

Incentives to a Life of “Good Deeds” (Tit. 3:4-8)

Intro: It is interesting that many of the NT epistles have exhortations to excellent living. This is what we are called upon as Christians to do—to glorify God through good deeds. But it is also interesting to notice the incentives to excellence—the reasons why Christians are urged to live as they should. Throughout all of Paul’s epistles you will find great theological statements that serve as a basis for His practical exhortations about godly living.

Last week we considered Paul’s instructions to Titus about what to teach the church about their relationship with the government and society.

Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. (Titus 3:1-2)

But how can Christians live such a life of submission and service and kind consideration in a world where such values are rarely practiced? The answer is to be found in our experience with God. Thus, Paul’s exhortations to excellence prompted one of the greatest theological statements about what God has done for us in the NT!

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. (Titus 3:3-8)

No theme should thrill the heart of a child of God more than to hear of how God has saved him from his sins. Not every word spoken by those professing knowledge of salvation can be trusted. Hence it is assuring to hear Paul say concerning the words of salvation of which he speaks to Titus, "This is a trustworthy statement". And since it is, we can do as Paul instructed Titus-- "speak confidently". And in doing so, a wonderful goal will be met. Remembering how we have been saved will produce in us the motivation to "engage in good deeds". The subject of this paragraph is simply stated in three words--"He saved us".

Why We Needed Him to Save Us!

The very words "he saved us" implies that we were and some still are in danger. We needed salvation because we were in sin. Here Paul specifies those sins with painful accuracy, v. 3

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. (Titus 3:3)

Paul's characterization of the unsaved man is an accurate picture of someone who lives not in the wisdom of truth with control over his desires, loving and benevolent to others. It is not a pretty picture but it is an accurate one, and sets the stage for the grand truth of this paragraph--"He saved us". This is why we needed Him to save us!

Why He chose to save us!

What is clear first is why God didn't chose to save us! It was not because of "deeds which we have done in righteousness".

What Paul affirms is that there is no merit in the good deeds we do as unbelievers. Whatever good we accomplish is only what we should have done under God's law and cannot remove the guilt of our transgressions! What Paul affirms by way of contrast is that we do not indebt God to us by the perfect keeping of Law, but instead receive His forgiveness through an act of His mercy!

Denominationalists take this statement out of context when they apply it to obedience to the terms of the gospel. They often will use such a text to affirm that "baptism" cannot have a part in salvation because it is a "deed done in righteousness". Baptism is not a "deed we have done in righteousness" to merit salvation; instead it is an affirmation of our need for a Savior!

What caused God to seek the salvation of man?

Kindness—Indicates the "kindness" of "benignity of God".

Love—the word from which we get "philanthropy" indicates God's love for mankind.

Mercy—this quality suggests acting out of regard for the misery of another

Grace—this word suggests favor that is undeserved

God chose to save us, not because we were good, but because He was good! We ought to thank God daily that He could love us when we were so undeserving.

How He saved us!

God saved us by sending a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He brought about a "washing of regeneration". Jesus' shed blood on the cross provided a sacrifice that "washes away sins" and "regenerates" us.

This washing occurs when we accept the gospel of Christ, obeying the Lord in baptism.

'And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.' (Acts 22:16)

God saved us by sending the Holy Spirit.

What Jesus accomplished by His sacrifice was made known by the coming of the Holy Spirit whom He promised on earth to send in His stead.

The Holy Spirit's coming fulfilled the promise of Joel that God would "pour out His Spirit upon all mankind". Notice Paul's expression, "which He poured out upon us richly".

His presence was made known through the mighty miracles of the apostles at Pentecost and in the spiritual gifts of those upon whom they laid their hands.

Through those miracles and gifts He confirmed the authenticity of the gospel message and gave evidence to all mankind of God's great love (Rom. 5:5) and His way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Hence, through the saving message of the gospel the Spirit "renews" mankind. Paul explains this "renewal" more fully in other epistles:

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:20-24)

This is how we were saved—through washing and renewal that God Himself made possible! We accept this washing and renewal through faith as we comply with the terms of the gospel. (More on this in a moment).

For what purpose He saved us!

That we might become His children with a heavenly hope!!

We are justified—we are acquitted of guilt through forgiveness of sins
We are made heirs—we adopted by God into His family who that we are "heirs" according to the hope of eternal life. What we are already heirs, but we yet to receive our inheritance in heaven with God.

That we might be careful to engage in "good deeds".!

Here then we see the incentives we have to do what God has commanded of us! Since we ourselves are beneficiaries of His mercy, His kindness, His love and His grace, even when we were deceived, foolish, enslaved to lust, and living a life of hate, so now we are to live in the wisdom of God's truth a life of service and consideration to others!

Paul urges Titus to preach about the great theme of salvation from sin with confidence "***so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds.***"

Conclusion: Do these incentives of salvation move us to live as God hoped we would?

In this text, Paul is swept away by the grandeur of what God has done. He simply says all of this is for those who "believed God"! It is faith in the provisions of the gospel that results in our salvation. God is the Savior but we must believe God and that means accept the provisions he has made. He does not mention here all the conditions of salvation, since this was not Paul's purpose. But they are clearly revealed elsewhere in the Scripture. (Hear, believe, repent, confess Christ, be baptized.) Can you say as Paul, "He saved me?" Do you have hope of eternal life?