

August 25, 2024

“The Washing of Regeneration”
Lesson 4

Titus 3:3-11

Intro

Last week’s intro explained that this letter was written to Titus to have him correct ungodly actions by the believers in Crete. Some of these actions were creating controversies and distractions from living their faith by what Christ said. Paul instructed Titus to appoint godly leadership, to encourage others with the gospel truth, and to refute the teachings of those who opposed the gospel.

No matter the person’s situation (old/young, male/female, husband/wife, free/slave), Paul instructed all to pursue godly lives and to demonstrated self-control. Titus was also to encourage the people to obey authority, be eager for good works, and live with gentleness and meekness. For Paul, the worst thing would be for controversies to arise that would distract believers from focusing on the gospel.

Read Titus 3:3-11

1. vs. 3: Paul wants these Christians to change, so he reminds them that sin is universal
 - He uses the words “we too” to show that he and the other apostles have also sinned
 - The list of things Paul then develops are reminders of how sin has affected all
 - Not everyone has done everything on this list, but all have committed sins
 - This particular list shows more of a pattern than a specific set of wrongdoings
 - Foolish people refuse to accept God’s truth that leads to salvation
 - This person is disobedient, rebelling against God’s standards
 - Sin can lead people to deceive themselves regarding what’s right and wrong
 - Such deception can lead people to be slaves to various passions and pleasures
 - Sin affects relationships as well as one’s mindset and thinking
 - People can hate others and be hated because of malice
 - Malice and envy are feelings of wickedness toward another person
 - These feelings come from sinful desires and can lead to anger
 - We are told that love is to be sought for as the highest value (1 Cor. 13)
 - Instead, the envious person gets filled with hate
2. vs. 4: The word “But” indicates a change in status
 - Despite all the previous things in vs. 3, there is a possibility for change to occur
 - God has provided a way to free us from sin and evil
 - This way comes because of God’s divine character, here described as “kindness and love”
 - God’s ultimate kindness comes from sending Jesus to earth to die for our sins
 - Humanity no longer has to live in sin’s darkness
 - The grace, kindness, and love of our *Savior* was shown to us on the cross of Calvary
3. vs. 5: Any good things we do, our “righteousness”, is not good enough to earn our salvation
 - Is. 64:6 says our righteous acts are like “filthy rags” that do not accomplish salvation for us
 - But God has mercy toward us: Eph. 2:4 says that God is “rich in mercy” toward us
 - God’s way is not that we earn salvation by doing things that are “good enough”
 - He gifts us with His righteousness because of Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf

The “washing of rebirth” has two possible meanings, according to scholars

It could refer to baptism

It could refer generally to our spiritual cleansing from sin that comes after salvation

We know that when we are saved God’s Spirit fills us and transforms us (2 Cor. 3:18)

The Spirit empowers us to remove the sinful self piece by piece, and become like Christ

Paul uses the phrase “rebirth”

This new life is one where we are dead to the ways of sin

The Holy Spirit transforms us into people devoted to following God and His ways

4. vs. 6: The Holy Spirit isn’t given to us in small amounts a bit at a time

Paul says the Spirit was “poured out on us generously”

This verse reminds us of Joel 2:28, where God promises to “pour out My Spirit on all mankind”

The work of salvation in vs. 5-6 show the work of the Triune God

All three persons of the Trinity are either mentioned or implied in these verses

In vs. 6, the pronoun He refers to God the Father who sent the Holy Spirit to us

The Holy Spirit comes from both God the Father and the Son

See John 14:26, John 15:26, and John 16:7

Paul finished this verse by noting that Christ is “our Savior”

All three persons in the Trinity have a role in our justification and sanctification

5. vs. 7: This verse is a continuation of vs. 6

The Holy Spirit was given to us “so that...we might become heirs”

We become heirs of God when we repent of our sins and are “justified by His grace”

This is the only way to be right with God

Paul has already noted that our works, no matter how good, won’t save us

God’s justifying us, making us righteous in His sight, makes us His heirs

As His heirs, we have a hope for our eternal lives

Hope here isn’t wishful thinking; it’s the expectation of a coming sure-thing

6. vs. 8: Paul says “This is a trustworthy saying”

He says this 5 times, once here and 4 times in his letters to Timothy

Paul reminds both Timothy and Titus of the trustworthy doctrines to teach others

The word “This” refers back to the things Paul has already discussed in this passage

The human condition

The kindness and love of God

Salvation through grace

Purification by the Spirit

Hope of eternal life

These points of doctrine are the heart of the gospel message

Paul wants Titus to “stress these things” so the Cretans would hear, obey, and grow

Paul says that believers need to be “careful to devote themselves to doing what is good”

Having faith and doing good go hand-in-hand

Our salvation changes us, leading us to obey God in doing good works

Good works are the result of salvation, not the cause of salvation

These good works will be excellent and profitable “for everyone”

Doing good works pleases God, and benefits others at the same time

7. vs. 9: Paul has just instructed that our good works be “profitable for everyone”
In vs. 9 he warns against things that are not profitable
He specifically mentions several things that he calls “unprofitable and useless”
Foolish controversies
Genealogies
Arguments and quarrels about the law
Back in chapter 1, Paul referred to the ones who were doing these things
“Many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception...disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach (Titus 1:10-11)
Paul is calling out false teachers who had infiltrated the church in Crete
Their arguments and controversies had divided the church
The church should be known for love and good works
Instead, it is recognized for its conflict over “useless” subjects
Paul wants Titus to call out dangerous teachings and divisive behaviors
8. vs. 10-11: Paul here describes a process of church discipline for such a divisive person
They are to be warned twice; “after that, have nothing to do with them”
Two warnings give a person plenty of opportunity to change
Having nothing to do with them cannot mean that they were just ignored
It certainly implies that these people are no longer to be allowed in the assembly
They are not to be allowed further chances to teach falsely and cause controversy
Paul says an unrepentant person is “warped and sinful; they are self-condemned”
Such people cannot be allowed to harm the church, much less be teachers

Application: When churches emphasize the gospel, the spiritual health of its members improves.
Believers can become devoted to doing good works that result from godliness. We are called here to examine ourselves to see if we are focusing on the gospel message and living out its teachings in our daily lives. Are there any things that are distracting us from spiritual growth and health? We are to find these if they exist and “have nothing to do with them.”

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for Your mercy and grace by which You have saved us. Help us to be open to the Spirit’s leading in our lives so we may grow more like Christ, and do works of righteousness which will draw others to You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.