**Right Living In A World Gone Wrong**

**Titus 3:3-7 (ESV)**

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We’re studying the book of Titus. We just work our way through God’s Word with various books of the Bible, trying to understand what Jesus would have us to do as we follow Him. The book of Titus, we’ve headlined it under *Order in a World of Chaos*. Titus was this young pastor who received a letter from his mentor, Paul, about how to help people trying to follow Jesus in a world that has gone terribly wrong. So we’ve made our way through the first couple of chapters. We’re in chapter 3. We’ll read verses 1-7.

***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.*

There is a birthday cake, but no birthday boy. He was supposed to come home after soccer practice with the rest of his team to celebrate, but after a while, no one came. There was no news and his family started to worry. Eventually, they contacted parents of the other teammates and no one had heard from the boys. So they all went to the same place, a local cave near the village. It’s the fourth largest cave system in Thailand. It was well-known as a place where people would get lost. During monsoon season, the cave was typically shut down entirely because rainfall floods this system with torrents of murky water. The rains had just begun. Upon reaching the cave, the parents discovered bikes, bags and shoes outside the entrance. They were aware that there was a need for help. The situation was desperate! Help arrived not just from the government in Thailand, but from around the world. People showed up and for days, engineers were struggling to pump water from the cave. Workers were working for ways to drill into the caverns. Military rescue specialists and volunteer cave divers were trying to move a treacherous search through these underground rapids. But after a week without news, many of them began to give up hope.

One day, over a mile into this flooded cave, divers went through hours and eventually surfaced into this black air pocket and discovered all twelve boys and their coach alive. It was celebrated around the world. The only question was how are we going to get them out? They didn’t know how this rescue was going to be carried out. The rains were picking up and were expected to last nearly four months. The boys had weakened bodies. They had no scuba experience. Several couldn’t even swim. The only way in or out was a five plus hour journey through these dark flooded caverns, much of which was just underwater in special scuba gear. The oxygen level in their cabin pocket was beginning to drop and the rescuers needed to act. Any hope that the boys could be taught to dive was eventually abandoned as too dangerous. There was a Thai former navy seal who had come in and ended up drowning while trying to bring oxygen to the boys. That was when a volunteer Australian doctor and these other cave divers put together a rescue plan that was just out of this world.

They were going to go in and put each boy under anesthesia and then fit them with a dive mask. They were then going to swim them asleep individually through the tunnels. Half-way through, they would have to surface in this air pocket and re-sedate them because it would begin to wear off, so that they could continue the journey safely. People thought this was crazy. It was a rescue that was tried to be carried out in a secret way because no one would have believed that it could be possible. Yet on July 10, 2018, the last of the boys and the coach were delivered safely from the cave in a rescue that is just out of this world.

There are all kinds of stories of people being rescued. There is this common sentiment such that a rescue that happens like this, that is so amazing, it just radically transforms your life. Rarely do people look at things the same way or people look at them the same way. A rescue, when it’s that special or that dramatic, it changes the way that you look at everything. If you’ve ever truly required a rescue and you’ve experienced the moment of salvation, you know that there is really nothing quite like it. You cannot experience such a miracle rightly and continue unchanged.

The island of Crete was known as this dark, dark place spiritually and morally. It’s a constant reminder that this world is a place where so much has gone seriously wrong. Paul knew that this was exactly the kind of place that God loves to shine His light. He had sent Titus to this island to help some growing and budding churches become established. He wrote this letter to give guidance on how to do that. For the last few weeks we’ve seen that for those who truly experience the salvation, the rescue that comes through this gospel message of Jesus, this rescue from the wrath of God because of their sin, that they cannot continue unchanged. When God’s saving grace goes to work in somebody’s life, they cannot help but stand out from this world as different and celebrate that rescue for what it is. We just heard some testimonies of that kind of a rescue. Jesus said His followers are to be known by their love for one another and to stand out and shine as lights in the darkness.

In this world of chaos, Titus is to encourage God’s people to live in order in a way that pleases Him in their lives, in their homes, and in their community. That’s never been an easy thing. God’s followers have always been faced with an uphill battle. From the days of Noah, Daniel in Babylon, the time of Jesus, the Apostle Paul, and to today, to follow God has been to take the narrow way. It’s to go against the stream. This calling that Titus is to remind his people of is the same calling that is issued now to us. It’s not new. God’s people are a changed people. By the grace of God, we’ve been rescued out of the chaos and are to shine as lights in this dark world that surrounds us. Jesus’ followers are to stand out as different in our roles individually and in home and family and community.

But if you’re anything like me, you hear Pastor Ritch preach on verses 1-2 and you’re probably asking a question similar to maybe what the Cretans would have been asking Titus. How do we live like that in a world like this? How are we supposed to live rightly in a world gone so terribly wrong? How are we supposed to be submissive when authorities prove themselves to be untrustworthy? How are we supposed to be ready to be obedient when people who are in charge are inconsistent? How are we supposed to be ready to do good when nations seem so committed to doing wrong? How are we supposed to speak evil of no one when news or media is so obviously misleading? How are we supposed to avoid quarreling when those in our social networks are just aflame with unrest? How are we supposed to be gentle when the world is constantly at war? How are we supposed to show perfect courtesy toward all people when they treat us with such disrespect? Verses 1 and 2 is a beautiful picture of how followers of Jesus are supposed to behave, but we read it and we ask ourselves, how are we supposed to live like that in a world like this?

Paul’s response is to circle back to the same core message upon which every other aspect of the faith hinges. It’s the message of the Gospel, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. The reason Paul can issue reminders like verses 1 and 2, why Paul can tell Titus and his listeners to live in a way that is gracious, to live in a way that seems to transcend this dark chaos with which you are surrounded, he can do that because of the radical out-of-this-world salvation that they have experienced. The Gospel of salvation through Jesus is a light that causes these kinds of reminders to make sense. It’s by looking at everything through the lens of this salvation that we’re able to actually see the path to do this.

Paul knows and he himself experienced that kind of a transformation. He lives in this world. He had experienced the kind of mistreatment and persecution. He had been wrongly imprisoned by authorities. He understands the challenges and he says this is what you’re supposed to do. You look at him and he says, “You think what I’m doing is impressive? You think what I’m doing is shocking? Then you’ve forgotten what is truly impressive. You have forgotten what is truly shocking. Or more accurately, you could say you’ve forgotten who truly lived rightly in this world gone so terribly wrong and He’s asking us to follow Him.”

Being rescued changes your perspective. Paul knows and God knows the motivation we need for living rightly in this world gone so wrong comes from viewing things through the perspective of salvation, of what God has done through Jesus. The only thing that can empower you to live rightly in this fallen world is viewing everything in light of this gift of salvation. It’s the rescue that comes through Jesus. It’s so out of this world that it actually empowers you to live rightly in it. God’s salvation is so out of this world that it actually becomes the only thing to empower you to live rightly in it. This is what gives us perspective. This salvation that helps motivate us to love like God wants in a world so filled with hate is what we need to remember. It’s what shapes our view. It’s how we live like that in a world like this.

This salvation that Paul has in mind, what does he want us to remember about it? What should come to mind as we think about it? What makes it so special, so out of this world? Paul knows and God knows we’re forgetful creatures. That’s why he tells Titus that as a pastor, your job is to be a reminder. It’s not to be really exciting. It’s not to be an innovator, but to be a reminder. We have reminders on our phones or on our calendars. In our kitchens are sticky notes and we write reminders sometimes on our hands. There are reminders all over the place. We know we need reminders. They’re not exciting, but they’re necessary. Here are reminders about this core central message, the Gospel. Paul is going to unpack these reminders in verses 3-7. We’ll look at five reminders of what makes salvation so special, so out of this world, so life-changing that it actually empowers us to live in this world that is so fallen. He starts at the very beginning.

**1. Who We Were Before Salvation (3)**

In verse 3 he calls us to think back honestly to who we were before we were rescued. This is the reality that he wants us to appreciate. It’s really a shameful reality. Each of us needs to take time to appreciate and to think back honestly about who we were before salvation. It we’re struggling to live rightly in this world gone wrong, we need to think back.

***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.*

This is who we were. Think back honestly and appreciate the shameful reality of our past. This is what we’ve come from.

There is a concept that educators refer to as the curse of knowledge. It’s this thing where teachers face this challenge where they forget what it’s like to not know something already. So they struggle to have empathy or lose their patience with students because they lack that appreciation for the difficulty of learning a subject for the first time. The problem is that they failed to appreciate what it was like when they had to learn it for the first time. They fail to think about where they’ve come from and who they were before they learned what they now know without any effort.

It’s been interesting watching our children, especially my oldest, try to coach her younger siblings in how to ride a bike. She gets exasperated with how scared or hesitant they are and their over-developed love of training wheels. She says, “What do you like these things for?” I have to remind her that you too were once where they are. You too loved your training wheels. So too, you needed patience and encouragement to leave the comfort of those wheels and embrace the freedom of two wheels. For the kids out there riding on two wheels, it’s great! But you forget what it was like. Paul is reminding us here that this world is a big mess. There is chaos all around. But don’t forget who you were. He includes himself. He says

***3*** *For we ourselves were once*

This whole passage is a contrast between here is who we once were and here is what we’ve now become and are being made to be. Live this way, but remember. Don’t forget who you were. Our past selves before salvation and remembering thinking honestly about who we were before salvation and before Christ rescued us in the way that He did is going to help change the way that we think about others and treat others. He wants us to remember the shameful realities about who we were. Maybe we’ll group them into three categories. The first we’ll say is spiritual blindness. We were corrupted by spiritual blindness. It’s going to help if we remember as we struggle to live rightly in this world gone wrong, remembering that we too were once spiritually blind. He says

***3*** *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray,*

We were spiritually blind. The unavoidable consequences of fallen nature is what we were born into. In terms of what we thought, our inward darkness, we were corrupt. He says we were foolish. We lived in this inward darkness, ignorant of true wisdom. We didn’t fear God rightly and we thought we were sufficient on our own. In terms of how we acted, the blindness just unfolds in outward disobedience that is driven by this blind foolishness to disobey authorities in our lives, whether they be divine or human. We were doing what we wanted to do. Even in terms of who we followed, you see not only inward and outward, but you see this wayward consequence of delusion where we are led astray. We were led astray by various ideas and lies of the world and the evil one. There were people who would “tickle our ears” is the term Paul uses, and we would be drawn away. This is who we were. We were a people corrupted by spiritual blindness. But not only were we blind, he says we were controlled by selfish desire.

*slaves to various passions and pleasures,*

We were controlled by our appetites and our cravings. Now, God is the creator of all good things. He made this world good to enjoy. Yet, in our fallen nature, we now are unable to resist the temptation to twist God’s good gifts and use them toward our own selfish ends. Whether it’s the good gift of food or drink or rest or community, communication, entertainment, intimacy, we take God’s gifts and we use them for ourselves wrongly, either at the wrong time or in the wrong amount or in the wrong ways, in ways that are harmful to ourselves and others and dishonoring to God. The secular term often used is addiction. The term here that Paul uses is enslavement for all of us in different ways. He says

*various passions and pleasures,*

We all have different appetites, different sins that catch us up. Paul warns us that we dare not look in self-righteousness at other people and think, “Oh, they struggle with such and such a thing. You should be more like me. That’s why I don’t struggle with such a thing. I’m not controlled by my selfish desires.” No, Paul says there are various kinds, but we all were enslaved and controlled by our selfish desires. The reason why we’re here is not because we are better than other people. No, we had a different form, a different expression, but this is who we were. Outside of the salvation of Christ, we’re controlled by selfish desires, nonetheless taking different forms, but selfish desires that dishonor God. As a result of these things, we are consumed by social strife. There is spiritual blindness, selfish desires and then social strife. The result is that we’re

*passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.*

Each new day begins with this desperate pursuit of our own desire and ends. We grow in malice against those who stand in the way and in envy of those who have what we want. So every day, we live in this constant state of being despised by others because of this competition and then also despising them for the very same reasons. It’s this vicious circle of a battle. It’s almost animalistic of just being consumed and consuming one another. It’s social strife. You see that chaos in the world constantly. Paul said we were a part of that. That’s not just some other condition. That’s the human condition. That’s what it is to be fallen. Paul describes this world and this is who we’re to understand ourselves to be before salvation. The consequences take different forms. They are expressed in different degrees at times, but this is the state into which we’re born. It’s the state of every individual, and then as the family units interact, and every community. As you have little children enter into your home, this is what is entering into your realm. Chaos! You can watch it grow and unfold and mature and express itself in different ways. But Paul says outside of salvation in Jesus, this is who we are. He’s saying this is who we were. The point is that without God, we’re hopeless!

For those of us struggling to live rightly in a world gone wrong and we’re struggling to treat the unsaved rightly, he reminds us to remember our unsaved selves honestly. Remember who you were. You were in desperate need of the kindness of someone else to rescue you. You had a desperate need. You were helpless. This motivation is given so many different places. It’s related to patience and longsuffering and forgiveness. Understanding the kindness and forgiveness you’ve received from God is what you need to motivate and empower you, now. You’ve received Christ to live that kind of kindness out in this world that is so filled with chaos.

You remember the servant in Matthew 18 who was forgiven this tremendous amount by his master and then he went and he couldn’t forgive his fellow servant this trivial small amount. He is confronted. He forgot. You forget what just happened. You forget who you were and what has been done for you. It’s recalling our shameful past reality that helps us to live in a way that is kind like God. It’s a danger that the Corinthians fell into that Paul had to remind them of in 1 Corinthians 4. He says this.

**1 Corinthians 4:7** …What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

The only reason you’re not spiritually blind, the only reason why you’re not controlled by your selfish desires, the only reason why you’re not consumed with social strife is because God has given grace. Wrongdoing is harmful. Sin and evil is to be called out. Paul is not afraid of that. He is very, very clear. Grace does not mean that we’re not clear on what sin is. The Bible is very clear. God is clear. He says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Being kind, being gentle means saying that clearly. Being loving and kind and gentle in a world gone wrong means saying

**1 Corinthians 6:9-10** …Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

That is said very clearly. Immediately after, what is said is

**1 Corinthians 6:11** And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

We’re very clear on what sin is and that is what helps us understand how amazing grace is, because we look in the church family and we realize none of us deserve to be here. In fact, people come in and they look and they go, “Whoa! Who invited you to church?” Then you come and if you think, “That guy is probably pretty spiritual. He’s up there and he’s talking a lot. Maybe he has some things together.” No, then you don’t know me well enough. You need to come talk with my wife and my children a little bit more. Then you’ll be like, “What is that guy doing up there?” God wants us to see that because He wants us to see that this is a gift. He’s going to unpack that even more. It doesn’t mean that we don’t see the wrongdoing and the evil of the world and the sin of the world and let God say what it is. But it’s that we also remember who we were.

Now, when you look at verses 1 and 2 and you see the difficulties of that list, think about Jesus. He perfectly fulfilled that list. Can you imagine in this world gone wrong, He did it all right? He lived that out. Unlike us, He was never foolish, never disobedient, never led astray, never caved to a selfish desire. He was perfectly at peace, content and fully loving others. Yet He joined us in this. He was hated! For all of His right doing, He was hated. He was completely innocent, yet He was despised and crucified and even Himself, smitten by God. This is who Jesus is. Even as He suffered, even as they mocked Him, He cried out

**Luke 23:34** …“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

This is the kindness of God speaking love and forgiveness on those who desperately needed salvation even as they hurled insults at Him. Thinking back honestly on who we were and what God has done to rescue us is going to change the way we live in this world.

Now, you might be thinking back on your life and you’re saying, “I don’t even know if there has been a difference.” Maybe all of this Gospel talk and God’s commands seems like a foolish waste of time. Maybe the drive of your appetite really is the thing that feels like it compels you forward and helps you succeed. Maybe the drama of social strife is something that you thrive on and you’re conquering your way and you deal with it and it defines your day to day. If that’s the case, then I think you need to truly ask, “Do I understand, have I experienced, have I been rescued by this God who is Jesus?” That’s priority number one for you today. No matter what your job or your family or anything, priority number one is understanding that Gospel message and what it is to actually be saved and rescued, because without God, we are helpless. So, living rightly in this world gone wrong starts with remembering who we were before we were rescued, before salvation. We don’t have to be afraid of looking back because we realize it’s covered. We’ve been rescued. We see that when we look at what God actually did in salvation. So we turn from who we were to what God did.

**2. What God Did in Salvation (4-5a)**

***4*** *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,* ***5*** *he saved us,*

That’s what God did. He saved us. It’s a rescue. What evokes more powerful celebration than a rescue, a true rescue, a salvation? You can find all kinds of news stories of individuals and their family members being reunited with their rescuers and they’re crying. You watch those and you’re going to cry. It’s mainly teens being saved from drowning or toddlers being saved from burning buildings. It’s just a really special picture into people who appreciate the rescue and what’s happened. There is compassion that has been shown and they’re embracing. Those people sometimes call their rescuers their angels. They’re like, “Something almost divine happened. In you, I saw the hands of God. God, almost in His kindness, was embodied in His compassion and care for me in this rescue.”

I don’t know if you’ve experienced something like that. Just to give you a flavor, I can remember a few times of being rescued and being a part of a rescue. I remember one time when I was a little guy, swimming in this pool. There was another little boy I had met and we were kind of shuffling along the sides. We couldn’t really swim, but we could shuffle along the sides. We made our way to the deep end, just going along the sides. We thought we were kind of cool guys. Then we thought, let’s go to the other side. We tried to swim. I remember kind of going down and feeling the bubbles and then swallowing some water. My dad was able to come in and he pushed me up. So he is under water and he’s pushing me up. I remember coming up to the surface and seeing this woman in normal day clothes superman flying, coming in to rescue her son. It was an amazing sight! You see the heart of compassion and determination like “I am going to save my son.” I think about times when I’ve had the opportunity to step in to try to rescue a child in our family and the drive. Then when you do experience that rescue, there is just the celebration. “Whoa! That was close.”

Think about what God has done to rescue you. This God who has endured man’s rebellion and centuries and millenniums of evil and bloodshed, this God came as a man. He was born of a virgin, perfect in His sinless state. He lived righteously as the very embodiment of God’s kindness. He was compassion in human form. He came and He came to save. This is what God did. You can see His goodness and lovingkindness.

*God our Savior appeared,*

This idea of appearing is not just sort of a Savior in history. This is a Savior personally. That word “appeared” is from the root word epiphany. It’s this idea of a light shining or giving you a sudden insight. Jesus is not just some word on a page. He’s not just some cross up on a wall. We recognize this was a real person and He came and this is God. This is the God-man who came to rescue not just people in general. He came and just as we heard testified, He rescued me. Paul had that epiphany, that recognition, that appearance. The light burst on him when he was walking down the road and all of a sudden, he recognized “I am in desperate need of a Savior” and then his eyes were opened.

Paul says you’ve been saved. You were before, spiritually blind and darkened, but the light shone and now you had an epiphany. Do you know what the epiphany was? It was the lovingkindness and goodness of God in the face of Jesus Christ. You had an epiphany that God has offered Himself in my place. This is what Paul is appealing to. This is what God has done. Jesus came and He lived this righteous life, fully pleasing the Father and then offered Himself in our place on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Then He rose again as prophesied, on the third day, as the ultimate judge and king over the living and the dead. He rules over every power and authority. He truly is in charge. Every country and nation now, past, future, He is the king and He will return one day as promised to complete the rescue that He promised in kindness to those who trust Him by faith. That means us. This is the same Savior, the same promise, the same kindness every follower of God from the beginning of time until today, that they trust in. It’s described by Paul in Romans chapter 5.

**Romans 5:6** For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

Talking about rescue, he says

**Romans 5:7-8** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We were fallen in our sin. Christ died for us and we’re rescued from God’s wrath and we’re just awaiting the full consummation of the rescue when He returns. This is what God did. He saved us. This is a salvation worth celebrating at all times. He is a God worthy of worship. We come and we sing and we celebrate because we’re thinking about who we were and what He has done. We sing here. We sing at home. We praise God for who He is and what He has done and the graciousness that He has shown. This God who is the Savior, the very name that was given to this baby before He was born was told there to Joseph and to Mary.

**Matthew 1:21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Jesus, the very name means “Yahweh saves” or “Yahweh is my salvation.” This is God with you and He is a Savior. So we see the love of God towards undeserving sinners like us and we can’t help but be called to follow after Him. Jesus said in

**Luke 6:35** But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

That’s what God is like. He is kind to people that don’t deserve it. He lived rightly in this world gone wrong. So then why did He do that? Why did God act the way He did? What prompted Him to rescue us from our sins? The reason is a bit surprising.

**3. Why God Acted Through Salvation (5b)**

It’s important to remember to help us live rightly in this world gone wrong. Here is why He did it.

***5*** *he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy,*

That’s why He acted. It’s a surprising reason.

When I was in California, I worked in financial aid at a college. People would apply and try to get money because college is expensive. There were two broad kinds of scholarship aid that were offered to help. One was called merit-based and the other was called need-based. Merit-based aid was often either academic or a GPA, a test or a talent or a music, sports. It was some kind of performance or achievement that would earn money for those students. Then need-based was typically determined by some lower income level or some situation. So there were students who didn’t ask for help. There were students who sometimes had merit-based aid and some who had a mixture of both. When it comes to salvation, there is not merit-based aid. There is no achievement. There is no performance.

We had students that do you know what happened with that merit-based aid? You get that aid, you get a GPA, you show up and do you know what you have to do? You have to keep your GPA. Those students had a little bit extra stress. “I can’t lose this GPA.” Those parents would call in. “I have to perform on the field. I have to perform on the court.” In salvation, there is not merit-based aid. We are saved not because of works done by us in righteousness. This is not according to merit. Do you know what it’s according to? It’s according to mercy. It’s based on our need, our true spiritual need. It’s not conditioned by our performance that we’re going to keep it or earn it. It is given according to God’s own mercy. It’s not because God looks at us and says, “You have something to offer me.” Or “I think if I give you a little bit of help, you’ll be able to do it on your own.” He says, “You are hopeless! You are so hopeless that I’m going to give mercy.”

God gives mercy. Salvation is a gift. It is not earned. It is given. We do the sinning and God does the saving. He is a merciful God. He chose us not because we had something to offer, but often in fact, because we did not. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, the world looks at this message of the cross and says this is foolishness. “This is crazy stuff. All those people are crazy. They don’t even deserve this. What’s going on? They’re a big mess, those churches. Those churches are filled with people who are messy.” Paul writes to the Corinthians, a church that was a big mess. He says God chose you on purpose because of that. He says to look around.

**1 Corinthians 1:26-27** For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many powerful, not many were of noble of birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak to shame the strong;

He chose you because you didn’t have stuff to offer. We’re not here because of merit. Just like you look at me and you say, “What is that guy doing here?” we look around at church and it’s like, “Who invited these people?” God says that’s the whole point. Why? So that no one goes, “Hey, I can show you how to do it. Be like me.” It’s so that no one can say, “I’m here because I was a little bit better, a little bit softer, a little bit kinder. I had a little bit more wisdom.” No, we’re here because Jesus is awesome! Why did He do all this?

**1 Corinthians 1:28-29** God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

It’s so that everyone would say it’s all Him. It’s not us. It’s all Him. It’s so that we who boast would boast in the Lord. This is the God who saves.

I’ve told that story of the Snack Shop when I was in high school. You would work in the Snack Shop to go on the senior trip. The senior trip was a big deal. A lot of the families had a decent amount of money, so they would go on the senior trip to Hawaii. I thought there is no way I’m making it to Hawaii. It’s not even worth it. I didn’t work in the Snack Shop any day my whole senior year. During the last month, I get called into the principal’s office and I’m thinking he’s going to bust me because I haven’t been working in the Snack Shop. He said “There is someone who wants to make sure you get to Hawaii, so your way is paid.” What? Do you know what I did the next day? I started working in the Snack Shop. (Laughter!) Now, my trip to Hawaii was not conditioned on working in the Snack Shop. But because of the mercy that I had just received, that gift, an overflowing product of that mercy was that I wanted to be a part of it. I’m going to work in the Snack Shop now.

We’re here. We’re doing church. We’re trying to serve. We’re using our gifts. It’s not because we might lose our salvation and we have to keep it. No, salvation is not conditioned on that. We’re here because we don’t have to be. God graciously saved us. He rescued us and now we’re like, I want to be a part of this. The mercy actually produces in us this great joy. This is what God has done.

**4. How God Worked Within Salvation (5c-6)**

How God worked it out is a beautiful mystery. We’re running low on time, so we can’t dive into this. What you can do is you can talk to one of the best. You can talk to Pastor Ritch, jump into a Gospel Institute class, and let him unpack Scripture and unpack the mysteries of the Trinity. Your mind will be blown. Pastor Ritch is very gifted in unpacking theology and working through what is incredibly mysterious. That’s what we see here when Paul says in verse 5 that He saved us

*by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,* ***6*** *whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,*

You see the Trinity. There is God who is one, and yet God is three; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. The importance of understanding who God truly is as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is critical to understanding the true good news message of the Gospel. If you lose that understanding of who God is, you lose the Gospel. The members of the Trinity, even though God is one, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all at work in the process of saving us and rescuing us. How this works is something that is worth contemplating and understanding even though any analogy of the Trinity falls short.

It’s sort of like those training wheels that we talked about earlier. It helps you get going, but it’s going to hold you back. Eventually, you just kind of ditch them and understand who God really is to the best of your ability and then just enjoy the ride as you study and see what God has done. The Holy Spirit has washed and regenerated and renewed. Part of this rescuing is what God has done through His Spirit. That mystery is so amazing that in John chapter 3, one of the Pharisees who was the teacher of Israel, he is coming to Jesus and Jesus is able to say

**John 3:5** …”Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

He must be reborn. Jesus is referencing Ezekiel. The teacher of Israel was like, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” That’s how deep it was. Yet, it’s also so simple that Jesus is like, “How do you not know what I’m talking about? You’re the teacher of Israel.” This is both simple and profound. The Holy Spirit is part of this regenerating, this rebirth that takes place. This is what God actually does when He saves us. He rescues us. We’re not just like some computer that goes in and gets refurbished and just kind of washed off a little bit. No, we’re regenerated and renewed. We are reborn. There is a radical transformation and this is what is accomplished by the Spirit. The Father pours out on us richly this Spirit who is not a force, but a Person.

In this idea of the Spirit being poured out richly, baptism is this image, this picture of how we’re now new in Christ and identified in Christ. But this idea of being poured out connects both to that aspect of Pentecost, where some of the believers likely had come from. It’s where the Holy Spirit first came down. He arrived and appeared as tongues of fire pouring down and symbolized often like pouring oil over people’s heads. Here is this idea of God’s supernatural Spirit now changing and washing and cleansing His people. You have both a picture of Ezekiel where we’re being reborn, but also, you have this quote in Joel that Peter talks about in that moment that is being fulfilled.

Here’s the thing. In Ezekiel, that idea of pouring out was so often of God’s wrath. So do you know what was being poured out? God’s wrath is going to be poured out. It’s being stored up. His wrath is coming. It’s poured out. Here’s God and He says what was poured out was His Holy Spirit. Here is what God has given. He has given salvation richly. It’s not like the kids who get the candy and you tell them they have to share some candy. They’re like, “Here’s one half of an m&m. Here’s two.” No, God pours it out richly, according to His riches. He abundantly gives.

Jesus says when you pray to the Holy Spirit, He will give abundantly. He’s not going to hold back. He does this richly, and He does this through God the Son, Jesus Christ, and what He accomplished on the cross. He died in our place and made this possible. He mediates this work. This salvation is so beautiful and the Trinity is at work in accomplishing this salvation. It’s worthy of contemplation and giving thought. But just jumping to the end here, where it leads us is to

**5. What We Await As a Result of Salvation (7)**

We look ahead eagerly with anticipation of the sure reward that is to come. We see that in verse 7. The sure reward that we anticipate is that He saved us

***7*** *so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

This is what we await. We are heirs according to the hope of eternal life. We anticipate it. We expect it. This is our hope.

A few days ago, I made the mistake of asking my youngest daughter what was coming up. Was there a special date coming up or something? It happened to be her fifth birthday in a few days and I was a little too close when I asked her. She is just old enough to understand the significance and just young enough to make it like the most important day of the year. Her expectancy of the coming birthday was too much to contain, and everybody within a couple miles knew that, too. (Laughter!) That kind of hopeful excitement starts to die down over time. It resurfaces a few times, like at Christmas, maybe. You see it sometimes when we do premarital counseling with couples and they get this little app, the countdown app. It’s like two months, three hours, four minutes and twelve, eleven, ten. They’re counting down. They’re excited and waiting. Expectancy is building.

There is a wedding to come and the date is set. Now, we don’t know the date, but we know that it’s on the calendar and we have the promise. The end of Scripture says “I am coming soon.” Now you imagine if you have a countdown app, it’s just blinking “soon, soon, soon.” We wait with expectancy and the hope of eternal life. What is it that causes us to have this? We’ve been justified by grace. The legitimacy we’ve been granted in being declared righteous by God gives us a right standing. Now the identity we can claim is heirs. We are children of God and we are receiving an inheritance. It’s on its way and the expectancy we can cultivate here is according to the hope of eternal life. This is the blessing that we await.

One of the unique things about that cave rescue was that a few of the boys and their coach belonged to what is known as Thailand’s stateless population. So because of some of the legal situations, they lacked actual citizenship in the ways that the other boys had. They didn’t fully belong and there were some limitations to what they could do. Now, the government recognized that and worked to recognize them as citizens. They said, “We’re going to work towards eliminating statelessness.” It’s a reminder that the best of rescues by men are still tainted by the fallenness of this world. This world is wrong. There are things wrong about it and it’s broken. But there is a rescue that is out of this world. It’s a rescue that can enable us to live rightly in a world gone so wrong because it’s one whereby this world will one day be made right because it’s made new. There is eternal hope of a present and future salvation that is alive in us even now. So despite the chaos and the brokenness of the world around, we dare not hold it in. We need to go and live that kindness and share the hope even this week.