

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 13, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



TITUS STUDY
“Tough Grace in a Difficult Place”

GRACIOUS REMINDERS
Titus 3:1-8



BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TITUS:

- (1) **Author: Apostle Paul** - Authorship by the Apostle Paul (Titus 1:1) is essentially uncontested.
- (2) **Date: A.D. 62-64** - Titus was written between A.D. 62–64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments,
- (3) **Literary Type: Pastoral Letter** - Along with 1, 2 Timothy, these letters to Paul’s sons in the faith are traditionally called “The Pastoral Epistles.”

- (4) **Place of Origin: Nicopolis** – Paul wrote this letter most likely from Nicopolis in Macedonia (some have suggested that the letter might possibly have been written from Corinth. (cf Titus 3:12).
- (5) **Recipient: Titus** - This epistle is named for its recipient, Titus, who is mentioned by name 13 times in the New Testament. The title in the Greek New Testament literally reads “To Titus.” Titus, like Timothy, had become a beloved disciple and fellow worker in the gospel. Most likely, Titus served with Paul on both the second and third missionary journeys. Paul’s last mention of Titus (in 2 Timothy 4:10) reports that he had gone for ministry in Dalmatia—modern Yugoslavia. The letter probably was delivered by Zenas and Apollos. Although Luke did not mention Titus by name in the book of Acts, it seems probable that Titus, a Gentile, met and may have been led to faith in Christ by Paul before or during the apostle’s first missionary journey. **Later, Titus ministered for a period of time with Paul on the Island of Crete and was left behind to continue and strengthen the work.** After Artemas or Tychicus arrived to direct the ministry there, Paul wanted Titus to join him in the city of Nicopolis, in the province of Achaia in Greece, and stay through the winter. Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul’s third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned 9 times in 2 Corinthians, where Paul refers to him as “my brother” (in 2 Corinthians 2:13) and “my partner and fellow worker” (in 2 Corinthians 8:23) The young elder was already familiar with Judaizers, false teachers in the church, who among other things insisted that all Christians, Gentile as well as Jew, were bound by the Mosaic law. Titus had accompanied Paul and Barnabas years earlier to the Council of Jerusalem where that heresy was the subject.
- (6) **Setting: Crete** - Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring 160 miles long by 35 miles at its widest, lying south of the Aegean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (see Acts 27:7-9, 12, 13, 21).+ He returned there for ministry and later left Titus to continue the work, much as he left Timothy at Ephesus, while he went on to Macedonia. He most likely wrote to Titus in response to a letter from Titus or a report from Crete.
- (7) **Occasion: Pastoral encouragement and counsel** - Like Paul’s two letters to Timothy, the apostle gives personal encouragement and counsel to a young pastor who, though well-trained and faithful, faced continuing opposition from ungodly men within the churches where he ministered. Titus was to pass on that encouragement and counsel to the leaders he was to appoint in the Cretan churches.
- (8) **Theological Themes:** In contrast to several of Paul’s other letters, such as those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, the book of Titus does not focus on explaining or defending doctrine. Paul had full confidence in Titus’ theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry. Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological correction, strongly suggesting that Paul also had confidence in the doctrinal grounding of most church members there, despite the fact that the majority of them were new believers.

Theological/Doctrinal Themes Affirmed in Titus:

1. God's sovereign election of believers (Titus 1:1-2)
2. His saving grace (Titus 2:11, 3:5)
3. Christ's deity and second coming (Titus 2:13)
4. Christ's substitutionary atonement (Titus 2:14)
5. The regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior in Titus, and the saving plan is so emphasized in that it indicates the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism. This preparation required godly leaders who not only would shepherd believers under their care, but also would equip those Christians for evangelizing their pagan neighbors, who had been characterized by one of their own famous natives as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. In order to gain a hearing for the gospel among such people, the believers' primary preparation for evangelization was to live among themselves with the unarguable testimony of righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers. How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony

Application Questions

1. Is it ever proper for Christians to engage in revolution against their government? What about the American Revolution?
2. Is it ever right for a Christian to stand up for his rights on the job or in the community? What if you are being ripped off for a lot of money? What guidelines apply?
3. What would you say to someone who insisted that verse 3 is not an accurate description of his past? Why is it important to see that it is, and to remember it?
4. What are some practical ways that you could get involved in our community with a view to being a witness for Christ?

Last week we talked about grace, particularly God's grace in your life. Here is truth you need to know... **if you have tasted God's grace at the cross, you are a changed person.**

How has God's grace changed you? What difference has grace made in your life? How has it changed you?

The grace of God is an incredible gift. It not only brings salvation (Titus 2:11), but it is the ongoing provision for our Christian walk. It's a peculiar thing about grace, however: it seems practically every Christian has their "angle" on the best way to use God's grace—what grace is *really* all about. Perhaps part of the reason for that is that grace is indeed multi-faceted. It doesn't *only* bring salvation, *only* give Christian liberty, or *only* produce holiness. God uses His grace at every level in our hearts. It is the ongoing provision for every child of God. Here are four specific ways we know that the grace of God works in our hearts:

4 Ways God's Grace Works in Our Heart to Change Us:

(1) **Produces Holiness** – Titus 2:11-12 says, *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”* The very grace that brings salvation, also teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldliness and live in a way that is honoring to God.

(2) **Compels Service** – 1 Peter 4:10 says it, *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* Her is Acts 4:32-33, *“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”*

- What gives you the desire to serve when the natural man wants to turn inward in self-focus or self-pity? Grace.
- What compels a church family to serve one another and the lost even in the unglamorous jobs of nursery care, ushering, helping in children's classes, or providing custodial assistance? Grace.

A pastor or ministry leader can ask all they want for help (and asking is one way to prompt people to receive God's grace), but without the grace of God at work in someone's heart, there will be no desire to serve truly as unto the Lord.

(3) **Encourages Sacrifice** – Listen to 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* Listen again to Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:8, *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”* When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church and addressed their lack of giving, he repeatedly appealed to them to factor *grace* into the equation. He spoke of the manifestation of God's grace in the Macedonian Christians; he reminded them of the other areas where God's grace had touched their lives; and he told them that God's grace could enable them to give cheerfully.

(4) **Enables Endurance** – Here it is in 2 Corinthians 12:9, *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* Hebrews 4:16 says, *“Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”* What enables a Christian to endure the difficulties of life—not just for a week or a year, but over the decades? What gives God's people the ability to go on when their own strength is depleted? Grace. God's matchless, all-sufficient, ever-available grace. We could list many more ways that grace works in our hearts than these four. Grace, in fact, is all throughout the pages of Scripture—literally from cover to cover.

I'll say it again! If you have tasted God's grace at the cross, you are a changed person. There is simply no way that you can receive God's gift of eternal life and have your sins forgiven by the blood of Christ, and go on living as you formerly lived.

By His sovereign grace alone...

4 Things God's Sovereign Grace Alone Does In A Believers Life:

- (1) By God's grace He raised you from being dead in your sins**
- (2) By God's grace He gave you a new heart**
- (3) By God's grace He gave you new understanding of the truth**
- (4) By God's grace He brought you personally to know Him (*the living and true God*)**

God's grace leaves you a different person than you were before.

Here is the picture Paul gives us in **Ephesians 2:1-3**... just listen to this. This is who you and I were before His grace... *"¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."*

But, at the same time, there are powerful forces at work to cause you to revert to your old ways...

3 Powerful Forces That Cause Believers (You and I) to Revert to our Old Man: (prior to grace)

- (1) The world** - The world bombards you daily with its false messages that promise satisfaction with its pleasures, apart from God
- (2) The flesh** - The flesh tempts you from within, promising you fulfillment if you will yield
- (3) The devil** - The devil craftily lays his traps, enticing you to satisfy your needs in disobedience to God

All of these powerful forces make us tend to forget what God has done in our hearts by His grace. And so we need to be reminded again and again of how God's grace has laid hold of our lives.

In our passage, in Titus 3:1-8, Paul speaks as a kind father in the faith to Titus, giving Titus and the believers in Crete some gracious reminders of how God has laid hold of their lives. His real concern is the church's witness in a pagan world.

It is quite relevant for us. We live in a culture that exalts sin and despises God. There is an increasingly militant mood against those of us who hold to godly moral standards.

How should we respond?

- Should we organize political parties to try to gain power over the opposition?
- Should we stage protests against the forces of evil in our community?
- While there is a legitimate place in a democratic government to seek to pass laws that uphold biblical standards of morality, that approach is really only putting a Band-Aid on the cancer.

What our perverted, sinful society needs is the gospel, which alone can change human hearts, but how do we gain a hearing for the gospel among people who mock God and His people?

Let's look at our passage (in Titus 3:1-8) and see if Paul doesn't help us answer that question in his letter to Titus...

READ: Titus 3:1-8

"¹Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. ³For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men."-Titus 3:1-8 (NKJV)

Paul's answer is that we must live godly lives in this evil world. We must excel in good works that display God's grace through us. The changed lives of believers will provide the platform for verbal witness that points other sinners to God's grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ. But, we need to keep being reminded of how God's grace changed us. So Paul is saying here,

Being reminded of God's grace that changed us will motivate us to show His grace to others through our good deeds.

In our passage, Paul gives us three reminders for our lives and how they may impact our world around us...

3 Reminders of God's Grace that Changes us and Motivates Toward Grace to Others:

- (1) Remember how you now are to act toward the ungodly world** – In verses 1-2, Paul reminds us of how we should act towards this ungodly world.
- (2) Remember that you once were just like the ungodly people of the world** – In verse 3, he reminds us of how we used to be before we experienced God's grace.
- (3) Remember that it was God's undeserved kindness and mercy that changed you** - In verses 4-7, he reminds us of the marvelous grace of our loving Lord, grace that changed us on the most fundamental level.

Let's break each one of these down as we explore Paul's words in our passage (Titus 3:1-8)

REMEMBER HOW YOU NOW ARE TO ACT TOWARDS THIS UNGODLY WORLD (Titus 3:1-2)

Look at **verses 1-2** of our passage... Paul writes to Titus, *"¹Remind them (Cretan Christians) to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men."*

The things that Paul shares here were not new truths to the Cretan church. They had already been taught these things. If you have been a believer for any length of time, they are not new to you. But, as a gentle father, Paul felt the need to remind his children in the faith of these basic ways that they needed to behave in relation to this godless world. **William Barclay** (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* [Westminster Press], rev. ed., p. 258) writes, *"The Cretans were notoriously turbulent and quarrelsome and impatient of all authority. Polybius, the Greek historian, said of them that they were constantly involved in 'insurrections, murders and internecine wars.'"* Paul lays out seven marks of godly character in relation to that kind of godless society:

7 Marks of Godly Character in a Godless Society:

- (1) Christians must be subject to government rulers and authorities** - This is the consistent apostolic teaching about how believers must relate to their government (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17)

2 Scripture Passages That Lend Support:

- 1. Romans 13:1-7** – *"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. ⁶For because of this*

you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. "

2. **1 Peter 2:13-17** – *"¹³ Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— ¹⁶ as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷ Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. "*

Some things to keep in mind...

Four Serious Quantifying Condition That Need to be Clarified:

1. **Godless and tyrannical governments and government leaders do not negate this Scriptural command** - Although Paul lived under the tyranny of the notoriously godless Nero, he did not make exceptions for notoriously godless governments.
2. **Known corruption within the government and governmental leaders does not render these Scriptural commands invalid** - Although there was much bribery and corruption in the governments of that day at every level, Paul did not specify that the government must be free of corruption before these principles apply (although believers should not engage in bribery).
3. **These Scriptural commands are not limited to more Christian-based governments and governmental leaders** - Although the government of that time was not even close to being Christian, Paul did not say that his commands only apply if you live in a Christian-based government.
4. **Christian disobedience to a secular government is only Biblically commended when God is being directly disobeyed by governmental command or directive** - The only time that believers are required to disobey secular government is when the government commands us to do something that would require us to disobey God. At that point, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), and perhaps suffer punishment from the government.

It is interesting, isn't it, that Paul did not call for the overthrow of Nero to protect the many believers who were being martyred. So except in rare situations, we should submit to our government.

***QUESTION 1: The question arises, to what extent, if any, should Christians get involved in politics or government, especially in a democratic system of participatory government? It's a good question. What are your thoughts? ***

QUESTION 2: *Some Christians camp on the fact that we are citizens of heaven and that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. They argue that only the gospel can change human hearts. Thus they refuse any involvement with civil government. They do not vote, they will not run for public office, they would never write to an elected official, and they will not join the military. What do you think about this?*

QUESTION 3: *On the opposite extreme, some Christians seem to think that political power is the key to saving America. What do you think about this?*

QUESTION 4: *Where, do you think, is the balance? And how do believer today strike that balance?*

A Personal Statement: Would you mind if I just share some of my personal thoughts for a moment. This is just what I think about this subject. Briefly, I think that there is a legitimate place for Christians to be involved in civil government as the Lord leads, whether by running for office, campaigning for candidates who stand for Christian values, or in other ways. But, we must keep in view that it is the gospel that our godless culture desperately needs more than anything else. *So in whatever capacity we may be involved in the political process, we need to keep our witness as Christians uppermost in our minds.* If we posture ourselves as enemies of the unbelievers that we're trying to reach, we will alienate them from the gospel that they need to hear. I have to constantly keep reminding myself of this as we deal with the very difficult city of Buda. Our witness in all of this is of utmost importance above all else. If we fight, kick and scream all the way to building a building, selling property, buying property or whatever we are trying to do, but along the way we have lost our witness to the very ones we are put here to be a witness to then what have we gained. We have lost it all... we have failed in our purpose and mission as God's people in the city of Buda. I would rather be poor, destitute, kicked out, our property taken from us worshipping out in someone's field somewhere than to displease the Lord, and fail in His purpose and plan He has for us. Again, "If you displease the Lord it doesn't matter who you please, but if you please the Lord, it doesn't matter who you displease." He'll take care of us! I think this apply at all levels of civic, political, governmental discourse. We must keep in view that it is the gospel that our godless culture desperately needs more than anything else

Paul says here that our witness requires us to be subject to rulers and authorities. This does not mean that we cannot voice strong disagreements or even do everything lawful to try to get godless officials removed from office. But we must show respect for them as individuals and respect for the office that they hold. We must obey the laws of our society, unless those laws would require us to disobey the law of God.

- (2) **Christians must be obedient** - Paul does not specify the object of obedience, but in the context he is probably referring especially to obedience to the government.

- We should not be law-breakers.
 - We should not provoke (encourage, incite, foment) rebellion or revolution, except in the most extreme situations.
 - Although abortion is a heinous and diabolical evil, it is a serious sin when professing Christians shoot abortion doctors or blow up abortion clinics.
 - Peaceful protest at abortion clinics is legitimate, if you are so led and believe that you can be a witness in that context.
 - If the government passed a law mandating abortion after one or two children, then we would need to disobey the law.
 - On a lesser level, whether on a local level or some of the IRS regulations, you may not like or agree with the law, but that doesn't give you the right to violate the law.
- Paul says that we must be obedient to the laws of our government.

(3) **Christians must be ready for every good deed** – Paul says, *“¹Remind them (Cretan Christians) to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”* Notice it, Paul says we are to be *“ready for every good work (or deed) ...”* That probably refers to any deed done in obedience to Christ out of love for others. But in the context, this means that we must be “prepared and willing to participate in activities that promote the welfare of the community.” We “must not stand coldly aloof from praiseworthy enterprises of government but show good public spirit, thus proving that Christianity is a constructive force in society” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* [Zondervan], ed. by Frank Gaebelin, 11:443).

When God sent disobedient Judah into exile in Babylon, He said through Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29:7, *“⁷ And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.”* That is such a godly and God honoring attribute. While our level of involvement will vary depending on our gifts and available time, it is legitimate for believers to be involved in our community. This may include public school activities, scouting, youth sports programs, involvement with the city government, or whatever. We need to be careful not to compromise our convictions by associating with questionable causes. But we should take the lead as Christian people to do good works as a witness to our world.

(4) **Christians should malign (slur, harm, slander, injure) no one** – Listen to verse 1-2 again... pay particular attention the first few words of verse 2, *“¹Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”* It is easy to get frustrated with a government official and to react by misrepresenting what he said or did. But that is to malign this person. Or, if a neighbor wrongs you in some way, the human tendency is to build your case against him by running him down when you talk to the

other neighbors. But you won't win that neighbor to Christ if you alienate him by maligning him.

- (5) **Christians should be peaceable** – Notice the word in verse 2, *¹Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.* See it? We are to be “peaceable.” The earlier edition of the NASB translated this, “uncontentious,” which is more accurate. The Greek word is “*amacho*,” which is the opposite of macho. As Christians, we don't need to act in a macho fashion, trying to prove that no one can shove us around. We shouldn't take offense easily. If we're wronged, we should try to conciliate. It is more important to maintain good relations with your neighbor than to stand up for your rights.
- (6) **Christians should be gentle** – Notice the word “gentle” also appears in the list Paul gives in verse 2. The Greek word has the nuance of “forbearance,” of not standing up for your rights when to do so would shred a relationship. There are situations where to stand on your rights would cause such damage toward an unbeliever that he would never want to hear about your Savior. It is far more important in such cases to absorb the wrong and to keep the door open for witness.
- (7) **Christians must show every consideration for all men** – Notice verses 1-2 once more, *¹Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.* The phrase, “showing all humility to all men” is the same word that may be translated “consideration”... “showing all consideration to all men.” It is often translated “gentleness” or “meekness.” It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). It does not mean weakness, but rather, strength under control. It was used of a horse that is broken so that it is completely submissive to its master. The idea here is that in all our dealings with outsiders, we should be under the control of the Holy Spirit, responding graciously and kindly, even when wronged.

Thus Paul says that we who have been changed by God's grace should be gracious citizens and neighbors towards those who do not know Christ. Then Paul reminds us of what we used to be.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ONCE WERE JUST LIKE THE UNGODLY PEOPLE OF THE WORLD (Titus 3:3)

Notice Paul's words in verse 3 of our passage... Paul writes, *³For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.* The first word, “For”, shows the logical connection between verses 2 & 3. It is easy to become angry and impatient with unbelievers who act like in an inconsiderate, self-absorbed manner, negatively and difficult. But if we want to

behave as godly people towards them (3:1-2), then we need to remember that before we met Christ, we acted in the same way that these people do (3:3). Unbelievers are living for themselves. That's all that they know how to do. Before we met Christ, we lived for self. Keeping in mind how we used to be will enable us to treat ungodly people with grace and compassion. Note that Paul includes himself in this description ("we also"). Again, he lists seven characteristics of unbelievers:

7 Characteristics of Unbelievers: (according to Titus 3:3)

It all appears in Paul's words in verse 3, *"³ For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."*

- (1) **We once were foolish** - We were without spiritual wisdom or understanding. We did not know God, and so our foolish heart was darkened (Rom. 1:21). We vainly thought that we were wise, but we were fools.
- (2) **We once were disobedient** - We did not obey God and we only obeyed the laws of our government when it was convenient or when we feared the consequences of getting caught. We were living for ourselves and whatever furthered our interests. We hated the thought of submission or obedience to any authority, including God.
- (3) **We once were deceived** - We did not understand spiritual truth and thus were led astray by Satan. We thought that we were wise to believe in evolution. We thought that we were sophisticated to throw off God's standards of moral purity. We thought that we could find happiness and fulfillment through the lusts of the flesh or by accumulating material things. We thought that we could violate God's law without any harmful consequences. But, we were deceived!
- (4) **We once were enslaved to various lusts and pleasures** - Sin, like addictive drugs, always enslaves the one who dabbles with it. At first, it seems as if it will meet your needs. At first, it seems pleasurable. Sexual gratification feels good. Drugs make you feel good. Drinking dulls the pain of problems and pressures. Dishonest business practices may help you to get rich, and money can buy you all sorts of pleasures. But all of these sins enslave you and ultimately destroy you.
- (5) **We once spent our lives in malice** - Malice means ill will towards others. It stems from selfishness and wanting our own way, even if it means harming someone to get it. If you have to lie about a rival to get him fired, well, that's life in the real world! If you have to cheat someone out of something to get what you want, well, it's too bad, but that's the business world! If you have to spread nasty rumors to make your enemy look bad, well it's a dog-eat-dog world! That is malice!
- (6) **We once spent our lives in envy** - Envy means wanting what someone else has or desiring to be in the position that they are in. It is closely connected with greed. Envy led Ahab and Jezebel to kill Naboth in order to take his vineyard, even though they already had plenty. Envy led the Pharisees to kill Jesus, because He was gaining more followers than they had (Mark 15:10). It is a deed of the flesh (Gal. 5:21; Mark 7:22).

(7) **We once were hateful** - Very few would admit that they are hateful, because we like to flatter ourselves as being loving people. But hatred is essentially self-centeredness and disregard for others' feelings and needs. If someone hurts me and I respond by thinking or saying, "He can just drop dead or go to hell, for all that I care," that is hatred. If I say, "I don't ever want to talk to that person again," that is hatred. So even if it doesn't take the outward form of trying to hurt or kill someone, we all were marked by hatred before we came to Christ, because we all lived for ourselves and were indifferent towards others, unless they could meet our needs.

Maybe you're thinking, "Well, I was never like this terrible description in verse 3! I was a basically good person, even before I became a Christian." It is true that not everyone displays all of these characteristics to the worst degree. Maybe you had a good upbringing, where your parents taught you to be considerate of others and to practice Christian morality. Perhaps your sin was restrained because of your circumstances.

But, if you know your own heart as God sees it, every one of these sins was lurking just below the surface. The truth is, on the heart level we all have violated every one of the Ten Commandments. As Jesus said (Matt. 5:21-30), anger is murder in God's sight, and lust is adultery. We all have stolen, lied, and coveted. We all have practiced hypocrisy, trying to impress others that we are better than we know we are. Here is what I have learned... I never saw myself as this way until I met Christ, and not I see myself too much this way. It seems to be that when we hold our lives up to the mirror of God's Word and catch a glimpse of ourselves up against the reflection of Christ we see how bad we really are and were... at least that is me. I see it nearly every day. The closer I get to Christ the worse I look!

Why is verse 3 in our text? It is there because Paul knows that in order for us to act with love and good deeds towards unbelievers who mistreat us, malign us, and falsely accuse us, we need to remember that we used to be just like they are. We're made of the same stuff! We would still be acting like that, except for one glorious truth:

REMEMBER THAT IT WAS GOD'S UNDESERVED KINDNESS AND MERCY THAT CHANGED YOU (Titus 3:4-8)

Okay, let's see our passage once again... let's start in verse 4 and read on down to verse 8... here it is (this is beautiful really), *"⁴ But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men."* Verses 4 & 5 contain one of the most glorious "buts" in Scripture: *"⁴ But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man*

appeared, ⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,”

Note that verses 4-7 here give us some important detail concerning our salvation...

4 Important Details of Our Salvation:

- (1) The basis or cause of our salvation = God's kindness, love, and mercy
- (2) The effects of our salvation = regeneration, renewal, and justification
- (3) The means of our salvation = the power of the Holy Spirit through the work of Jesus Christ
- (4) The goal of our salvation = heirs according to the hope of eternal life - All three Persons of the Trinity are involved in this wonderful gift of God.

The clear thrust of verses 4-7 is that salvation was not due to anything good in us, but rather it is totally due to God's abundant grace and mercy. We were just as Paul describes in verse 3, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved to sin. There was nothing in us deserving of salvation. To the contrary, we deserved God's wrath and judgment. But, because of His great kindness, love, and mercy, He saved us!

CONCLUSION

Paul's point is, if you received mercy when you deserved judgment, then show God's kindness, love and mercy to unbelievers who don't deserve it. You're thinking, "But he wronged me!" Well, you wronged God, but how did He treat you? He showed you mercy. Show mercy to the unbeliever who wrongs you. "But she maligned me!" You once maligned God, who is perfectly good, but He still showed you kindness and grace. Rather than getting even, show kindness and grace to that person who maligned you. "But she doesn't deserve it!" Neither did you!

John Newton was a drunken sailor and an evil slave-trader, but by God's grace became a great preacher and hymn writer. He wrote a text in bold letters and put it over the mantel in his study, where he would see it often. It was Deuteronomy 15:15 (KJV): "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee" (cited in, *A Frank Boreham Treasury*, compiled by Peter Gunther [Moody Press], p. 72). Newton didn't want to forget that he had received mercy.

Paul gives us the gracious reminder that God has shown us great mercy. In light of that, show God's mercy to a lost, rebellious world by your godly behavior and good deeds.