

**Women's Bible Study, March 28, 2025**  
**Holy Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church**  
**The Pastoral Epistles**  
**Lesson 13 (Titus 3)**

**Highlights/Notes for Titus 3 -- A Summary of the Christian Faith: He Saved Us**

1. **Theme Verse:** "...He saved us -- not because of works done by us in righteousness, but because of His own mercy; He saved us through the washing of rebirth [regeneration, ESV] and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly [richly, ESV] through Jesus Christ our Savior,..." Titus 3:5-6 (EHV, ESV)

2. **Objectives:** By the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, we will...

a. ...understand the importance of a sound knowledge of Christian doctrine for our faith and life;

b. ...confirm our belief in holy Baptism as a true and powerful instrument of salvation;

c. ...be encouraged to support the work of pastoral ministry.

3. **Overview:** In this last portion of Titus (beginning with Titus 2:11-14 [from last week], continuing with 3:1-7 [this week]) "Paul gives special prominence to the doctrines of justification and regeneration." He saved us! (SG p.115)

4. **Titus 3:1-7 -- The New Birth**

a. **v. 1, reminders of "good citizenship"** (TLSB)

1) **"Remind them..."**

\* Refers back to Titus 2:11-15, teaching the people of the church to do good, keeping in mind "the grace of God that brings salvation ...and trains us" to do good works [sanctification]. (Last weeks notes, Titus 2:11-14)

\*\* And, oh how we need to be reminded! "Yes, Christians need reminders, frequent reminders to live their Christianity. How quickly we can forget!" (TPB p.204)

\*\*\* And also recall from last week's lesson, it is NOT Law that reminds us, but it is Gospel that reminds us, motivates us, effects a change in our hearts, and equips us. We'll continue to see this more in today's study, as Paul unfolds the Gospel in vv.4-7!

2) "...**be subject** [*submissive*, ESV] **to rulers and authorities**..." (Refers to all forms/levels of government, CSB 3:1)

\* "Although believers are citizens of heaven (Php 3:20), they must also submit themselves to earthly government (see Ro 13:1-7; 1 Pe 2:13-17) and help promote the well-being of the community." (CSB 3:1-2)

\*\* "The Cretan Christians might think that their freedom in Christ freed them from obedience to secular rulers, particularly if they were pagan, as was true in the Roman Empire." Paul was stressing the point he makes elsewhere, the need to be subject and obedient, yes, even to unjust laws. The only restriction to obedience occurs when government commands us to act against God's will [Acts 5:29]. (TPB pp.204-205) (And even then we must be prepared to accept the punishment of the government, and continue to shine the light of Christ's Gospel. Consider the witness of the apostles in Acts.)

\*\*\* In our American culture, this is a challenge. We seem to be able to say, "Throw the bum out," if we want. We can say what we want in our democracy. Paul wasn't writing to democracies, was he? But here in our American culture we seem to think we can say, "I didn't vote for him; he's not my president." Paul doesn't give us that option, however. We are to do our best to be the best citizen we can be. (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Titus 3:1-15, Episode 254)

3) "...**to be ready to do whatever is good**" -- As Christ's dearly loved children, and as the Church, we want to be known as good neighbors and good citizens. We need to acknowledge there are people over us, and we are to speak well of them (see v.2 below). (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Titus 3:1-15, Episode 254)

b. v. 2, always as Christ's representatives, in word and deed...

1) "**speak evil of no one**..." - Do not indulge in slander, insults, or character assassination. (TLSB 3:2) "Do not find pleasure in speaking evil of others, even if it is true." (TPB p.205)

2) "**avoid quarreling**" (ESV) ("**be peaceable**" [NIV, EHV]) -- Not contentious, helping to settle quarrels rather than cause them (TPB p.205)

3) "**be gentle**" (ESV, EHV) ("**considerate**" [NIV]) -- Speaking well of others, without arguing, being gentle in our speech, erring on the side of gentleness even with our opponents. (30 Minutes in the NT). "Willing to overlook weaknesses in others... forbearing" (TPB p.205)

4) "**show perfect courtesy toward all people**" (ESV, EHV) ("**show true humility toward all**..." [NIV])

\* "Gentle, courteous conduct stands in contrast to quarrelsome attitudes and evil speech; it strengthens the Christian's credibility and personal witness." (TLSB 3:2)

\*\* "The word for 'humility' can also be translated as 'gentleness, courtesy, meekness.' All of these show a sensitivity and concern for the other person. Jesus calls himself 'gentle' (Matthew 11:29), or meek, as he invites the 'weary and burdened' to come to him for rest (verse 28)." In Him, our gentle Savior, we find the perfect example of the kindness and courtesy and humility with which we will reach out to one another and to the troubled in the world. (TPB pp.205-206)

c. **v. 3, "For we ourselves were once..."**

1) "Life without Christ tends to follow the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness in God's view (1 Cor. 1:25). People who can remember their life before they became Christians are often amazed and dismayed at how foolish and distorted it was. This passage provides a succinct description of how badly we need God's grace." (TLSB 3:3)

**Discussion Question (SG #105, pp.60,116):** "Why may Christians not boast that before their conversion they were by nature better than unbelievers (v. 3; Ephesians 2:1-2)?"

"Our past sins and the fact that we are by nature no better than others should move us to be lenient with our neighbor. The old Adam in Christians is no different from that of non-Christians. It is the fallen, sinful nature that they fight against by the power of the Holy Spirit whose grace imparts to them a new nature." (SG #105, p.116)

2) If we see the people outside the Church acting worldly, and our first inclination is to say 'How dare they,' the first thing we should do is recite this verse to ourselves, lest we forget what we were by nature. We are not different by nature than anyone else we come across in the world. We shouldn't be shocked by how unbelievers act, like we all once were in unbelief. The description in verse 3 reveals the effect of sin on our lives. Paul pulls no punches! It's not pretty! This is a word of the Law, giving us a diagnosis about our condition. Let it be what it is! Then we can appreciate the very next words of Paul all the more, which are pure Gospel... (30 Minutes in the NT).

3) Paul is reminding "himself and Titus and the Christians in Crete and all of us of our 'one time' corrupt, lost condition. Such a reminder helps us appreciate the Gospel." The verses that are next (vv. 4-7) are "a Gospel presentation that provides the motivation," that enable us and give us "encouragement in Christian living (sanctification)." "...What a miserable world this would be if God left it to itself! How miserable we would be if God had left us to ourselves" But God didn't!..." (TPB pp.206-207)

d. vv.4-7, Pure Gospel; "He Saved Us"

1) "This is one of the choicest passages of Holy Scripture. In one sentence in the original Greek, Paul sums up the entire Gospel." (TPB p.207)

2) "This is one of the most wonderful of passages in all the New Testament. The Incarnation of the Lord - God has appeared. We are saved not by what [works] we've done, but we are saved from what we've done, because God is merciful, by Grace alone. Our works (any works we think are good) are excluded." (30 Minutes in the NT). "We are totally passive in our salvation. God came to us when we were dead in our sin, and He alone made us alive. Christ did it ALL for us. We can rest in that. Find peace in that! -- That God saved us not according to our works, but according to His works and mercy, and none of our own." (Chad Bird, 90-second video, Titus 3:5, "In Salvation, We are Totally Passive," 03/28/2024)

3) "Every aspect of our salvation described in 2:11-14 and 3:4-7 depends on God's actions alone; none of it depends on what we do. Even though Paul repeatedly urges Christians to prepare for and perform good works, these are the harvest of God's grace in saving us from our sins and are not prepayments or repayments for His salvation." (TLSB 3:5)

4) When did God save us? v.4, "*When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared.*" -- The deity of Jesus Christ affirmed. God in human flesh came to save us.

5) Why did God save us? What moved him? v. 5, "*Not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.*" Note these four characteristics of God that moved him: (TPB p.208...)

a) the kindness of God (v.4) -- the goodness, "the good will God has toward us, that He is disposed to bless us."

b) the love of God (v.4) -- "The word for 'love' used here is the same as our English word *philanthropy*, love of mankind....Look at Jesus and you see the Father's love and kindness actively present among us."

c) His mercy (v.5) -- Why did God save us? Because of His mercy. "God looked with pity upon our wretchedness, with compassion that knew no limits. Our God is 'rich in mercy' (Ephesians 2:4)."

d) His grace (v.7) -- "This is God's undeserved love. 'For it is by grace you have been saved' (Eph. 2:8). Nothing in us moved God to save, only His kindness, love, mercy, and grace."

6) How do we receive this (this saving gift from God)? vv.5-6, "Through the washing of rebirth [regeneration, ESV] and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly [richly, ESV] through Jesus Christ our Savior,..."

a) "This is divinely poetic; a poetic way of saying, '**He** has baptized you!' The early Church understood this passage to be about Baptism... which is what God does for us and in us. There really was no dispute in what this passage meant until the radical reformers came after Luther and Calvin (even Calvin himself would have said this passage is referring to Baptism as well)." (30 Minutes in the NT)

b) How does this washing happen?

\* It's poured out on us. Regeneration. Rebirth. "...born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). "A washing through which our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16), a washing that saves us (1 Peter 3:21)." And Galatians 3:27, "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (TPB, p.209).

\*\* The Holy Spirit renews us, having been "*poured out on us generously [richly, abundantly] through Jesus Christ our Savior.*" (**v.6**)

\*\*\* Baptism brings new life and spiritual cleansing. God provides this Baptism as a means for us to receive His grace. "Baptism may certainly be called a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water. Such power is given to Baptism by the Word that it is a washing of new birth" Paul "sets forth and proves that baptism is that wherein the old man dies and the new man is born." (TLSB 3:5; Luther's Large Catechism, Part IV, 27).

SG #106. **Discussion Question (SG #106, pp.60,116):** "Why must we be born again before we can be children of God (John 3:3-5)?"

"The new birth is necessitated by the fact of human sinfulness. As Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). People cannot by any act of their will or through any good deed bring this about. Only God, working through the Gospel, can do so." (SG #106, p.116)

SG #107. **Discussion Question (SG #107, pp.60,116):** "How does Paul prove that our redemption and sanctification are entirely and solely the work of God?"

"God's infinite love is revealed in Christ's work of redemption. Salvation is by grace alone; we could not earn it by our works. It is altogether the result of God's love, kindness, mercy, and grace. All that Jesus has accomplished by His life and death God gives and seals to man by Holy Baptism." (SG #107, p.116)

SG #108. **Discussion Question (SG #108, pp.61,116):** "How does he prove that Baptism is a means of grace and has the power to work faith in one's spiritual life (Titus 3:5)? Is this an argument for or against infant Baptism?"

"Paul points to the 'washing' of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit' (Titus 3:5) as that through which Christ's work of justification is personally applied to us and we are made heirs of eternal life. The word *washing* refers to a laver (a basin used in temple worship) or the washing done at one. There is only one instituted rite and act of ministry that makes use of water; it is Baptism. The Sacrament is not a mere rite or symbol but a means of Grace through which the Holy Spirit works faith and regenerates the heart of a person. Far from being an argument against infant Baptism, it serves to justify it. Since the basis of salvation is found not in our works or actions but God's alone, children, who are capable of virtually nothing, can also be saved through these waters. Since God's work and promise of salvation in Christ are for all people and not adults only, infants may and should (and must!) be baptized for their salvation." (SG #108, p.116)

SG #109. **Discussion Question (SG #109, pp.61,116-117):** "How does Luther explain the value and power of Baptism in his catechism?"

"In his Small Catechism, Luther says that Baptism 'works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.' Our Baptism assures us of our justification before God, bestows upon us the blessings of Christ's redemption, makes us heirs of salvation, and gives us the hope of eternal life." (SG #109 pp. 116-177)

7) What is the purpose of all this that God has done for us?: v.7, "...so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (EHV, ESV) [Thanks be to God!!]

a) He justified us (declared us not guilty) by His grace (undeserved love) to make us His child, an heir. Our birthright is eternal life to live with Him.

b) "Justification before God is regeneration." (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article III 19). Once justified and purified, God adopts us into His family as co heirs with Jesus Christ. And as children and coheirs with Christ, God's promise of eternal life is something we genuinely look forward to, being forever with our Savior. (TLSB 3:7)

c) "God has written us into His will as heirs. The inheritance is eternal life. That is our 'hope' as God's heirs. It is a sure hope, for God will never change His will. So certain is this inheritance that Jesus speaks of eternal life as already ours: 'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life ' (John 3:36). We have life now and will have it forever. What blessings we have in this life! What a glorious future awaits us in eternity!" (TBP p.211)

## 5. Titus 3:8-15 -- The Fruits of Faith

a. v. 8, a trustworthy saying: the Gospel that changes hearts and bears fruit (TPB p.211)

1) SG #110. **Discussion Question (SG #110, pp.61,117):** "Why should we be constantly reminded of our redemption, justification, and heavenly heritage (v. 8; 2 Timothy 2:21; 3:1-7)"

"Paul closes his doctrinal instruction with his favorite expression, "This saying is trustworthy," absolutely reliable... The apostle states emphatically that Christianity is not merely a matter of the head and intellect but of the heart and life. It is a practical religion. The Gospel is to be preached to believers as long as they live, in order that they may grow in knowledge and sanctification (2 Peter 3:18). By living according to the Gospel, people will derive inestimable benefits for themselves and will be most profitable to their neighbor." (SG #110, p.117)

2) As we've just studied in vv. 4-7, we realize that this "trustworthy saying" is "a unified statement of salvation in Christ, representing the Christian's experience: God's initiative in sending Christ; His merciful rescue of us; Baptism for rebirth and cleansing; the indwelling Spirit, who makes us rich in Christ; justification and acceptance into God's family; and the hope of eternity with our heavenly Father." (TLSB 3:8)

3) Stressing "these things" (which are all of the Gospel message). "Truly, the Gospel can change hearts so that Christians will be moved to serve God in all they do." (TPB p.211)

4) Grace alone produces this desire to do good works on behalf of our neighbor. Good works are produced through the Gospel. This is fruit of proclaiming the Gospel. It is not the fruit of preaching Law... When we're not focused on Gospel, we get involved in controversies about Law, and the good works go by the wayside... (see v. 9 that follows). (30 Minutes in the NT).

b. **vv. 9-11**, There is no fruit in false teaching: those who add law to the Gospel, those who are "divisive" (the Greek word=*heretic*;; "one who chooses to be different in his teaching"...different from God's truth), those who warp/distort the truth of God's Word, and insist on teaching perverted doctrines. (TPB pp.213-214)

1) Paul firmly instructs regarding the divisive false teacher, "Have nothing to do with him... he is self-condemned." Paul knows from experience that it's easy to get bogged down by those who are divisive in the Church. Paul is not being impatient here, but he is properly very concerned for the sake of the Gospel and the sheep of the flock who need the Gospel. Paul will not tolerate distortion nor attacks on the Gospel! (30 Minutes in the NT).

2) SG #111. **Discussion Question (SG #111, pp.62,117)**: "What should be a Christian's attitude toward false teachers (v. 10; Romans 16:17)?"

"The Gospel... enlightens and strengthens [believers], so that they will not fall prey to religious deceivers but know how to deal with them. Paul was not a man to compromise with the fanatics and errorists. How often he warns the believers in the Pastoral Epistles to guard against human speculations, religious trash, and false doctrines, which endanger a Christian's faith! The Church should properly admonish heretics and in brotherly love try to lead them to a knowledge of the truth. But if they refuse to become convinced and continue in their error, they should not be permitted to hold membership in the Church (Romans 16:17; 1 John 4:1). To believe and to teach a false doctrine are grievous sins, which, if not repented of and forsaken, will lead the deluded person into perdition." (SG #111 p.117)

c. **vv. 12-15**, Gospel-fruit of Christian giving and support, "*devoting themselves to doing what is good*" for the sake of the Gospel, for those who teach and do missionary work.

1) Who's who?:

a) Artemas - Not mentioned anywhere else in the NT. (TLSB 3:12). Paul promises here to send either Artemas or Tychicus as one of his trusted associates to replace Titus. Since Paul had left Titus in Crete to "straighten out what was left unfinished" there (Titus 1:5), his work in Crete was a temporary assignment. And Paul wanted Titus to rejoin him in Nicopolis (west coast of Greece) for the winter. (TPB p.216)

b) Tychicus - A trusted co-worker of Paul's, who had traveled with or for Paul on several occasions (Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8; 2 Timothy 4:12). (CSB 3:12)

c) Zenas the Lawyer - He is mentioned no where else in Scripture. "If he was a Jewish convert, 'lawyer' means that he was an expert in Mosaic law; if he was a Gentile convert, that he was a Roman jurist." (CSB 3:13)

d) Apollos - From Alexandria, one of Paul's well-known co-workers (Acts 18:24-28, 19:1; 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6,22; 16:12). (CSB 3:13). Zenas and Apollos most likely brought this letter to Titus. (TLSB 3:13). Paul doesn't mention where Zenas and Apollos are going from Crete after they deliver this letter to Titus. But Paul does ask that Titus and the believers of the Church in Crete "help them on their way. We may conclude that they were on a mission journey, and in this way their needs were to be provided ." (TPB p.217)

2) **vv.13-14**, "...help [them]...on their way and see that they have everything they need. Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good..."

a) "What we give toward the support of training and sending out missionaries, and that is the basic work of a church body, also makes our lives fruitful as servants of God and as members of the fellowship of believers." (TPB p.217)

b) "...devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful." (ESV, EHV).

\* Paul wants to make sure these missionary workers are being taken care of. "Paul and the others could not perform such ministries without the help of other Christians, so his closing includes instructions for their support. Whether or not we personally work in outreach ministry, we need to support others as they evangelize, teach, and minister in Christ's name. God, who redeemed us with the precious blood of Jesus and saw to it that we received His dear message, will give us opportunities to serve and support others. What a privilege to serve with our brothers and sisters in Christ in God's kingdom." (TLSB 3:12-15)

\*\* "How do people learn to devote themselves to good works?? It comes through focusing on the Grace of God in Jesus Christ. Period. Good works are those things that are done to help those in need. To serve our neighbor...what we do in love toward our neighbor. Good works are outward, having people involved. While prayer life and devotion, etc. are important, those things are not the good works Paul refers to here." (30 Minutes in the NT).

### 3) v.15, Greetings, closing, and Grace

a) "Paul ends this letter with Grace. He started with Grace, and fills his letter with Grace, because he wants Titus to have a congregation that's devoted to good works. And there's no way you produce that unless you talk all the time about the Grace of God." (30 Minutes in the NT).

b) "Paul's greetings are extended to 'those who love us in the faith.' Truly, faith in the Lord Jesus establishes a special bond of love among Christians... 'Grace be with you all.' ...Both in the opening and closing greeting, as in all of his letters, Paul speaks of Grace. His mission was to proclaim the riches of God's Grace in Christ." (TPB p.218). He did it well...by the Grace of God. Grace be with you all!

#### **References:**

TPB = "The People's Bible (Commentary): 1,2 Timothy, Titus" 2nd edition, by Armin W. Schuetze. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI. 2000 (2nd ed.). (Originally published 1988)

TLSB = The Lutheran Study Bible, English Standard Version, General editor Rev. Edward A. Engelbrecht. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. Published 2009.

CSB = Concordia Self-Study Bible, New International Version, General editor Robert G. Hoerber. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO. 1986.

SG = Study Guide used in our Women's Bible Study (by participants in-person and via Zoom): "1 and 2 Timothy, Titus: Keeping the Faith" by A.C. Mueller. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. 2006. (This is part of the Bible study series "God's Word for Today")

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30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Titus 3:1-15, Episode 254, 03/11/2022.

Chad Bird, 90-second video, Titus 3:5, "In Salvation, We are Totally Passive," 03/28/2024

#### **Bible translations used:**

EHV = Evangelical Heritage Version

ESV = English Standard Version

NIV = New International Version