

Invitation to New Life
How God Saves Us
God's Invitations Series – Part 7

Titus 3:4-7
Sept 20-21, 2025

Introduction

- The Reason – the reason Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth and went through all He went through including a savage death on the cross was **to rescue and save His creation...us.**
- Big problem - If He went through all of that to save us there is clearly a **significant problem that we couldn't reconcile ourselves.** That's what we need to talk about today.
- Knowing facts but not living it - **Many** in this room, **know** what I'm about to say. They know the facts about mankind being separated from God and the need to be saved. **But not all of us. And those of us who do, we live as if we don't.**
- Shocking reality – I'm always shocked that God can say something super clear and I struggle to receive it. I can even say I believe something and live as if I don't. So today, **we are going back to the basics to make sure that ALL of us and I mean ALL of us are at least CLEAR on what Jesus has done for us.** It's absurd to call ourselves Christians if we don't understand the fundamental purpose of our King coming to earth. Ready?...

We are SAVED by GRACE

- Last Week (how church should treat people) – The apostle Paul told his local young pastor Titus how the church should operate and how he should train everyone to get along. He explained that **the local church is a family and they needed to put in the effort to love one another rightly. They can't just act the way they used to, or the way they want. There are rules for how Christians behave and treat one another.**
- Motivation – The apostle finished by saying, and if you need a reason for why we need to be humble and kind to one another, it's because **we used to be the same way** as everyone else before Christ transformed our lives. We too used to be **ignorant, rebellious, and led astray.**
- But now... - but now we aren't like that (at least we aren't supposed to be like we were and like the rest of the world). **We are different.** What makes us different? What allows us to live and act different? **Why are Christians held to a higher standard than everyone else? That's what Paul need Titus to make clear to his congregation.**
- Succinct Gospel presentation – and in explaining this stuff Paul lays out **one of the cleanest, clearest, and concise explanations of the gospel and what Jesus did for us, in the entire Bible.** It's so cleanly stated and it's a repeat of information he just said, so it makes you wonder if it was memorized and something everyone was supposed to know.

- Baptismal hymn?¹ – it's a repeat of a prior passage² (about five verses earlier) but stated more clean and succinct. **Why say it again?** In a mostly illiterate society and a lack of books and writing materials, **memorization** was critical. Therefore, important things, things that needed to be kept were memorized by people and the simplest way to do that was to either put it to song or in a easily remembered pattern.
- Tricks to memorization – do you know your **telephone number AND your social security number?** Do you know why? Because they are broken into 3 digits at a time with dashes in between. Humans can't just remember everything, they need it broken down for them to grab on to. Here's something creepy, if you know what I'm quoting, finish it for me aloud:
 - Grammar Rule - I before E, except after C, or when sounding like A as in NEIGHBOR and WEIGH.
 - What's the ingredients of a Big Mac? – Two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun.
 - What are the colors of the rainbow in order? ROYGBIV – Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.
 - My name is Inigo Montoya, you killed my father...PREPARE TO DIE.
 - Song – it's a world of laughter, a world of tears, it's a world of hopes and a world of fears. There's so much that we share that it's time we're aware...IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL.
 - That's the power of using memorization tools.
- My hope for this message and our time together – I have **two goals** today for us: **1.) to appreciate the depth of being saved by Jesus; 2.) Fall in love with God all over again.**

Lesson

- Jesus Changes Everything
 - The arrival of the Savior altered reality
 - *Titus 3:4 – “But when the goodness and loving³ kindness of God our Savior appeared,...”*
 - But... - what happened before? Do you remember **what Paul had just argued?** He said that all humans were/are disconnected from God by one of three things: **1.) ignorance; 2.) disobedience; 3.) Led astray.** And in that state, separated from God, **we lived at our base level.** We were lost in

¹ “One commentary indicates that some or all of this language may have been a baptismal hymn: “That pericope made but an allusive reference to baptism by speaking of the purification of the chosen people. This pericope incorporates a traditional baptismal hymn that speaks of the Christian ritual as one of rebirth and renewal.” Notes from Pastor Brian citing Collins, R. F. (2012). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary (C. C. Black, M. E. Boring, & J. T. Carroll, Eds.; pp. 359–360). Westminster John Knox Press.

² “Each of the key words of 2:11 recur in 3:4” (Collins, R. F. (2012). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary (C. C. Black, M. E. Boring, & J. T. Carroll, Eds.; p. 361). Westminster John Knox Press.)

³ “The second term, love (NIV), is literally “love for humanity” (philanthrōpia). God’s fatherly love for humankind is thus declared to have been expressed in Jesus’ incarnation.” (Towner, P. (1994). 1–2 Timothy & Titus (Vol. 14, Tt 3:3–4). InterVarsity Press.)

selfishness and struggled to love other people. **BUT, then something changed in us...**

- when the goodness (of God) – Two amazing aspects of God showed up to change everything. God's goodness, or the word used there in Greek means his **pure beneficial kindness and gentleness**. In a place, earth, where there was harshness, darkness, danger and damage, God's **sweetness flowed into our reality**.
 - and loving kindness of God – loving kindness is one word in Greek, *philanthropia* which means **loving friendship and kindness toward mankind**. It's saying that **when mankind was in a state of rebellion and animosity toward God, God took the initiative to flip the script and He showed up to soften the relationship and turn things through kindness into a restored relationship**.
 - How did he do this? – How did God's sweetness flow into our reality to restore and heal our relationship?
 - our Savior – our **redeemer, our rescuer, our deliverer** showed up. God **took the initiative to come to us and be present in our yuck**. He personally, intentionally, and magnificently came to our rescue.
 - appeared – this means it's **in a manifestation or body**. All of that sweetness of God turned into an ambassador of relationship, and came as something or someone that would engage with us to make things right.
 - Who Jesus is – whatever we want to say about Jesus and how He operated, it must be remembered that **He is the embodiment of God's kindness and sweetness to save us from ourselves**. When any animosity toward Him occurs, whether through frustration or pain, we must anchor ourselves in this truth. He's not the bad guy. He's our greatest gift, help, and hope.
- Savior Extraordinaire
 - Jesus saves His people
 - **Titus 3:5a – "he saved us,"⁴...**
 - He – God, **through all three persons of the Godhead** (Father, Son & Holy Spirit), engaged with humanity to rescue us. It was not just Jesus. The bible tells us clearly that all of God was involved unified in our rescue. The Father's love inaugurated the process that something had to be done. He sent the Son who willingly entered into humanity to be our sacrificial lamb. He sent the Holy Spirit to enter into the purified space in people that was carved out by the redemption of the cross and locked us down as children of God bound for heaven.

⁴ "the thread begun in 3:4 is picked up and the effect of the epiphany event on people is stated: "He saved us." This too is well known language for God's redemption of humankind, expressing in some contexts the thought of future salvation but in others, as here, reflecting on salvation as a past experience with present implications.⁴⁷ The reason for the time perspective becomes clear as Paul's focus in this conversion shifts to a description of the way in which people experience salvation: "through ... the Holy Spirit." NICNT

- Saved us – this is the part that is beautiful to the desperate and agitating to the prideful. Why did we need to be saved? What made us unable to fix things ourselves? What aspect of us was too weak to do? What did He save us from? Two things primarily: sin & death
 - Sin – sin is what separates us from God, ruins us, and kills us. It's the part of us that stands against God. It's the toxicity in our spirit. It's the disease in our soul. It's the manifestation of selfishness and evil.
 - Death – death is what cuts us off. Death, primarily spiritual death, and eternal death, is the sentence for our sin that will leave us without God forever.
 - The natural outcome for humans – those two things are the natural outcome for all humans. It's where we are naturally headed. It's the bent of an unredeemed life. If nothing else occurs to change it, that is the destiny of all humankind. Why? What did we do that was so wrong as to deserve those outcomes?
 - God's Plan & Purpose – it begins with God as creator and recognizing that there was a time when He existed and we did not. When God chose to create humans they were created FOR a purpose. They were not created to be independent beings from Him. They were created FOR Him. We, humans, were made for very specific purposes and that is to have relationship with God, to love Him back, and to reflect His glory to the rest of creation. When we willingly rebelled against that purpose and plan, we ceased to be what we were made for.
 - God's Purity – God is the epitome of purity and goodness. Any slight adjustment or shadow of evil is antithesis to what He is and stands for. All violation of that which is good is abhorrent to Him. Evil that harms is unacceptable. Wickedness stands opposed to the Almighty God. As much as He is loving and kind and merciful, He also is consistent and pure and righteous and will NOT allow evil to remain. It's like a cancer or a poison. It only destroys and that is unacceptable in His plan and in violation of His nature.
 - Mankind's depravity – Mankind was created and told to adhere to Him only so that we might continue in relationship to Him and be and do what He built us to be. When we violated that trust and relationship in the Garden of Eden through our champions Adam and Eve, humanity was thrust into a state of rebellion against God. We invited sin into our existence. Our choices only magnify our brokenness and our unwillingness to submit to God. That schism, that separation was full and complete and we lack the ability to fix it. We, without God's help, cannot and will not heal or restore. We are, as the Bible says, enemies of God, filled with sin, and therefore, objects of God's wrath.
 - Why it seems so severe – eternal death seems severe to us as a punishment for ignorance and foolish rebellion but that is only

because we do not understand or behold the magnificence of God. We are trapped in the reality around us and our minds are too limited to imagine someone like God who is all perfect, all pure, all good. When people in the bible beheld the glory of God even for a moment, they came undone and fell on their faces in reverence. It is only in that understanding that we can grasp what it means to be evil and choose evil in front of a perfect God. God is eternal and His things are eternal. He will not allow poisoned people to continue to willingly poison themselves and others.

- The Solution = Salvation – regardless of our ability to understand the depth of our depravity and sin, God told us again and again the seriousness and the natural outcome. It is for this reason that God had to clearly come to us and explain what was happening. In His kindness He created a solution to the problem. He could save us from ourselves. But that means that we need to trust Him and believe Him that there is such a problem and He has provided such a solution.
- Why would He save enemies? – If we are enemies of God, theoretically spitting in His face, and demanding that we are our own gods, why would he want to save us? Because we are His. Because He loves us deeply. Because He understands our ignorance. Because He built us to be with Him and hasn't given up.
- Jesus or Nothing
 - Clarification of salvation means
 - Titus 3:5b – “...not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...”
 - not because of works done by us in righteousness, - How does this process of salvation work? If God is going to save us by what means can He and will He do so? Is it only certain people that can be saved? What are the qualifications? What's the process? Who will he save? Before answering any of these vital questions, Paul the Apostle needs to make ONE THING very, very clear about this salvation system: it's not contingent on mankind. Whatever happens, it will not be because we earn a better outcome. It will not be because we become good enough. It will not be because some religious system qualifies us. And I think this is where Christians continue to get hijacked.
 - Back to Self – It's such a struggle for humans to keep our eyes on God and look to Him for this WHOLE process. We keep wanting to bring it back to us. We keep wanting to talk about our part in the salvation system. We keep wanting to talk about us.
 - Works done in righteousness – what does this mean? What is Paul trying to say? He's describing to a relatively religious group that we are not going to get saved because of actions, decisions, behaviors

that are done perfectly or ritually pure. We are not going to get saved by doing good things. Why? Because what we produce in ourselves is never going to be good enough. It can't be. We lack the purity to make it good enough. The demand is perfection and we can never reach perfection in our broken state.

- The Christian danger – the main stumbling block that I see in Christians around me, and many times within me, is that we believe that we are saved by grace, but we keep our salvation by good works. It's like we think that God gets us in the heaven door but we need to work like crazy to not get kicked out. It's as if Jesus washed us of our sins in our past, but it's our job not to sin any more or He will revoke our salvation. And unfortunately, that is taught in many streams of Christianity. But here's the thing: it doesn't make sense. Whatever mankind can do, they certainly can't keep it up. If our salvation depends on us, we are doomed.
- How salvation works – there is another misnomer that we tend to believe and largely due to a grammar issue. We think that salvation is a one-time moment by which God declares us clean and sets us on a trajectory of heaven. Although that is true, it's not the whole story. Many times in the Bible the term salvation is mentioned grammatically as a process that is ONGOING. In other words it should be translated, 'are BEING saved.' It means that until we get to the side of Jesus, we are in a process of being saved. The danger still exists and God is navigating all of that to get us where we need to go. The reason why this detail matters is because if salvation was a one-time moment that God handled, who is handling the rest of our salvation while we are still in danger? Us? That's never going to work. We aren't done BEING SAVED by the SAVIOR. Jesus is still saving us.
- but according to his own mercy – if it's not going to be based on us being good enough or worthy enough to be rescued and saved by God, what IS IT based on? Him...alone. We are saved or not saved by His decision through His heart alone. There is no external reason otherwise. God decides to save, or it never happens. He is the Savior, the ONLY Savior, therefore His decisions are what everything hinges on. So, if ANYONE is saved, it will be because of His MERCY. What's mercy?
- Mercy – mercy is the active outflow of compassion. It's the outcome of loving someone and doing what they need. It's more about the heart of the giver than the recipient. It's the active love of making sure they get what they desperately require. Grace, which we'll talk about more, is the motivation of unmerited kindness that allows the mercy to flow. Grace is the posture toward someone and mercy is the activity of kindness.
- His mercy – What Paul is trying to reiterate over and over is that it's God's mercy, His active love, that is going to rescue us and has little to

nothing to do with our good works, or being good enough for the process to continue.

- Maximum Wash Cycle
 - The cleansing power of the Holy Spirit
 - Titus 3:5c – “...by the washing of regeneration⁵...”
 - by the washing – HOW is it possible that God can pour out His sweetness and loving kindness to mankind if they are sinful, wicked, selfish, broken, evil, and rebellious? Isn't this enabling bad behavior? Isn't this injustice because we don't deserve something like this? If the heavenly host were watching couldn't they charge God with unfairness by pouring out such kindness on His enemies? That's where we have to talk about the system by which God makes us the type of people who can receive such goodness. It begins by a cleansing of the poison and sin that is so deep within us.
 - Poison and stain – the sin in us is wickedness. As mentioned, it's the toxicity. It's the cancer. It's the oozing evil that pours through our spiritual veins and out onto others. Everything in our spirits, souls, and hearts is the effect of sin. It's staining and affecting everything we are and do. So, how can God make that right? He can't just excuse it, it's still poison.
 - Heavy Rinse Cycle – God, once the death of Jesus on the cross is applied to us (more on that in a moment), a process begins whereby God cleanses us of sin and evil. Declared not guilty because Jesus took it upon Himself and paid our debt, it is now FAIR to do the cleansing process. It's the full and complete removal of sin in our spirits.
 - of regeneration – regeneration means making something as new. It's akin to the concept of rebirth. It's where we get concepts like being 'born again.' The cleansing is so deep and powerful that it's like we are being made a new creation and starting afresh. It's an overhaul of our spirits, the deepest part of us and the eternal part.
- Born Again
 - The renewing possible with the presence of the Holy Spirit
 - Titus 3:5d-6 – “and⁶ renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly⁷ through Jesus Christ our Savior...”

⁵ “Paul writes first of “the washing of rebirth,” which is surely related to the divine regeneration of the human heart through faith in Christ alluded to in John 3:3–8. Water baptism is a recognition of and catalyst for this spiritual but real transformation.” (Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). The Letters to Timothy and Titus (D. A. Carson, Ed.; p. 546). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos.)

⁶ “The most likely intention of the phrase is, then, to view a single event from two slightly different, yet interrelated, perspectives. This rules out the possibility that the text conceives of two separate events (either, according to the liturgical traditions, baptism and confirmation, or, according to the Pentecostal tradition, conversion and baptism in the Spirit).” NICNT

⁷ The verb “poured out” is the same word used to describe the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. “Paul envisions an issuance of the Holy Spirit not by dabs and dribbles but in a full and rich stream.” The work of the Holy Spirit could be talked about here, as could the concept of

- What parts need what - One of the difficult parts about talking theology is that it's so deep, nuanced, and complex. **Some of us needed to be removed completely and replaced while other parts of us needed renovation because the core was still valuable.** How do we talk about the core of who we are? Remember, God made us. We are made in His image. There are beautiful things within us. **Just because sin ruined a lot and stained everything doesn't mean that God doesn't want us.** It means that like with a dilapidated house, a deep examination will reveal what needs to be torn down and thrown away and what can be rebuilt upon. In the human there is a core that remains. It's the eternal part. The Bible refers to it in a variety of ways. Usually it's talked about as our spirit. But that spirit is inextricably linked to the core of our personalities and identity forming elements. For example the bible uses the terms heart and mind to talk about how we interact with reality both supernatural and natural. Heart and mind seem to be the accessible parts of our core. **Only God seems to have access to our spirit (too deep for us), but we can access our heart and mind. So, when there needs to be a salvation, conversion, process of being born again, in a human God is going to do the deep dive and fix the most important parts, but He's going to partner with us to repair the rest.**
- And renewal of the Holy Spirit, - the term renewal (in Greek) means to **renew/refresh/alter in order to make different than it was (positively).** We think of the passage in Romans 12:2 that talks about renewing our minds and it's the same word. Here it's talking about the deep work of the Holy Spirit that happens in our 'being saved' which alters the parts of us that need to remain and make them new, fresh and right. When we get saved, God does layered renewal with us to make us more of what we were built to be. **The Holy Spirit is the primary member of the Godhead who partners with us to do the overhaul** both from the moment of conversion to the growth process that ultimately results in heaven. This renewal is the concept when we talk about 'becoming a new creation'. It's in **this process that the yuck is removed, the cleansing occurs and we become like Christ.**
 - 2 Co 5:17 – *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*
- whom he – did you hear it? That second word? **HE. Who is that word referring to? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not an it** in an impersonal way (although He is not specifically, and intrinsically male), but a personality being. This is a game changer. Too often we operate as if the Holy Spirit is a force or power surge from God, but that's insulting to the Holy Spirit. **HE wants to be interacted with, talked to, loved, heard, partnered with.** The goal is to have relationship with the Holy Spirit, not

USE Him for our goals. HE, the person of the Holy Spirit is intricate in everything we do from the moment of salvation forward.

- poured out on us richly – thankfully God poured the person of the Holy Spirit (a beautiful portion of God) out upon us (we learn He also imbeds within us as He dwells within us). We know that the preposition on/in is true in both senses. But what's so beautiful about this line is that the Holy Spirit was not cautiously and hesitantly poured out to us, but richly which means, abundantly, or in great amounts. **We were soaked with the Holy Spirit and His powerful presence. We aren't begging for His attention, He is richly present.**

- Joe 2:28–29 - *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit."*

- through Jesus Christ our Savior, - **and we were able to receive the pure Holy Spirit because of what Jesus Christ, our Savior, did on the cross.** When He took the payment for our sin, the Holy Spirit was free to rush in and fill up the purified space and start doing the cleansing necessary for our spirits, souls, minds, and hearts. Prior, that space was necessary and rightful sin loaded. We filled it with sin. But when we allowed Jesus to take our sin and nail it to the cross, the necessity of it remaining there was removed and the Holy Spirit could take out the trash.

- **Acquitted**

- Declared guiltless due to the grace of God

- **Titus 3:7a - "so that being justified by his grace..."**

- so that being justified – and how did Jesus do all that? **The cross. He paid OUR penalty.** He made the account resolved. All the yuck and the ramifications of that sinful yuck were placed upon Him on that cross which He bore for us in love, and God's wrath for that sin (rightfully so) was vented down on Jesus and the account was cleansed. The word for justified here in Greek is: **acquitted, absolved, exonerated. It means declared clear.** There is no more right to be blamed for a paid account. **Justice has been served.** God didn't just 'let it go', He personally paid it.
- by his grace – and may we never forget that it was all due to **God doing something for us that we never deserved.** Grace means the posture of doing something out of your goodness for another person that they didn't deserve. It's a gift. It's unearned. This is critical because that term **grace is one of the critical elements that separates Christianity's narrative from the rest of religions of the world.**
- Saved by Grace; Held by Grace – and we are back to the discussion of how we **'are being saved'**. Not only did the grace of God cleanse us at the moment of conversion, but it continues to cleanse us and cover us all the way to heaven. **God is the Savior. He didn't leave that saving job to us after He did the initial cleansing.** It's all Him or nothing. We

could never, even in regeneration with a new spirit, be perfect enough to earn a right to go to heaven. **Although we are purified, we are in a broken world** and the war for our minds and hearts is still present. Temptation and sin is present. Evil and the devil are present. **Even Jesus, the most pure was tempted by the devil. Although He made it through unscathed, none of us would. And yes, Jesus even died for that future failure.**

- Freed to live right – it's critical that we realize that what God was doing in cleansing us and making us a new creation, was making it possible for us to live rightly to His glory. **The goal was not clear out space for us to live sinful lives without consequence. The goal was to empower and enable us to live the righteous lives that God intended.** It means we are now made in a way to do what we were always supposed to do: live rightly and purely for God. This is the part that many streams of Christianity (including myself) tend to either miss or gloss over. Paul is in the middle of telling Titus and the Cretan church to live better and live rightly. The reason he can demand that so strongly is that we were saved to do just that.
- Threading the needle – Paul is threading the needle of talking about the false teachers error (remember the context), while at the same time demanding similar change. Here's what I mean. The false teachers came into the Cretan church and said that the only way to get saved was to do works of righteousness. You had to be perfect enough to get saved. Paul said, that's not true and it's damaging. BUT, although we are saved by grace alone (again, look at the context of the false teachers to see why Paul doubles down on this concept), we are not saved so that we can continue to live wrongly. We are saved so that we can honor God with our lives. So, how do you tell someone to live rightly without falling into the same trap that the false teachers did about living rightly FOR salvation. **Paul spins it to living rightly BECAUSE of salvation.**
 - Eze 36:25–27 – *"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."*

- Forever Family
 - How Christ's salvation and Spirit's power qualifies us as family

- Titus 3:7b - *"...we might become heirs⁸ according to the hope of eternal life."*
 - we might become – The word for 'might' isn't a 'hope so.' It's a Greek word that means **a process had become to make a new thing into existence. It means created for.** So the better read would be,...'so that being justified by his grace, we are created to be...' It's a statement of beginning of a process.
 - heirs – heirs means someone enters into **a new status for gaining something.** It means rightfully owners. Here it means that we become qualified to gain something from God that is precious. We didn't earn the right to be heirs, something outside of our self, made it possible. Heirs of what? Instead of listing the items of gain, it's best to say it this way: **Heirs of positive, permanent relationship to God and heaven. Everything flows from that.**
 - according to the hope of eternal life – I feel like this part of the sentence is awkward and could be said a cleaner way. I think what Paul is saying is that our inheritance is real and now and it includes all the benefits of what happens with the endowment of eternal life. Or it could mean the inheritance is eternal life. Either way it's speaking to the same thing: we become heirs with Jesus to gain all that God has for His people including eternal life.

Conclusion

- What God has done for us! – do you see the kindness, the brilliance, the love, the power of what God has done for us????
- After all of this, ought we not respond? Ought we not live differently? – in light of all of this there's a response that is appropriate. If we don't know the Lord what must we do? If we DO know the Lord, what needs to change?
- **Altar Call**

⁸ "For Paul in New Testament terms, with fulfillment of messianic promises in Christ, believers are "heirs" of age-old promises made by this God to his people, who through faith now live in "the hope of eternal life" (see Titus 1:2 above). The assurance of a secure spiritual inheritance, the result of divine adoption (Rom 8:14–17), should empower Titus and Cretan believers to trust God for their future in the face of the possibly discouraging social situation faced in Crete." (Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). The Letters to Timothy and Titus (D. A. Carson, Ed.; p. 546). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos.)