

### It's All God (Part 1) – Titus 3:1-7

Titus 3:1-7; A little over 27 years ago, on October 14, 1987, just 5 days before the infamous Black Monday stock market crash . . .

An 18 month old little girl name Jessica McClure, was wandering around her aunt's back yard in Texas, and fell into an abandoned well only 8 inches in diameter And it wasn't until she reached a cavity 22 feet down, that she stopped (**Photo 1**) And as you can imagine, a frantic effort began to rescue her, with pictures like this shown all over the nation; Some of you may even remember it

The problem, was that due to Baby Jessica's age, rescuers were unable to simply lower a rope and extract her

So for two days (**Photo 2**), they labored around the clock, to implement an elaborate plan of digging a *parallel* shaft, connected by a tunnel, to get her out And finally, after 58 grueling hours (**Photo 3**), they were able to reach her and pull her to safety; She was numb, she was dehydrated, and she needed . . . 15 surgeries over the years to correct her injuries – but she was alive, and safe

➤ And I remember thinking as a junior in college at the time, that Baby Jessica was absolutely helpless in that well; She could do *nothing* to save herself; Nothing Her fate was completely in the hands of her rescuers (**Intro**) Which is exactly the situation *we're* in when it comes to our *salvation* – we are utterly *powerless* to save ourselves, and completely *dependent* on God; It's all God And the more we *understand* that – the more amazed we'll be, the more thankful we'll be, and the more secure we'll be in our blessed assurance

Which is the thrust of Titus 3:1-7; The Apostle Paul is writing to Titus about what he should tell his church, the people in his care, and says in v1 . . .  
[1] *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, [2] to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. [3] For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. [4] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Salvation, is all God; Starting with the fact, that . . .

#### **We're saved by God's grace (4-5, 7)**

That's the flow of this passage – *When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared [v4], he saved us [v5] . . . by his grace [v7]*; That's the flow We're saved by God's grace; Grace that he *lavished* upon us Eph 1:8 says And grace that *justifies* us according to Rom 3:24; And grace that's offered as a gift

We're saved by God's grace; God's unmerited favor; His acts of kindness toward us that we didn't deserve; His goodness that we didn't earn, and couldn't earn His love and compassion that we aren't worthy of (Rom 2:4); His rescue that delivers us from our sin and its consequences; That's grace – unmerited and broad And the first of 4 aspects we find here

➤ The 2<sup>nd</sup>, according to v4, is that it's *embodied by Jesus*; Or personified in him He's *the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior* that appeared In fact, Titus 2:11 says he *is* the grace of God; *The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people*; Who appeared bringing salvation? Jesus So Jesus is God's grace; The fullest expression of his grace

3<sup>rd</sup>, he came to save us, v5; He came to rescue us from our well, our sin Which makes God's grace *salvific* – able to save; That's the 3<sup>rd</sup> aspect we find here And he does so – by forgiving us when we don't deserve it, cleansing us when we're filthy, renewing us when we were dead, and justifying us when we're guilty That's the essence of God saving grace, wrapped up in just a few verses here

And he offers it, and implements it, at just the right *time* – the 4<sup>th</sup> aspect God's grace is unmerited, it's embodied by Jesus, it saves us, and it's *timely* Rom 5:6 says that *at the right time Christ died for the ungodly* And at just the right *time*, he pricked your heart; And got your attention Sometimes after 58 *hours* of work, and sometimes 58 *years* Either way, God's grace *was* and *is*, timely

➤ But it's important to understand, that God's work of grace to save you, *isn't automatic* It doesn't automatically apply to you just b/c you're alive The application of God's saving grace to your life, requires faith; *By grace you have been saved through faith* the Bible says (Eph 2:8) IOW faith is the switch, that releases the grace, to save your soul

It's like the water behind a dam, with faith as the gate; Release the gate, respond to God in faith, and grace flows down; Like a flood And keeps flowing; Overwhelming you, and blessing you, and exceeding all your sin No wonder song writers of every generation call it amazing, and marvelous, and wonderful, and all the rest It's all God, and it's all grace; We're saved by God's grace

But . . .

#### • **Not our works**

Just as Baby Jessica was saved by receiving the help her rescuers offered, *we* are saved by receiving the grace *God* offers; She couldn't save herself, and neither can we IOW works have nothing to do with our salvation; That's what v5 says explicitly *He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness*; Not b/c of the things *we do*; It doesn't get much clearer

It's not what we do that *gains* our salvation; It's not what we do that *earns* our salvation; It's not what we do that *keeps* our salvation Even things done *in righteousness*; Things done for a good cause and with a pure heart They have nothing to do with God's act to save us

That's why baptism doesn't save you; Or confirmation; Or taking communion; Or serving the poor; Or going to church; Or anything else you do The things we *do* in no way gain or ensure or maintain our right standing before God They don't; They don't *make* us righteous in his eyes, and they don't *keep* us righteous in his eyes; And it's not just here in Titus 3 that we find that principle

➤ Over and over again the Bible tell us that works don't cut it  
Like **Gal 2:16** – *A person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ*; IOW we're not saved by keeping God's rules  
That's *necessary* for a life pleasing to him, but it's not salvific – it doesn't save us  
*For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.* Rom 3:28  
And Eph 2:9 says that our salvation is the gift of God; Not a result of works

You might think of it this way; Works don't gain or ensure your status as a child of God, any more than good behavior makes you a child of your parents\*\*\*\*\*  
You're a son or daughter by *birth*; Period; Just like you're a child of God, by grace  
Nor does bad behavior *disqualify* you as God's child

➤ And thank God for that, b/c 2000 years under a law of works in the Old Testament, proved that nobody could do it; Nobody could keep it; Nobody's perfect  
Which makes this truth of being saved by grace and not works, yet another reason for our blessed assurance  
B/c while our works may not *please* God at times, they don't cause him to cast us off

And yet in religion after religion, church after church, all kinds of *man-made* traditions and works are added and deemed necessary  
Some in order to *be* saved, and some in order to *stay* saved  
“If I don't get that checked off and this checked off, in *addition* to my faith, I won't go to heaven”; Wrong; Nothing could be further from the truth  
That's a works-based salvation that's unbiblical, and results in nothing but bondage

Works have their place in the Christian life, for sure; We've been *prepared* for good works, and we're told to do them  
But they are *not* necessary for salvation, or a means to *keep* it  
*By works of the law no human being will be justified in [God's] sight* (Rom 3:20)  
*He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness*  
We're saved by God's *grace*, and only grace; Not works

Those are the first 2 principles we find here; The 3<sup>rd</sup> is that we're saved . . .

#### **Because of God's mercy (5)**

V5 – *He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy*; His own disposition to withhold the *punishment* we deserve  
That's mercy; The other side of the coin of grace; Which is God's disposition to grant us *favor* we *don't* deserve

And both are necessary to be saved; Without grace, there's no life, no blessing, and no eternity with God  
And without mercy, there's no forgiveness, no pardon, and no release from the consequences of sin; *Both* are necessary; In fact . . .  
1 Pet 1:3 says – *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again*  
We need God's grace, and we *desperately* need God's mercy

➤ And there's no better illustration of it, than those in the New Testament who were blind  
Like Bartimaeus; Who was sitting just outside Jericho one day, and upon hearing that Jesus was near, cried out – “*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*” (Mk 10:47-48)  
And after being told hush up, he said it again – “*Have mercy on me!*”

Why? B/c he was desperate to see; Desperate to be relieved of the consequences of sin, in a fallen world; Desperate to receive God's mercy

Just like you were when you were saved – when you recognized *your* sin and guilt and spiritual blindness, and called upon the name of the Lord  
You were desperate for God's mercy; Desperate for him to forgive your sins, open your eyes, and relieve your guilt; Remember that?  
I hope so; B/c if you don't, you may not be saved; B/c you haven't realized the depravity of your sin and its consequences  
He saved us v5 says, according to his *mercy*; Mercy we *need*; Desperately

And thank God he's good for it; Thank God he's rich in mercy, *because of the great love with which he loved us* (Eph 2:4)  
Thank God he possesses an inexhaustible supply; Thank God it covers a world of sin  
Thank God he's the *Father* of mercies the Bible says (2 Cor 1:3)

We're saved by God's grace, b/c of God's mercy; Something we desperately need, and something God freely gives

➤ Which is all well and good until someone receives it without deserving it; At least in *our* eyes; You know, like someone who hurt you; Or someone who wronged you  
Someone who offended you; Someone who cost you something  
In that case, we can't *imagine* God extending mercy to them

Let alone showing it *ourselves* – the very thing we're *called* to do in light of the mercy God shows us; “No way; I'm not showing them mercy; They don't deserve it”  
And the irony of that is completely lost on us; Mercy wouldn't *be* mercy if people deserved it; And yet we dig in our heels; Especially if the offense is personal

➤ Or how about someone who committed a heinous crime? It's not just when we're offended personally that we don't like to extend mercy . . .  
But when it defies our sensibilities

For instance, imagine that instead of innocent Baby Jessica at the bottom of that well, it was somebody like **Wesley Allan Dodd**  
Convicted in the early 90's for torturing, sexually molesting, and murdering 3 boys;  
And labeled one of the most evil killers in history  
Would you have been so eager for the crews to rescue *him*?  
Mercy says that *God* would have; In fact, mercy says that God *did*

B/c just before his hanging in 1993, Wesley Dodd's last words were these . . .  
“I was wrong. [And] I was wrong when I said there was no hope [and] no peace. There is hope. There is peace. I found both in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look to the Lord, and you will find peace.”

“What! No way; God can't show him mercy; Or shouldn't; Let him rot in his well of sin”;  
That's what *we* tend to think\*\*\*\*\*  
And when we do, we put a *cap* on the riches of God's mercy; And by default think that our sin isn't quite as offensive to God; When in reality, we're *all* repulsive  
And apart from Christ, we're all in the same well; Desperately *needing* God's mercy

We're saved by God's grace, b/c of God's mercy; But . . .

- **Not our merit**

It doesn't matter where you were stuck in the well of your sin

Whether 22 feet down with Baby Jessica, or 222 feet down with Wesley Dodd – you deserved to stay there; And so did I

Because of our sin, we didn't deserve God's merciful rescue

Nor was there anything we could do to change that; Or compensate for it

We're saved because of God's *mercy* – period; Not our merit, b/c we *have* none

**Rom 3:10-12** says that apart from Christ – *None is righteous, no, not one; no one seeks after God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless [meritless]; no one does good not even one.*

We've done nothing in our lives to deserve God's merciful rescue; Let alone his gracious blessing; Nothing; B/c even the *good* things we've done have been self-serving

Or at best, for reasons other than God's glory

And on top of that, even our *righteous* deeds are as filthy rags in his sight, apart from

Christ (Is 64:6); Which makes our tally in the merit column, a big fat zero\*\*\*\*\*

➤ In fact, what we *deserve*, is punishment – death the Bible says

*The wages of sin is death* (Rom 6:23); Not just physical death, but eternal death – suffering in the Lake of Fire; Torment that never ends

Which sounds a bit harsh until you understand the purity of God's holiness; And the implications of his righteousness; And the demands of his justice

Like the fact that sin must be punished – b/c it's wrong

And the fact that light has no *tolerance* for darkness; And holiness no place for *sinfulness*

When *that* begins to sink in, alongside our utter depravity, the justice and rightness of God's punishment will too

And his mercy will become the most beautiful, stunning, and desirable thing you could ever imagine, or hope for (**Summary**)

➤ We're saved by God's grace, not our works; B/c of God's mercy, not our merit; 2 sides of the same coin of salvation

And we'd do well to not only cling to it, and rest in it, and bask in it, and revel in it, and rejoice in it – but show it to others as well; Grace and mercy both

Otherwise we'll simply continue in our foolish disobedience like v3 says, passing our days in the well of malice and envy and hate

Pray – Lord, I don't know what else to say, but thank you; We're so blessed – blessed by your grace, and graced by your mercy; Where would we be without it?

We love you, we worship you, and we give to you now our tithes and offerings, as an expression of our joy and thanks

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