongs through Your gift to those who are saved.

We pray today for a greater assurance for ourselves, and we have come to trust in You that this inheritance indeed, Lord, belongs to us also. So go before us now into the remainder of this day and pardon our sins for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Amen. Let's now sing in conclusion Psalm 18, verses 1 to 6.

Psalm 18, we'll sing from the beginning to the tune Wareham, verses 1 to 6. I love You, Lord. You are my strength, a fortress is, the Lord to me, my rock and my deliverer, for refuge to my God I flee. That's on page 19, page 19, or Psalm 18, to the tune Wareham singing, the verses marked 1 to 6. I love You, Lord.

[31 : 24] I love You, Lord.

You are my strength, a fortress is, the Lord to me.

My hope and my deliverer, for refuge to my God I flee.

He is my stronghold and my shield, a Lord who sends me by His might.

I'll call on Him, I'll give Him praise, I'll save He put my foes to flight.

[32 : 36] The courts of death entangled me, destruction, with me like a wave, and circle by the snares of death, I miss the terror of the grave.

In my distress, I call on God, I cry out to the Lord for aid.

He from His temple heard my voice, He listened to the prayer I made.

I'll go to the main door again this morning. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

Amen. Amen. Amen.