

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 20, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



TITUS STUDY

“Tough Grace in a Difficult Place”

MOTIVATION FOR GOOD DEEDS

Titus 3:4-8

“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.”-Titus 3:4-8 (NKJV)



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

Have you ever heard of the 80/20 rule? What is the 80/20 rule? What do you think of the 80/20 rule? In your church experience is this rule accurate? Why?

The biggest struggle most small churches have is those who truly recognize that they are not a spectator in the body of Christ, but are a part of the alive, active body of Christ and His work in this world... volunteers in God army... servants of Christ... the problem is not enough volunteers, burning out volunteers, finding new volunteers, and keeping volunteers. There's a lot of sympathizing about the 80/20 rule, where 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people. But is that even true? Does it have to be?

Many people in churches talk about the 80/20 rule. For some, being able to state this rule gets them off the hook for developing more volunteers. Because if 20% are serving, well then, that's good, right? For others, the 80/20 rule is a way to commiserate with other churches in the same position, as if we're all doing the best we can, and 20% is the best we can do. **I want to let you know the truth though... the 80/20 rule isn't a rule.** It isn't biblical.

It is immensely important, however, but not in the way you think. If you embrace the truth, it is going to transform the way you do ministry.

Is it true that in most churches that the same core group of people tend to step up, show up, and keep everything running?

- How many people teach Sunday school vs. how many come to Sunday school?
- How many people help in the children's or youth ministry vs. how many come to church and put their kids in the nursery or in a children's ministry or their youth in a the youth ministry program?
- How many arrive early to set up for an event taking place at their church vs. the people who come to enjoy, sit back and be fed by the event?
- Or how about this one... how many are full of suggestions about what the church needs to be doing, full of ideas, and suggestions (maybe even sometimes sounding a bit critical about what the church isn't doing vs. not willing themselves to do it themselves or be involved in carrying it out?

Before we dive in further, take a quick check-in with your emotions. If you do agree with the 80/20 rule, and if that's the way your church seems to function, how does that make you feel? Does it make you feel bitter? Disappointed? Sad? Or maybe you're a little proud that you are part of the 20% that's committed?

Many pastors can tell you about the 80/20 rule in the local church. Eighty percent of the work gets done by 20 percent of the people. This means that 80 percent of the people attend church without getting involved in any form of ministry or service. I haven't actually checked out those numbers here statistically, but I do know that there are many who attend here who never get involved in ministry. We don't have a waiting list for Sunday School teachers, nursery workers, those willing to help out with the children's ministry, those willing to go to youth camp or mission trip as a sponsor! Why do you think we are constantly having this ongoing announcement in our bulletin asking for volunteers in the nursery or working with the kids

Why is that? What are your thoughts? List below three reasons why you feel people don't serve. They can be either legitimate or illegitimate, positive or negative, but why don't people serve in your thinking?

3 Reasons People Don't Serve:

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

29 Reasons People Don't Serve: *Here is a list of 29 reasons people don't serve according to one Christian leadership organization. I'll run through these quickly. Circle or underline the ones you may have listed as your reasons for people lack of service.*

- (1) I'm not a Christian – I'm checking Christianity out
- (2) I'm a member of another church – I come here for more teaching/to meet other Christians
- (3) I'm too busy with work -
- (4) I'm too busy with family commitments (we have kids) -
- (5) I'm too busy with family problems (e.g. my sister's sick) -
- (6) I'm too busy with other things (e.g. preparing to get married) -
- (7) I'm married to an unbeliever who doesn't like it when I go out -
- (8) My husband/wife and I don't get to spend much time together so the week nights/weekends are precious to us -
- (9) I don't know what opportunities are available -
- (10) I don't have enough information about the available opportunities (e.g. what would be required of me to serve on a fair trade market?) -
- (11) I don't know what gifts God has given me -
- (12) I don't have the skills required to serve in the available areas (e.g. I don't know how to use the computer to operate PowerPoint) -
- (13) No one asked me -
- (14) I've come here from another church because I'm burnt out. I just need to be fed for a bit -
- (15) I'm serving in other ways outside of church -
- (16) I don't want to commit to anything in advance (I'd like to keep my options open)-
- (17) I live too far away and it's a struggle to get to church outside of service times -
- (18) The staff team is paid to serve so I don't have to -
- (19) I don't know anyone who's serving in the area I would like to -
- (20) I serve the people I know by encouraging them in their faith -
- (21) I'm generous in other ways (e.g. with my money) -
- (22) Serving is what the young people do – they've got the time and energy -
- (23) We've just got married and we're concentrating on our marriage for the first year -
- (24) Everything seems under control – I'm not needed-
- (25) I offered to serve, and no one followed me up -
- (26) I offered to serve, but I wasn't needed (e.g. I was told the ministry was full) -
- (27) I served for a while, but I felt unappreciated and no one thanked me -
- (28) I don't get anything out of it -
- (29) I just don't want to –

➔ One prominent preacher (Dr. Andy Stanley) recently said, *“Too busy to serve at your local church? Just fyi (for your information) every Sunday you attend your local church you are served by very busy people. Get involved!”*

- What is your initial reaction to that quote?
- Do you agree or disagree with the statement? Why?
- How does that statement make you feel? Why?
- Do you find this statement convicting, challenging or motivating? Why?

Let just be honest, there could be multiple causes for people not serving or getting more involved.

4 Serious Considerations for Why Christians Don't Serve:

- (1) **Life is busy and other things crowd out serving the Lord** - For one thing, life is busy and other things just crowd out serving the Lord. But, we all have the same number of hours in a week, so it really boils down to priorities.
- (2) **Serving the Lord is just not a priority for many that attend church** - And so we come back to the question, why is that? Why aren't God's people motivated (or more motivated) to serve Him?
- (3) **There is a lack of motive to serve for some** - I cannot judge the motives of a heart. We each need to examine our own hearts. But something may be lacking if there is not “motivation” to want to serve the Lord, to get involved in Kingdom work in some way.
- (4) **Some professing Christians are nominal in their Christian life** - I know that there are many that are just cultural Christians or nominal (minimal, small, trifling, token) in their faith. For them, going to church once in a while is a nice thing to do. It makes them feel good. They would claim to believe in Christ as Savior, but He is not really their Lord. They do not let Christ control their use of time and money. They keep Him compartmentalized in a drawer of their lives and pull Him out whenever they feel the need. But other things dominate their daily lives. Serving Him is just not a priority.

This is important...

I must say in love, the one I have just described, needs to examine whether or not they are truly saved. Jesus does not save you and so that we can relegate Him to a drawer of your life, to pull out and use whenever it's convenient. He is Lord and He demands total allegiance in every area of our life. He will not take a back seat to your career, your family, or your hobbies. So you must ask yourself honestly, “Is Jesus Christ my Lord?” If He is not, you also need to ask, “Is He truly my Savior?” Have I trusted in His blood to deliver me from the wrath of God? Have I repented of my sins? Is Jesus my only hope of heaven?

- It may be that you have trusted Christ as Savior, but you've drifted into complacency or carelessness in your relationship with Him.
- You have forgotten your “purification from [your] former sins” (2 Pet. 1:9).

- You need to remember and think about what God has done for your soul so that you will be both useful and fruitful in your walk with Christ (2 Pet. 1:8).
- In other words, remembering God's abundant grace in saving us is the key for motivation to serve Him.

That's what Paul is saying in Titus 3:4-8:

"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." -Titus 3:4-8 (NKJV)

God's great love and mercy in saving us will motivate us to excel in good works.

Paul's overall concern in these verses is the church's witness to a pagan world.

How can we gain a platform to tell this world about God's great love as seen at the cross of Jesus Christ? Paul's answer is that we must engage in good deeds in our society.

Some Things To Remember To Motivate Us to Good Deeds According to Paul:

- (1) **We must remember that we used to be just as unbelievers around us are** – Titus 3:3, *"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."*
- (2) **We must remember God's great love and mercy in saving us** – In our passage in Titus 3:4-7, *"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."* Paul gives us this extended sentence (3:4-7) extolling God's great love and mercy in saving us.
- (3) **We must be sure to engage in good deeds (service/ministry) based on these things** – Titus 3:8, *"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."* Paul comes back (3:8) to exhort Titus to speak confidently about these things (the truths of the gospel of God's grace), "...those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works." These good works are good and profitable for men, in that they may be the avenue to lead them to experience

God's saving grace. The words, "good and profitable," contrast with the "unprofitable and worthless" doctrines of the false teachers (3:9).

God's saving grace was the central theme of Paul's theology. It is the foundation for everything that he says. It was his personal motivation to serve the Lord in spite of repeated trials, persecutions, and setbacks. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, he says, *"¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."* So we should ask God for deeper understanding of His grace, so that we may serve Him joyfully out of hearts filled with love and gratitude.

To understand His saving grace, we must begin by going down, not up. We must see our wretched condition without Christ so that we appreciate what He did in saving us.

3 Motivations That Must Move a Believer to Serve:

- (1) **To be saved, God must open our eyes to see that we are hopelessly lost and cannot save ourselves** - Titus 3:4, *"⁴ But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared."*
- (2) **When God saves us, it is totally due to His grace and provision, and not at all due to our works** – Titus 3:4-7, *"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."*
- (3) **These doctrines of God's grace in our salvation will motivate us to excel in good works** – Titus 3:8, *"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."*

TO BE SAVED, GOD MUST OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE THAT WE ARE HOPELESSLY LOST AND CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES (Titus 3:4a)

Notice Paul's words to Titus in Titus 3:4, *"⁴ But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared."*

The word *"but"* that begins verse 4 takes us back to verse 3, which we studied last week: *"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."* That verse described Paul before his conversion ("we") and it describes every person before conversion.

6 Reminders of Who We Were When Christ Saved Us (That We May Not Like to Admit)? (Titus 3:3)

- (1) **We were once foolish** – What do you think He means that we were once foolish? Listen to Psalm 14:1, *“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.”* Before we came to Christ, we lived our life “Godless”... like there is no God. We lived in such a way that we were the god of our life. Foolish!
- (2) **We were once disobedient** - What do you think He means that we were once disobedient? Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1-2, *“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in 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.”* In what way is an unbeliever/the lost disobedient? Any person who is lost and apart from Christ lives in disobedience to God’s claim on their life. To disbelieve in God/Christ is to disobey who He reveals Himself to be not only in His Word, but also in His World. As our Creator, He alone has claim to our lives, and to not give our very lives to the one who made us for His purpose is to live in disobedience to Him. Further, an unrepentant person knows that he or she has sinned and refuses to ask God for forgiveness or turn away from the sin. The unrepentant show no remorse for their wrongdoing and don’t feel the need to change. Unrepentance is the sin of willfully remaining sinful. The unrepentant live in a state of disobedience to God, unheeding of His gracious call. The unrepentant remain unsaved until they turn from their sin and embrace Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.
- (3) **We were once deceived** - What do you think He means that we were once deceived? In what ways are the lost deceived? Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:13, *“¹³ But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”* Our own sin and the enemy of our soul devil deceives us and keeps us from God. Telling us we don’t need God, that there is no God, that we are our own god, that God doesn’t really love us, that God doesn’t really even exist. Deceived!
- (4) **We were once controlled by lust and pleasure** - What do you think He means that we were once controlled by lust and pleasure? Here are Paul’s words again in Ephesians concerning who we were when Christ found/saved us, in Ephesians 1-3, *“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the ^{1a}course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among 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.”* Something will be our master, will control our actions and motive, and if we don’t have Christ and the Holy Spirit living in us our desire, pleasures and lust of the flesh will be master in our lives. Christians still live often in this tension between the controlling influence of our flesh and the conviction and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- (5) **We were once filled with malice and envy** - What do you think He means that we were once filled with malice and envy? When Paul describes the life of unbeliever (before

coming to Christ) in Romans 1:29, he says, *“²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips.”* It is hard for us to get away from these powerful and controlling desires in our heart, and prior to coming to Christ things like malice and envy, jealousy and strife with others has sway over our lives controlled by self, selfishness, and self protection. Because self is god in the life of an unbeliever, anything that is a threat to self become our enemy and an unbeliever will feel malice and envy.

(6) We were once hateful and hated others - What do you think He means that we were once hateful and hated others? Listen to John in 1 John 2:9-10, *“⁹ Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him^[b] there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”* As sinner by nature and by choice, we hate anything or anyone that tells us we are wrong, sinful, impure, disobedient, foolish. We are filled with hate toward a God that says we are sinners. We anyone and anything that seeks to control us.

Maybe you’re thinking, “But I wasn’t like that! I grew up in the church. I was a pretty good person!” If that is true, it is only because of outward circumstances that restrained your sin. But if God has saved you, He opened your eyes to see that the sins of verse 3 are lurking just below the surface in your heart.

As Romans 3:10-12 describes the human race, *“¹⁰ As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. ¹² They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.’”* Listen, you were not the first exception to those verses!

➡ **Scott Hubbard** (Desiring God) makes this statement, *“It is a settled spiritual principle that small thoughts of sin lead to small thoughts of Christ. If we think we have been forgiven little, we will love little (Luke 7:47).”* *What is he saying? What does he mean? Do you agree or disagree?*

Here is what I want you to see... the same principle applies, however, to those who have simply forgotten how much they’ve been forgiven. And to one degree or another, we are all prone to forget.

So, the apostle Paul’s command to *remember* what life was like without Christ. We need to remember that we were once separated, alienated, estranged, hopeless. Because then, and only then, will it mean something that in Christ you are reconciled, welcomed, adopted, saved. If we are going to love Christ much, and be serve Him we need to remember the depths from which he saved us. If we are going to treasure all we have in him, we need to remember who we were without him.

Now, some people don't like an emphasis on our sin. They want to be positive. They know that God has forgiven their sins, but they just want to focus on His love and not think about the depths of sin from which He rescued them. But, if you do that, you will not appreciate God's love and grace. God's grace in saving you was not a matter of His taking a basically good person and giving you a little moral guidance or advice. Salvation is a radical intervention that required the infinite, holy God to send His own Son to be the substitute for sinners. You will never understand or appreciate God's amazing grace until you see that you were a wretched, lost sinner before He intervened in your life.

➡ **Martyn Lloyd-Jones** brings this out in his exposition of Ephesians 2:14-16, which states that Christ is our peace, who reconciled us to God through His death. He says (*God's Way of Reconciliation* [Baker], p. 201), "In order to measure the love of God you have first to go down before you can go up. You do not start on the level and go up. We have to be brought up from a dungeon, from a horrible pit; and unless you know something of the measure of that depth you will only be measuring half the love of God."

So Paul begins to tell us of God's abundant love and mercy with the word, "but," which takes us back to see the depths of sin from which He rescued us. Then he gives us these glorious verses about God's grace...

WHEN GOD SAVES US, IT IS TOTALLY DUE TO HIS GRACE AND PROVISION, AND NOT AT ALL DUE TO OUR WORKS (Titus 3:4-7)

Here is Paul's words in Titus 3:4-7, "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."

In verse 3, man is active in sin without God. In verses 4-7, God is active in salvation, changing what man could not. Paul does not mention faith in 3:4-7, because his emphasis is on what God graciously did for us.

3 Things Paul Tells Us About Salvation: (in Titus 3:5)

- (1) **Our salvation was not due to anything good in us -**
- (2) **Salvation is not a joint effort -** Salvation is not a venture where God does His part and we add our part
- (3) **It is all from God, and not at all from us -**

Think of this...

- God did not love us because we were worth loving, but rather because He is love.
- He did not save us because He foresaw that we would believe in Him. That would make us, not God, the cause of our salvation.
- Apart from His sovereign intervention, none of us would have believed, because we were dead in our sins.
- He had to take the initiative. Salvation is totally of the Lord.

These verses in Titus 2:4-7 give the basis (or cause) of our salvation (first, negatively, not by our works; then, positively, by God's kindness, love, and mercy); the means of our salvation (regeneration; renewal, justification); and, the result of our salvation (the hope of eternal life). Note the work of all three persons of the Trinity. The Father took the loving initiative in our salvation. The Son provided His gracious merit to secure our salvation. The Spirit effected and abundantly applied God's salvation to us.

The Basis of our Salvation:

(1) Salvation is not on the basis of deeds that we have done in righteousness - Every non-Christian religion, every cult, and two of the major branches of Christianity (the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church) teach that somehow our good works play a part in our salvation. But, go through the epistles of Paul and note how often he is at pains to deny that our works have any part in saving us. Here are just a few (see, also, 1 Cor. 1:26-31; Gal. 2:21-3:14):

4 Pauline Passages That Teach Works Play No Part in Salvation:

- (1) **Romans 4:4-5:** *"Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness." (ESV)*
- (2) **Romans 9:11-12:** *"For though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, 'The older will serve the younger.'" (ESV)*
- (3) **2 Timothy 1:9:** *God, "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." (ESV)*
- (4) **Ephesians 2:8-10:** *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (ESV)*

Clearly, we are saved so that *as a result* we will walk in the good works that God prepared beforehand for us to do. But, just as clearly, we are saved apart from any good works, so that we will not boast. So, Paul says here (Titus 3:5a) that God "saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness."

(2) **Salvation is on the basis of God's kindness, love, and mercy** - Note that Paul calls God our Savior (3:4) and then (3:6) calls Jesus Christ our Savior, making Him equal with God.

- The kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared when Jesus Christ, the eternal God, took on human flesh and entered this world to die as the substitute for our sins.
- We personally experienced His mercy (we don't get what we deserve) —His compassion on our pitiable condition—when He saved us.
- When Jesus commands us to love our enemies and do good (Luke 6:35), He adds as the reason that the Most High *"Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men."* In the next verse, He commands, *"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."*

So the foundation for our showing love, kindness, and mercy to others is that we know the love, kindness, and mercy of the Father.

- God's *"love for mankind"* (Titus 3:4) is the Greek word, *philanthropia*, from which we get our word, *philanthropy*.
- This is the only time this word is used of God in the New Testament.
- The more usual word of course is, *agape*, which occurs in the familiar **John 3:16**, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*
- The reason that God loved this evil world and sent His Son was not that the world was so loveable! Rather, it was that God is so loving! The fact that He loved sinful rebels such as we were shows the magnitude of His great love.

Thus, salvation is not based on our good deeds, but rather on God's kindness, love, and mercy.

(3) **Salvation is accomplished through the washing of regeneration, renewing by the Holy Spirit, and being justified by God's grace** - There is at least one sermon in each of these phrases, so I can only skim the surface here!

3 Things Salvation is Accomplished Through:

1. **Salvation is accomplished through the washing of regeneration** - Regeneration refers to the new birth, or being born again. When God saves us, He raises us from spiritual death to life (Eph. 2:5). We were as active in being born again as we were in being born the first time. In other words, God is active and we are passive. We do not exercise our free will to be born again any more than Lazarus exercised his free will to come from death to life when Jesus cried out, "Lazarus, come forth!" **James 1:18** plainly states, *"In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth...."*

The new birth is God's doing, according to His will. Many commentators interpret the washing of regeneration to refer to baptism, but that is mistaken. In the New Testament, baptism happens *after* the new birth, as a picture and testimony of what God did in saving us: He washed us from all our sins. The only other time this word is used in the New Testament is in **Ephesians 5:26**, where Paul says that God cleansed the church *"by the washing of water with the word."* In the context, it refers to what happened at the cross. In Titus 3:5, Paul may have been thinking of **Ezekiel 16:4**, where God speaks metaphorically of Israel's birth as a nation: *"As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths."* He goes on to say that no one took pity on her, but she was thrown in a field and left to die. Then (Ezek. 16:6), God passed by and saw her squirming in her blood and said to her, "Live!" Later (16:9) He tells how he bathed her with water and washed off her blood. It is a picture of how when we were born spiritually, God washed off the filth of our sins.

2. Salvation is accomplished through renewing by the Holy Spirit - Commentators debate whether this refers to the same act as the washing of regeneration, or to something separate. **I understand it to refer to the ongoing process of inner renewal that occurs after regeneration.**

- In Romans 12:2, this renewal of the mind is the ongoing process that takes place after we present our bodies to God as living sacrifices.
- In Ephesians 4:23 and Colossians 3:10, Paul refers to putting on the new man, who is being renewed according to the image of the One who created him. While God creates the new nature by the power of His Spirit, we must walk in the Spirit and be transformed through God's Word in order to experience this ongoing renewal.

Note also that Paul adds (3:6) that God poured out the Holy Spirit upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Those who teach that you may be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit are mistaken.** Every Christian has received the Holy Spirit: Paul says in **Romans 8:9**, *"⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."*

Our text says that we not only have the Spirit in a small portion, but that God has poured out the Spirit on us *richly* through Jesus Christ. But, having said that, we all need to ask ourselves,

- "Do I experience this?"
- Do I know in my daily walk the fullness of God's Spirit?
If not, why not?

- Is there some sin in my heart that blocks His fullness? Is my focus too much on the things of this world? Is my faith too small, so that I operate more in dependence on my own abilities, rather than relying on God's Spirit?

The main evidence of the Spirit's fullness in our lives will not be that we babble in tongues or keel over backwards. **The main evidence will be the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) manifested in our daily lives.**

3. Salvation is accomplished through being justified by God's grace - To be justified is for God to declare the sinner righteous because He imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to us at the instant we believe (see Romans 3 & 4). God does not justify the sinner by crediting faith to us as our righteousness. Rather, the merit of Christ (His perfect righteousness) is credited to us *through faith in Christ*. As Paul says here, justification comes to us by God's grace, and thus it is in no way merited by our faith. Thus salvation is not on the basis of deeds that we have done, but rather, is on the basis of God's kindness, love, and mercy. It is accomplished through the washing of regeneration, renewing by the Holy Spirit, and being justified by God's grace. Finally,

(4) Salvation results in our being made heirs according to the hope of eternal life - All that is Christ's is ours! We do not experience it all in this life, but it is laid up for us in heaven, as secure as the promise of God. "Hope" does not convey any uncertainty, but rather the fact that our inheritance is still in the future, and thus not fully realized. We are heirs, written in the will of God's Son. Throughout eternity, we will not get to the end of experiencing our riches in Christ!

What is the bottom line? Why does Paul go into this great discourse on our salvation?

THESE DOCTRINES OF GOD'S GRACE IN OUR SALVATION WILL MOTIVATE US TO EXCEL IN GOOD DEEDS (Titus 3:8)

Titus 3:8, *"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."*

"This is a faithful saying..." occurs four other times in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11). Here it refers back to the long sentence that runs from verses 4-7. *"These things"* refers to the same sentence, these great doctrinal truths about our salvation. Paul wants Titus to continue speaking these truths with confidence, so that believers "will be careful to engage in good deeds."

"Be careful" is literally, "take thought." It implies that we must give mental effort to the question of how God wants us to serve Him. It also takes a swipe at the false teachers, who

loved to speculate on worthless things that did not lead to good deeds (3:9). It also shows us that sound doctrine is not for useless speculation, but for practical application. If you understand the doctrine of salvation by God's sovereign grace, it will motivate you to take thought about how you may engage in good deeds.

"Maintain" (be devoted, engage in) is a Greek word that means, "to take the lead." It is used of elders leading the church (1 Tim. 5:17). The idea is that believers give careful thought so that they may excel or take the lead in doing good works. The reason is that these things (the truths of the gospel and the good deeds of believers) are good and profitable for men, believers and unbelievers alike. Our good deeds encourage and build up the saints. And, they are often the platform that open the door so that we can tell lost people about the kindness and love of God, who sent His Son to be the Savior of all that believe in Him.

Conclusion

So, are you motivated, like Paul was, to outdo everyone else in serving God? If not, first make sure that you're trusting in Christ as Savior and Lord. Then, meditate on His great kindness, love, and mercy that sent His Son to die for your sins. The Lord's Supper is a time to be reminded again and again of what He did for you totally by His grace. Let His grace motivate you to excel in good deeds. Tell the world of what He has done for your soul!