

Transformed By God

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Treg. Please open up your Bibles this morning to the book of Titus. The book of Titus.

We're continuing our series through Titus this morning. If you did not bring a Bible of your own, there should be Bibles there in front of you in the seat backs. And you can find that on page 938 of that Bible there in front of you.

And we are going to be in Titus chapter 3, verses 3 through 8 this morning. Believe it or not, we only have three more sermons in the book of Titus. We've covered a lot of ground in this little book.

And I hope that it's been as encouraging for you as it has been for me. Last week, you saw that Treg helped us to see who we once were before the grace of God appeared. Before the grace of God appeared in our life.

And today, this morning, we're going to pick up at that same place. But we'll see the whole process of spiritual transformation. The whole process of spiritual transformation.

[1 : 01] So let's look there now. Titus chapter 3, verses 3 through 8 this morning. Please follow along with me as I read. Paul says, He says, The saying is trustworthy.

Amen. This is God's word.

Let's pray together. Lord, you are God and besides you there is no other. Who is man that you are mindful of him?

We are nothing. And yet you have shown us kindness and love and unmerited favor in Christ. And so we pray now that you would for the next several minutes.

Lord, cause us to look up, out and away from ourselves. Away from our wants, our needs, our desires. And would you fix our gaze on Christ this morning.

[2 : 52] We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Well, they say hindsight is 20-20. But for the first 1,400 years or so, for about 1,400 years, the smartest people in the world got it all wrong.

They believed that we were at the center of it all. The most intelligent, most well-educated men and women of the world held what we now call a geocentric view of the universe.

Meaning that they believed that the earth was at the center of the universe. And so all known planets, all known stars, the sun, the moon, everything that they knew of, as far as they concerned, revolved around planet earth.

We were at the center. Everything revolved around us. And Claudius Ptolemy was influential in this view. He was a mathematician, an astrologer, a geographer.

He was extremely intelligent, widely respected. And his geocentric theory of the universe spread through the civilized world and was universally accepted.

[4 : 11] That is, until Copernicus proposed what we now call the heliocentric model in 1543. Which said, of course, that the sun was at the center of the universe and not the earth.

Y'all didn't know that you were coming here for an astrology class this morning, did you? Copernicus's view, which we now know is the correct view, was not well received.

To put it lightly. See, this was, it was not just a scientific proposition. The belief that the earth was the center of the universe, that everything revolved around us.

That had become an entire framework for all of life. In fact, it had become official church doctrine. And so much so that when Galileo, you might know that name, in the 16th century, and Giordano Bruno, an Italian philosopher, in 1600, proposed these same ideas, that the earth was not the center of the universe, they were condemned as heretics.

Galileo was sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life, forbidden to publish any of his works. And Bruno was burned at the stake, proclaiming that the earth was not at the center.

[5 : 33] You see, it was so embedded in their philosophy, and in their theology, and their view of the world, that we are the center of the universe, that nothing else seemed to make sense.

In fact, it was heresy to claim anything else. And as easy as it is for us to look back and scoff, and to laugh about just how wrong they were, the truth is, we all make this same mistake.

Every one of us are prone to think, and to act, and to walk, and to talk, as if we were the center of the universe.

But of course, this is not true. As Christians, we know, we believe that we are not the center of the universe. God is. Our lives revolve around Him, not the other way around.

Christianity, although this isn't popular, Christianity is not a man-centered religion. Christianity is about God. That's not popular.

[6 : 40] We want it to be about us. But our conversion to Christianity was a transformation inside of us, by the power of God that shifted the center of our universe away from self, and back to where it rightly belonged to God.

From beginning to end, from beginning to end, our existence, our transformation, our life in Christ is all about God.

Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory. That's the cry of a transformed heart. It is all about God.

In our text this morning, Paul is, he's reminding Titus, and he's showing us that our salvation, our transformation in Christ from beginning to end, is from God, it is by God, it is through God, it is about God, it is for God, it is God-centered from beginning to end.

And so our outline this morning, what we're going to do, we're going to see five God-centered aspects of spiritual transformation. If you're a note-taker, this will help you follow along. This is my outline this morning.

[7 : 58] Five God-centered aspects of spiritual transformation. And what I hope we'll see is, again, from beginning to end, it is all about God.

First, we see the summary of transformation. The summary of transformation. The last week we saw that Paul wrote to Titus that believers there in Crete are to, verse 1, chapter 3, verse 1, to be submissive to rulers and authorities, be obedient, be ready for every good work, speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, be gentle, show perfect courtesy to all people.

Why? Why should believers act that way? And he tells us here in verse 3, for because we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, hated by others and hating one another.

This is the before of spiritual transformation. You all have seen those before and after photos. I know you have. Somebody's trying to sell you on a product, this weight loss product, hair recovery product, skin cream, whatever it may be, and they show you the before picture, and it just looks awful.

There's a thousand things wrong with that image besides the one thing that they're advertising that they're trying to fix, right? And then they show you the after picture, and it's incredible.

[9 : 28] It's beautiful. The lighting is better. It's a better angle. They look like a supermodel in the after picture. Paul is showing us here the before of spiritual transformation, and it's ugly.

There's no hiding it here. In other words, he says, you used to act this way. You used to be characterized by sin.

You used to walk in foolishness. You used to walk in disobedience. You used to walk in slavery to sin, but then something happened. When the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared, He saved us.

In other words, if you are a Christian, you have been transformed. You have a before, and now you have an after.

There is now something different about you. You are not the same as you once were. If anyone is in Christ, he is, help me out, what? He's a new creation. The old has gone.

[10 : 38] Behold, the new has come. You see, verses 3 through 5 here of chapter 3, they give us a condensed summary. It is a big picture overview of salvation.

So every Christian in the room can take these verses and say, yeah, that's me. That happened to me. Now this is Paul's quick bullet point summary of transformation. In fact, the whole book of Titus is summed up in a nutshell here.

We could have saved some time if we just went right here to these verses first. He says, Do good, do good works, because you were sinful, but God saved you.

That's the summary here. Do good works, because you used to be sinful, and now God has transformed you by his grace. That is our testimony, church.

If you are a Christian, this is your testimony. In this summary, it's important here, because it is abundantly clear who the focus is on.

[11 : 44] Who gets the glory, and the praise, and the credit here? Who's the hero of this story? It's God. From beginning to end. Paul makes it clear here.

The only thing that you and I contributed to our salvation is the need to be saved. The only thing that we contributed to our salvation was the need for redemption.

Our contribution here in these verses was sin. It was rebellion. It was foolishness. It was disobedience. But God saved us.

Paul says something similar in 1 Corinthians 6. 1 Corinthians 6. You don't have to turn there now. I'll read this to you, but maybe write this down for later. 1 Corinthians 6, verse 11.

He says, That's the before picture.

[13 : 01] But you were washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

And such were some of you. But the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared in the gospel of Jesus Christ and He saved us.

That's the summary of our salvation. How God-centered is your testimony. Who's the hero of your story of salvation?

How do you tell it when you share your story of your salvation from death to life? Who's the hero of your story? You all heard Sean's testimony last week. I hated that I had to miss it last week.

But I know what he did not say. He did not say, Well, I was going down the wrong path, making some bad choices, but then I straightened up and I decided to figure it out.

[14 : 05] And I cleaned myself up. I got better. And I decided I'd start going to church. And I decided I'd start reading my Bible because I knew that that was the best thing for me. And I'm much better off than I used to be.

You should have seen me back then. I've made some really powerful strides forward. Who's at the center of that story? It's I. I am the hero of that story. Self. In that story, God is not central.

You are. He's the medicine that you decide to take because you realize you are sick. But friend, what does Paul say? You're not sick apart from the mercy of God. You're dead.

Dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. Dead men, dead women, cannot work. Dead men, dead men, women cannot please God.

Dead men cannot improve. Dead men cannot believe. Dead men, they stink. Like Lazarus in the tomb. But God made us alive together in Christ.

[15 : 13] But God saved us. You want to sum up your salvation? Here it is. We were dead, but God saved us in Christ.

Is that your story? Is that your story? This is a three-verse summary of new life in Christ. And so here's an application for you when you go home this afternoon.

Here's a challenge. I want you to write out your testimony. And you got three sentences. That's all you're allowed. Three sentences. Write out your testimony. And make sure that God is at the center.

Second. Second, we see the basis of our transformation. The basis of our transformation. Look again here to verse 5.

Paul says, He saved us not because of works done by us. Now hold on. Paul has been telling us in Titus over and over and over and over again.

[16 : 18] Do good works. Do good works. Do good works. These false teachers, they prove that they are false because they are not doing good works. There's no fruit in their lives.

Faith accords with godliness. Here in verse 8, he says, Be careful to devote yourselves to good works. So what gives? He wants to make absolutely certain here that we get the order right.

Our works are not the basis of our salvation. By no means. Again, dead men and dead women cannot do good works. We have to get this order right.

See, our works are not the root of our transformation. They are the fruit of our transformation. Say that again. They are not the root, the basis of our transformation, of our new life in Christ.

They are the fruit, the overflow, the outworking of our spiritual transformation. See, we have a hard time with this because we don't want to see ourselves as totally, completely, spiritually helpless.

[17 : 21] We want to contribute in some way. We want to have a part in this. We don't want to be helpless or weak. We're too prideful for that.

But that is precisely who Jesus came to save. Not the strong, not the capable, not those who think that they add anything.

Jesus came to save the weak and the needy. It's not the healthy who need a physician, but the sick. His power is made perfect in our weakness.

And when you pull the thread on your story of salvation, I wonder where it stops. Does it stop at a prayer you prayed, a decision you made, any good work, any list of good deeds, good thoughts, good works as the root, the basis of your salvation?

If that's where it stops, friend, you need to keep pulling. Now pull a little bit further. When you peel back all the layers, every prayer, every good deed, every belief, every act of yours in your testimony, what is left at the bottom holding it all up?

[18 : 37] What does Paul say? It is the merciful heart of God. The merciful heart of God. What's the basis here of our salvation?

Paul says, God saved us not because of works done by us, but according to His own mercy. See, we have to get the order right.

God did not look upon you, look upon anything done by you, and deem you worthy of salvation. God did not look ahead in time to see what you might do or would do, and then on that basis, deem you worthy of salvation.

Again, you see, that puts us, that puts our goodness at the root, at the center, and God orbiting around us. Paul says, the basis of your transformation is the merciful heart of God.

Mercy, by definition, is given to those who don't deserve it. This was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation. It's October, and I know for most of y'all that most normal people, that means pumpkin spice lattes, and fall weather, and flannel, and colors changing outside.

[19 : 55] For nerds like me, I think of the Protestant Reformation. So, 505 years ago, Martin Luther, he nailed his 95 thesis to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, Germany.

These were 95 concerns with the teaching of the church, 95 points of doctrinal clarification, and at the center of it was a practice called indulgences.

You may be familiar with that, maybe not, but this practice of indulgences, Luther was concerned that the church was teaching you could buy your way to forgiveness. You could work your way, earn your way, whether by money or by merit, towards acceptance with God.

And he said, no, that's impossible. Faith is the path of salvation. Salvation is a gift given by faith according to the mercy of God.

And he was right. So he says this, he says, we believe that the very beginning and end of salvation and the sum of Christianity consists of faith in Christ, who by his blood alone and not by any work of ours, has put away sin and destroyed the power of death.

[21 : 10] Is it not wonderful news to believe that salvation lies outside of ourselves? Amen? Friend, this is good news.

It's good news that we cannot earn acceptance from God. You can't do it.

If you are in Christ, you have his acceptance in full, not because of you or anything in you, anything you've done, but by his mercy alone.

And if you are not in Christ, friend, you're working to please God can never earn his favor. It's only, only by saving faith in the Savior, the perfect Savior, Christ Jesus.

His mercy, not our works, is the basis of our salvation. Third, the third aspect of our transformation here, we see the work of transformation.

[22 : 13] The work of transformation. Look at verse 5 again. Paul says, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy.

How? Verse 5. By the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Christ our Savior.

Now, we were reading this at the dinner table the other night. Every now and then, I try to do it every week, but most weeks, I try to read the sermon passage before I come here to preach and ask my family, hey, what questions do you have about this?

And a lot of times, I find that they got questions I'm not thinking of, and this was one of those times. I didn't plan to talk about this at all. But Amanda said, what does it mean, the washing of regeneration and renewal?

What does that mean? I didn't plan to say a thing about that. Ezekiel 36. Y'all can turn there with me. Ezekiel 36, verses 24 through 27.

[23 : 21] The people of Israel are in exile. God is speaking to them through the prophet Ezekiel. He makes them a promise.

Verse 24. See if this sounds familiar. He says, I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.

I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness. And from 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 will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

See we have this promise here that God has given to Old Covenant Old Testament Israel this promise to cleanse Israel by his spirit to give them a new heart to give them renewed desires to cause them to walk in ways that are pleasing to him.

[24 : 31] And now here Paul says that is accomplished through Jesus Christ for any who come to faith in him Jew or Gentile. Paul is showing us how our salvation was accomplished.

He's showing us the work of God in salvation. And I love how Paul shows us each member of the Trinity at work. Here. Each member of the Trinity at work.

We believe God is a Trinity. Okay. One God not three gods one God three persons not one God acting at different times in different ways one God three persons Father Son Holy Spirit each of them working together in cooperation in the work of redemption.

So we believe that our redemption was a merciful plan of God planned in eternity past and worked out in time according to the counsel of his will.

But here Paul shows us that it is also a work of the Holy Spirit. He says in verse 5 our salvation is according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

[25 : 44] Last week if you were here the section of the statement of faith that you read was concerning regeneration. And I'd like to read a portion of that again to you this morning.

It says this we believe that in order to be saved sinners must be regenerated or born again. Born again Christian that's redundant you know that right?

It's like saying pen number personal identification number number born again Christian it's redundant there's no other kind of Christian but a born again Christian if you are a Christian you are born again if you're born again you're a Christian you have the spirit in you.

Alright keep going. Regeneration is a change of heart by the Holy Spirit who revives the spiritually dead that's the before picture all of us savingly enlightening our minds to understand the word of God and renewing the whole nature so that they love the Lord and desire to practice holiness that's what we saw God promise Israel here in Ezekiel and that's what Paul says was brought to life through the gospel new life new minds new nature new love for God that's the work of the spirit of God if you are a Christian you are born of his spirit you have the spirit in you in full there's no second filling of the spirit if you don't have the spirit you're spiritually dead but if you have the spirit you are regenerated you're alive you're born again if you understand the word of God praise God that's the work of the spirit in you if you love the Lord at all praise God that's the work of the spirit in you if you desire to practice holiness praise God that's the work of the spirit in you if you see any of the fruit of the spirit in your life praise God that's a work of the spirit in you but how was the spirit given verse 6 he was poured out on us richly through

Jesus Christ our savior faith trust in you in you in you in you Holy Spirit Christ Jesus the son of God accomplished our salvation this is the gospel church we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ faith trust in his perfect obedience in our place faith trust in his death in our place on the cross the death that we deserve for our sin faith trust in his perfect resurrection from the dead trust faith that if we have died with him in a death like his then surely we will share in his eternal life and it is through faith in Jesus Christ that we receive the promised Holy Spirit who is our helper who guides us and comforts us and leads us and convicts us our comforter our helper until he returns again see our transformation church is God's work it is God's plan accomplished through

[29 : 11] God's son by the power of God's spirit from beginning to end it is God's work shouldn't this lead us to thankfulness church what do we have to boast about shouldn't this lead us to humility church we have nothing to boast about but the work of God in us a right understanding of God's work and salvation ought to lead us to be the most grateful the most humble the most awestruck the most joyful people in all the world we are saved by God because of his goodness fourth we see the effect of transformation the effect of transformation what is the effect of transformation Paul says it's twofold here and there are more of course but Paul is showing us two effects of transformation here in verse 7 two effects of our salvation in Christ he says in our salvation we have present justification and future hope we've been given present justification and future hope look with me to verse 7 he says

God saved us so that so here's the effect here's the result so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life so you see there's two effects here present justification future hope he says we are justified by his grace what does that mean this again was at the heart of the protestant reformation it's this question of how can a sinner be accepted in the sight of God how can we with all of our sin all of our unrighteous deeds how can we with all our rebellion against God be counted righteous forgiven accepted loved in the sight of God it's justification this this is courtroom language this is legal terminology so imagine this with me in the legal courtroom of God

God is the judge he is holy he judges all the earth in righteousness not a single decision that comes from his counsel is wrong in any way not a single decision is unjust and one day we will all stand before him for judgment and if we really know the depth of our sin we should we should tremble at that thought we have earned punishment for our sin and the just sentence for our sin for our disobedience is death it is condemnation not a person on this planet can stand and say I've earned acceptance with you God not but one Jesus Christ and so when God the judge pulls out the record of your life every thought every deed every motivation every word and if you're like me that list spills out over the top of the table and down onto the floor and out into the hallway and he asks you how do you plead what do you say what do you say if you are in

Christ friend you look him in the eye and you say I am innocent I am innocent not guilty and I know that for certain because it was it was decided long ago not because of anything in me but because of your work in my life because of your saving mercy there is nothing good in me but God you have seen fit to nail my sin to the cross of Christ and to give me his perfect righteousness by faith not guilty I am innocent because of the gospel 2nd Corinthians 5:21 it tells me for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the very righteousness of God and so the gavel comes down and the verdict is declared you are righteous in God's sight not guilty

Paul says that verdict is already decided if you are in Christ you are justified right now not by not by your works not by your goodness but by his grace alone and with that present justification comes future hope certain joyful expectant life changing hope if we are in Christ God is not only the judge he is our father we are adopted as brothers and sisters Christ Jesus being the firstborn into the family of God so so verse 7 tells us being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life if God is our father through Christ we will inherit eternal life that is our hope life forever in the presence of God free from sin free from suffering free from death fullness of joy in the presence of God in the new heavens and the new earth full access to God our father through the blood of Jesus

[35 : 29] Christ this is what he has done for us believer this type of freedom the freedom of total acceptance and certain hope that ought to transform the way we live our lives amen we live as sons and daughters of God which brings us to our fifth and final point this morning this is where we close fifth we see the evidence of transformation the evidence of transformation you see good works good works the evidence that you have been made a son or a daughter of God is that you begin to look a lot like your father there's a family resemblance that's going on here and you join into the family business you reflect his godly character and you go about his godly work verse 8

Paul says the saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things insist on these things Titus don't skirt past it don't avoid it don't remove God from the center why so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works this has been the message of Titus hasn't it faith accords with godliness good works are the fruit not the root of our transformation Christ Jesus gave himself to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works not for our glory not for our attention not for our boost in our self-esteem but for the glory of God not by our strength but by the strength of God that's what

Christ came to create in us I hope that Luther's quote is still ringing in your ears we've said it two or three times already throughout this series in Titus maybe you know it by now it says we are saved by faith alone but the faith that saves is never alone we are saved by faith alone but the faith that saves is never alone it is always accompanied by the fruit of good works so here's the challenge that I want to leave pounding in your chest as you leave here this morning if you are not a believer if you've never known the transforming grace of God friend repent and believe the gospel God's grace is extended to you this moment in the preaching of the word as Christ says come to me all who weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest call upon the name of the

Lord and you will be saved but friend if you have been redeemed Christian would you would you reflect on the goodness of God and your salvation this week would you reflect on what God has done it is about him and then out of that God centered view of yourself and the world around you and your salvation go do good for the glory of God as an overflow of the good you've received from him extend his goodness and his kindness and his mercy and his salvation to others what good can you do for the glory of God this week his power at work in us extended to the world what opportunities is the spirit bringing to your mind even now as you think who around you needs to hear the good news of the gospel who can you lay your life down for this week and meet a need and give an opportunity to show and to share the goodness of

Jesus at home at work in your neighborhood at school what good works can we do together for the glory of God as a church family not for our credit not for our recognition not for our morale not for us but for the glory of God you see the evidence of our transformation is our zeal for good works are we zealous for good works Matthew 5 16 let your light so shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to us give glory to your father who is in heaven church for 1400 years they got it all wrong and they thought it was centered on us and sadly here in the year 2022 not much has changed no we don't think the earth is literally at the center of the universe but we all tend to think that we are at the center of the universe see

[41 : 02] Ptolemy he popularized the idea but he didn't come up with it it started in a garden Genesis chapter 3 where Adam and Eve placed their wants their desires their needs their appetite at the center but Christ Jesus came to transform our man centered view of reality and to restore all things for the glory of God it is all about him he is at the center our mission statement at Seaweed Bay is to magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ that's what we're about that's that's the mission and when you magnify something whatever it is that's at the center is the focused point that lens is magnifying whatever is at the center everything else is kind of on the periphery on the edges is blurred you can see it but it's not totally clear church my challenge for you let's be a church let's be a people that keep

God at the center we may magnify the glory of God let's pray father god it's all about you it's not about us and your work of salvation it's amazing lord what you have planned what you have done your power at work in us and we pray that you would receive all the glory all the honor all the praise that you are due we love you lord and even our love for you is your work in our hearts we pray that we would go do good not to earn your favor that's impossible but lord out of the out of the gift that we've received new life in Christ we pray that we would share and extend your merciful heart to others around us we pray this in Christ name amen