

The Gospel of Salvation

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bibles and to read God's Word together. And we come in this little series that Edward has been leading us through to Titus chapter 3.

We're going to read together the whole chapter. If you need a Bible, there's some around the edge of the rooms on the shelves. Do feel free to jump up and grab one and follow along as we read together.

Titus chapter 3, then reading at verse 1. Paul says to Titus to remind them, that is, those in the households, in the churches in Crete, remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and show perfect courtesy towards all people.

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.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

[1 : 30] And we poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

These things are excellent and profitable for people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

And as for the person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful.

He is self-condemned. When I send Artemis or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I've decided to spend the winter there.

[2 : 36] Do your best to speed Zenos, the lawyer, and Apollos on their way. See that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need.

And not be unfruitful. All who are with me, send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all. Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Pope Paul is giving Titus much instruction on how to lead God's people and for him to teach God's people how to be God's people.

Well, good evening, friends. Very good to see you all here. Let's turn to Titus chapter 3. And our passage is the whole of this last chapter of Titus. My title is simply, The Gospel of Salvation.

Now, this is the last sermon in our studies in this letter. And I want to start with a very, very basic question. And that is, why did Paul write this letter to Titus, who was working for a limited period on the island of Crete?

[3 : 54] Well, let me give two reasons. The first, a secondary reason. And then secondly, the primary reason for writing. The secondary reason for writing is very practical.

And you'll see it in chapter 3 at verses 12 and 13. And it's about itineraries and diaries. So he's saying towards the end there, 12 and 13, I'm soon going to send to you either Artemis or Tychicus to take over from you in overseeing the gospel work, the church work on the island.

And then you must take the first ship to Nicopolis and join me because I want to spend the winter there. And verse 13, look after Zenos and Apollos.

Now, these two men are probably the postmen who physically brought the letter to Titus. So Paul is saying to Titus, send them on their way from Crete, fully supplied.

Food, money for travel, a fresh shirt or two, a bar of coal tar soap. Whatever they need, make sure they have it. So it's diaries and journey plans.

[4 : 59] Very practical. That's the secondary reason for writing. But the prime reason, the big reason for this letter is to ensure that Titus teaches the young churches on the island of Crete how to live the Christian life, how to conduct themselves, because the gospel produces a most distinctive lifestyle.

It's what Paul describes throughout this letter as a life of good works. Just look back to chapter 2, verse 14. 2.14, where Paul is writing of the reasons why Jesus died on the cross.

So 2.14, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works.

Then look back to chapter 2, verse 7, where Paul is giving some direction to Titus himself. Titus, you are to be, in all respects, a model of good works, a powerful example of the Christian life to others.

And this phrase, good works, means much more than acts of charity, though it certainly includes acts of charity. But Paul is talking about the total Christian lifestyle, that it should be transparently a good, wholesome, godly lifestyle.

[6 : 23] Now look on to chapter 3, verse 1. The Cretan Christians are to be ready for every good work. Then in chapter 3, verse 8, they are to be careful to devote themselves to good works.

And this subject is so much on Paul's mind that he says in chapter 3, verse 14, just before signing off, he says, make sure that the people, your people, are careful to devote themselves or to learn to devote themselves to good works.

So he's really rubbing Titus' nose in this subject. Look back to chapter 2, verse 15, the last verse of chapter 2. Just after the phrase, zealous for good works, he then says to Titus, declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority, let no one disregard you.

So it's very strong. Good works, godly conduct, is not an optional extra for a few enthusiasts. They are for every Christian and every church. And the Cretans were certainly in serious need of learning Christian conduct.

Because look how Paul describes them. Back in chapter 1, verse 12, well, he's actually quoting from somebody else. But he says there, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.

[7 : 42] And Paul immediately endorses it by saying this testimony is true. So why should Paul be driving this point at Titus so resolutely?

For two reasons. First, because the Cretans needed to understand, as we do today, that this gospel of eternal salvation must issue in a radically changed lifestyle.

Must issue in that. But secondly, because Paul is always very conscious of the way that non-Christian society looks at the church. Christ's honor, Christ's reputation, are tied to the way that Christians represent him.

So if Christians are behaving like pagans with a lifestyle such as we see in chapter 3, verse 3, just have a look at the end of chapter 3, verse 3, in malice and envy, hated and hating.

If Christians behave like that, the gospel will be discredited. Look back to chapter 2, verse 5. The young Christian women are to live godly, self-controlled lives so that the word of God be not reviled.

[8 : 51] The reputation of the word of God is at stake. And look at chapter 2, verse 10. Christians who are slaves are to live a godly lifestyle so that in everything they may adorn, they may be an adornment to the doctrine of God our Savior.

So our lifestyle can either adorn the gospel or besmirch the gospel and bring it into disrepute. Well now let's turn to chapter 3 and I'd like to take it in three sections.

First of all, verses 1 and 2, which is about good works in relation to the world. Then secondly, verses 3 to 7, where Paul unfolds the gospel, which is the source of a life of good works.

And then finally, and we'll look at this very briefly, verses 8 to 15, which is a section of mixed final instructions. First then, verses 1 and 2, where Paul speaks of good works in relation to the world.

Now as I said a moment ago, the secular world looks at the church. And when any secular unbeliever becomes a Christian, that's happened to many of us, hasn't it?

[10 : 00] A secular unbeliever becomes a Christian. It is because that person has been looking at the church with interest and has been listening to the church's gospel message. The church over 20 centuries has established a track record in the world's view.

And the world has a very varied range of views on the church, sometimes ignoring the church as an irrelevance, sometimes hating it and persecuting it, sometimes looking at it with a certain cautious approval.

An example of this would be the way that the Queen's funeral service was appraised last year, where people said, well, the church did well, wonderful pageantry, splendidly organized, a kind of muted approval.

But Paul's concern, like the Apostle Peter's in his first letter, is that Christians should conduct themselves in relation to society and particularly in relation to the government in a way that commends the church.

So in the first two verses of chapter 3, Paul says to Titus, remind them. Well, clearly they've been taught this in the past, which is why they need to be reminded rather than instructed for the first time.

[11 : 12] They've heard this teaching before, but they need to hear it again. So he says, remind the Christians to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.

Now you probably know that Paul develops this line of teaching in Romans chapter 13. But before we think of our own 21st century, think of how Christians might have responded to this in the first century, in the days of the Roman Empire.

The rule of imperial Rome was a form of tyranny. Rebellions in the empire were crushed. Law was enforced, not through velvet gloves, but through an iron fist.

And the Roman Empire expanded through subjugating weaker nation states like Judea. And from the middle of the first century AD, the cult of emperor worship was established.

And those who lived under Roman rule were expected to call the Caesar Lord and even God. So how could those who confessed Jesus as Lord also call Caesar Lord?

[12 : 22] Well, they couldn't when the chips were really down. That's why so many of them were martyred under the Roman Empire. Paul and Peter themselves were both executed in about 65 AD because they would keep on preaching Jesus as Lord.

Now we have to bear in mind this kind of political atmosphere and pressure if we're to understand verse 1 in our passage here. You see, Paul is not calling Christian citizens to give the state an unconditional allegiance.

That would be to worship the state. That emperor worship in the first century was idolatry in the eyes of Christian people. How could you call Caesar Lord if Jesus is your Lord?

What Paul is teaching here is that our Christian duty is in principle to submit to the state because, as Paul explains in Romans 13, the rulers of the state have their authority delegated to them by God.

But if God has delegated authority to the state, a Christian's first loyalty is to God. His is the ultimate authority.

[13 : 33] So if a Christian's duty to him comes into collision with our duty to the state, our duty to God must take precedence. As the Apostle Peter himself once said in Acts chapter 5, we must obey God rather than men if there's a clash.

Now for much of the time, there won't be a clash. That's the case with us today. We pay our taxes, we get our cars MOT'd, we even get our dogs microchipped.

Obedying the state's regulations and laws may be hard on our bank balances and hard on our patients sometimes, but in most cases, there's no clash with the principle of obeying the Lord. But there will sometimes be a clash. Have a look at the final phrase there in verse 1. Be ready for every good work.

Now that phrase, every good work, clarifies our responsibility, but it also limits it. The state's God-given duty is to promote what is good and to punish what is evil.

[14 : 39] But if the state at some point is promoting evil and resisting what is good, the Christian cannot in good conscience cooperate with the state. He is, verse 1, to be ready for every good work.

But he has no command from the Lord to engage in evil work if the state is pressing him in that direction. Now we have an illustration of this under our very noses.

Why is our church, in collaboration with other Christians, wanting to start a Christian primary school this year, God willing, in this very building? It's because the government's educational program now

contains elements which are profoundly wrong in God's sight.

So we are saying we cannot buy into a curriculum that is coercively teaching our children things about sexuality and gender and family life which are deeply hostile to the teaching of the Bible. This modern agenda is quite simply contributing to the collapse of human society. So how can servants of the Lord possibly endorse it? It's at a point like this that our loyalty to the Lord must take precedence over our submission to the government and the government's values.

[15 : 56] Think for a moment of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the book of Daniel. Why did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego end up in Nebuchadnezzar's burning, fiery furnace?

It was because they refused to bow to the idolatrous image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And why was Daniel in his 80s having served the Persian Empire with great distinction and hard work for 60 years or more why was he dropped into a pit of lions?

It was because he refused to obey a new silly wicked law that insisted he pray to the king rather than to God. Those true stories are in the Bible precisely to make the point that when there's a clash between government law and God's truth, the faithful believer sticks with God's truth even if it means losing his life in a particularly unpleasant way.

Paul, as a learned Jew, knew the book of Daniel like the back of his hand and he understood the significance of those stories. Titus chapter 3 verse 1 comes from a man who soon afterwards laid down his own life because he would insist that Jesus and not the Emperor Nero was truly Lord. So in our day let's cooperate fully and gladly with all government regulations doing every good work that we're asked to do. But if we're being asked to endorse government policies which are hostile to the Lord we must submit to the higher authority even if it means being thrown to the lions.

[17 : 35] Let's look on to verse 2. Now this lovely verse describes a delightful human behavior. Look at Paul's words here. To speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle and to show perfect courtesy towards all people.

Now in this verse Paul is moving away from the question of how the church relates to the government. This verse is about how Christians relate to everybody that we have anything to do with. Neighbors, colleagues at work, family members, in-laws, out-laws, people who are complete strangers but we perhaps have just a moment's contact with them.

People like bus drivers, train managers, the person at Gregg's that you buy your sandwich from. You can see that Paul means everybody that we have anything to do with because of his all-inclusive phrases.

Speak evil of no one, show perfect courtesy towards all people, all without exception. Now you might ask, but didn't Jesus speak evil of the Pharisees when he denounced them as hypocrites and likened them to whitewashed tombs?

And wasn't Paul speaking evil of the false teachers at Crete when he described them in chapter 1, verse 10 as empty talkers and deceivers and at the end of chapter 1, verse 16 as detestable?

[19 : 02] Well, I don't think so. Think of Jesus. In calling the Pharisees hypocrites, Jesus wasn't speaking evil of them. He was telling the truth about them so that they should repent and be saved and so as to warn other people of their evil influence.

And here in Titus chapter 1, Paul is likewise telling the truth about these false teachers because he has to warn the Cretan Christians against their influence. Think of the Old Testament prophets. They had to expose sin in God's people and in other people. To say, as the prophets did, that idolatry is evil and sexual immorality and greed and murder are evil is to speak the truth that all of us very much need to hear.

If speaking evil of no one means that we can't expose sin or look critically at human behavior, we couldn't preach the gospel at all. What Paul means, surely, is that we should resist the temptation which is common to all of us to focus on a particular individual and to talk about his faults and to magnify them and exaggerate them so as to smear his reputation and get other people to think badly about him.

To indulge in the kind of conversation maybe with two or three others that gangs up on somebody who's not present and who can't defend himself. Oh, think of that nasty Mr. Withenshaw who lives at number 37 who walks that disgusting dog of his up and down the street.

[20 : 30] Dog looks more like a rat than a dog and he has no taste in clothes at all, does he? That jacket of his that he insists on wearing. Now, it's that kind of talk.

Putting people down so as to make oneself appear superior. We rather want to put other people down sometimes because we want to put ourselves up and Paul is saying to us not like that rather, verse 2, show perfect courtesy towards all people, all people.

How about this? You bump into Mr. Withenshaw in the street. Good morning, Mr. Withenshaw and how are you today? Keeping well? Good. And Rover, your dog, he's looking very frisky, isn't he? What breed is he? 57 variety. Oh, yes. They're the best, aren't they? You'll never be at the vets with a dog like that. Much stronger than your pugs and Pekingeses. Now, that is perfect courtesy, isn't it, to all people and it's gentle to use another word from verse 2.

You see, don't forget Mr. Withenshaw needs the Lord and if you speak kindly to him and become friendly, one of these days he might just come to you and say, you're a Christian, aren't you?

[21 : 40] My life, it is so difficult. Can you tell me how to get to heaven? Now, we look to verses 1 and 2 where Paul is teaching Christians how to live the godly life in relation to the government and then to all people that we meet and rub shoulders with.

And it's at this point in the letter that Paul turns to the gospel itself to remind Titus of the source of good works and godly living.

And in verses 3 to 8 we have a beautiful passage which is one of the most complete and detailed statements of the gospel to be found anywhere in the New Testament. Now, if you run your eye over verses 4, 5, 6, and 7 you'll see that they consist of just one sentence.

4, 5, 6, and 7. It's quite a long and complicated sentence but it's just one sentence. And it has a central phrase which dominates the whole sentence and holds it all together.

And that central phrase comes at the beginning of verse 5. He saved us. That's what it's all about. That's the central thought of verses 4 to 7.

[22 : 54] And it's the central expression of the whole of the good news. He saved us. So let me divide this statement into six brief sections which show us what God's salvation really means.

First then, from verse 3. Paul shows us why we need God's salvation. Why we need it. Verse 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.

Now you might ask, is Paul exaggerating when he describes the life of the unbeliever like that? Is there too much vivid technicolor in that description?

Well, I don't think so if we're honest. And it does Christians no harm to remember the dark pit from which we've been rescued. And Paul is writing autobiographically in this verse.

He says, we ourselves were once like this. I was, Titus, and you were too. So what were we? Well, foolish, he says.

[24 : 05] Foolish. In the Psalms, we read, the fool says in his heart, there is no God. In the book of Proverbs, the fool is the one who is heading for death and destruction.

He's blanked God out of his life. Next, disobedient. Men and women were created by God to find fulfillment and joy in obeying him, in obeying God.

The gospel, according to the New Testament, is not only to be believed, it is to be obeyed. Jesus doesn't simply offer us eternal life. He commands it.

As he puts it himself at the end of John chapter 12, the Father has given me a commandment and his commandment is eternal life. Now, foolish and disobedient, those are active anti-God qualities. But the next two phrases are passive. Not about things that we do, but about things that have been done to us. Led astray. Well, it's the devil, of course, who leads us astray.

[25 : 11] You remember the city of destruction in the Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan? That's where the devil leads us finally, if we're not Christians. And then the next phrase is equally passive.

Slaves to various passions and pleasures. We've been the victims of evil forces that we could not control. Slaves, gripped, addicted, even to things that might be morally neutral.

Pastimes and hobbies. Even to things which are good gifts from God, but which have assumed the proportions of a slave master for us. For example, music or literature or a pathway to educational excellence.

And the rest of verse 3 is really bleak. Passing our days in malice and envy. Malice is wishing evil on other people, hoping they will fail, hoping they'll be hurt.

And envy resents and covets good things which other people possess. But I don't possess myself, so I'm very cross. And then finally, reciprocal hatred.

[26 : 16] Hated by others and hating one another. Now a person who has never quite dared to look into the depths of his own heart might say, this must be an exaggerated portrait.

This is surely too dark, too demeaning. Paul, you cannot be serious. But Paul is serious. And if we have a teaspoonful of honesty in us, surely we'll recognize this as a true description of life without Christ.

This verse 3 is a complete contrast to verses 1 and 2. Verses 1 and 2 describe the beauty of the life which pleases God, the life which is the fruit of the gospel.

Submissive to authority, obedient, eager to do good things, kind in speech, peacemaking, gentle, perfectly courteous to everybody. But verse 3 is almost like looking into the pit of hell.

It describes a life that is disordered, deeply nasty, and enslaved. As somebody once said, mankind longs for freedom but is everywhere in chains.

[27 : 27] Enslaved, enslaved to lies, enslaved to our self-centered nature, ultimately enslaved by the devil. Paul is surely not exaggerating. And Paul is surely contrasting verses 1 and 2 with verse 3.

He puts these two accounts of human life right next to each other so as to drive home to us what life without Christ is really like. And it makes us cry out who can deliver us from this hellish and hell-bound slavery.

Well, for the answer, look across to those first three words in verse 5. He saved us. So if verse 3 shows us why we need salvation, verse 5 shows us where our salvation comes from.

It comes from Him, the one Paul describes in verse 4 as God, our Savior. Now secondly, here's our second little section here. The source of our salvation is God Himself.

Now the human mind, left to its own devices, does not like this idea at all that God is the Savior, even though this is the central theme of the Bible, that God is willing to save hell-bound human beings.

[28 : 43] Jesus made this point very clearly to Zacchaeus when he said to him, the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. Jesus, sent by God the Father, came to our world to save us.

But the natural human mind doesn't like this idea because it is so humbling. It's humbling for a person to admit, I need saving, because that's a confession of weakness and need.

It's a confession of inability. But if verse 3 is right in saying that we are led astray and enslaved, it's quite clear that we can't liberate ourselves.

We're in a prison, but we don't have the key to get out. We need to be rescued. So how does typical secular man today, man without Christ, how does he try to solve this dilemma?

There is a general recognition in society that the human race is in trouble. Social commentators and students of human behavior recognize that human beings are in multiple difficulties.

[29 : 48] But the way of the world is to seek salvation from within oneself. The idea is go deep within yourself. Explore the depths of your own personality and you will find the resources that you need to cope with life.

You'll be able to tap into deep reservoirs of peace and calm. You'll be able to walk away from your cravings to be praised and recognized. The answer is inside you.

Recently, a movement has been started called Me-ism. Me-ism. You'll probably find this on Google. The wonder of the world, the beauty of the world, the most ravishingly fascinating thing in the world is Me.

Now what does Jesus say about the real Me? The natural, unadulterated, unregenerate Me? He says this, Out of the heart of man come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

All these evil things come from within and they defile a man. Well, that is the unsaved me and it's the unsaved you.

[31 : 16] We're not going to find salvation from within a heart like that. That is why we need a Savior. But verse 5 tells us this wonderful good news that God saved us who were impotent to save ourselves and he did it, verse 4, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared.

That is, when Jesus appeared. The coming of Jesus into our sin-ravaged world demonstrated the goodness and loving kindness of God, his tender mercy, whereby his intention was not to destroy us but to save us.

So if verse 3 shows us why we need God's salvation, verses 4 and 5 tell us where our salvation comes from. It comes from God who loves us.

Then third, Paul shows us in verse 5 where our salvation is grounded and he uses one of those clarifying not this but that constructions which you find all over the Bible and which contrasts truth and error most sharply.

So according to verse 5, our salvation is grounded not in works done by us in righteousness but according to God's own mercy. His mercy shown to us in the death of Jesus on the cross.

[32 : 39] Just look back to chapter 2 verse 14 again. Jesus who gave himself for us to redeem us gave himself up to death. That's what Paul means.

It's the cross of Jesus expressing God's own mercy which is the ground of our salvation. Now isn't that a huge relief to us? Isn't that music to our ears and medicine to our weary hearts that it's not because of works done by us in righteousness that we're saved?

Can you imagine what it must be like to have to achieve your own salvation by works done in righteousness? If that was necessary, well think of me.

Get up in the morning, straighten yourself up to your full height. You say to yourself, right my boy, today is to be another day of scintillating moral rectitude. Cold shower, three minutes.

Prayer, three hours. Bible study, three hours. Work, eight hours and no cutting of corners. Seven hours, 59 minutes will not do. Chocolate biscuit ration, one biscuit.

[33 : 46] Kindness to animals, half an hour. Kindness to cantankerous elderly neighbor, half an hour. Where does it end? How could you ever know if you've done enough?

That kind of attitude is proud, man-centered, man-made religion. Thank God that he's merciful to the sinner, which is me. What we need is not grunting efforts at being good, but mercy.

And that's what we've received through the appearing of the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior in the person of Jesus. So the ground of our salvation is God's mercy, not our efforts.

Then fourth, in verses five to seven, Paul shows us how God's salvation has been given to us. And he speaks there of two things, regeneration by the Holy Spirit and justification by his grace.

The regeneration is a subjective experience for us. The justification is an objective declaration of not guilty made by God.

[34 : 59] Look at that lovely phrase in verse five, the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. This is a radical new beginning. John Chrysostom, one of the early church fathers, wrote this, God has not repaired us, but has made us all new.

You see, it's not just a repair job, it's a recreation, being born anew. This is what the Holy Spirit does for us and in us.

Paul's Greek word translated regeneration is a lovely word. It's the word palingenesia, which means the again Genesis, again Genesis.

To become a Christian is to be born into a new world. Now our human bodies in this old world are of course constantly deteriorating and they will die. But we will be reclothed in our resurrection bodies as Jesus was in his resurrection body.

Immortal, citizens of heaven. Regeneration and renewal, that's what happens to us subjectively. But objectively, we are justified by his grace and that means that God in his mercy declares us to be acquitted in his sight, not guilty.

[36 : 17] Our sin no longer laid to our account but dealt with by Jesus once and for all by his sin-bearing death. The wages of sin is death and those wages have been paid but not to us, to Jesus.

Regeneration and justification, they're two separate things but they become ours the moment we come to Christ in repentance and faith. Born again and declared not guilty.

Then fifth, at the end of verse seven, Paul shows us the ultimate goal of God's salvation. Here's verse seven, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

So there's the goal of it all. The goal of God's salvation is eternal life. Why have Christians been justified by God's grace? It is, verse seven, that we might become heirs.

So eternal life is described here and elsewhere in the New Testament as an inheritance. We become its heirs. We haven't earned this inheritance but by God's grace we own it, we possess it.

[37 : 33] It's the most wonderful inheritance possible and Jesus died so as to secure it for us. So it is owned but not earned. Thinking of inheritances, do you remember that when the queen died last

September and King Charles knew that he was now king, he said rather touchingly to the nation that very same evening, he said, I've been dreading this day for a very long time.

And I imagine that his son, Prince William, probably rather dreads the day when he would have to step up and follow his father to the throne. To be monarch is an inheritance that carries great difficulty with it, great weight, pain.

But the inheritance of the Christian carries no weight or tears with it, only the prospect of joy. In Romans chapter 8, Paul says that Christians are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

All that Jesus is heir to, we are heir to if we're Christians. And our minds simply boggle at the thought. But to be heirs of the kingdom of God, that is what God has promised to us.

That promise is laid out very simply in chapter 1, verse 2, right back to the beginning. In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.

[38 : 56] That's why Paul was able to endure sufferings and beatings and shipwrecks and imprisonments. because he knew what lay ahead of him, what God had promised him. This is why the elderly Christian is able to reach the end of life smiling and not weeping.

Heirs of eternal life, co-heirs with Jesus. And then 6th, in verse 8, Paul teaches us what is the evidence of salvation.

So here is verse 8. The saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

So the evidence of our salvation is that our lives demonstrate a lifestyle that is sharply distinguished from the lifestyle of the world. That lifestyle described so chillingly back in verse 3.

Now as we think of verse 8, it's important that we read it correctly in relation to verse 5. Paul makes it clear in verse 5 that God has not saved us because of works done in righteousness.

[40 : 07] The ground of our salvation can never be our works. We are saved purely by God's mercy and God's grace. But once we are saved, Paul insists in verse 8 that we devote ourselves now to a life of good works, godly lifestyle.

You could put it like this, that good works can never be a ladder by which we climb up to salvation and earn salvation. That's simply impossible. But once we are saved by God's grace, our lifestyle is then to give unmistakable evidence of our salvation.

So let's pray that God will help us to live like this, to live lives that have the fragrance of heaven about them even while we are still living in the old world. I said earlier that verses 3 to 8 give us a beautiful summary of the gospel, this astonishing news of what God has done for us in sending Jesus into the world.

Let me just sum it up. Paul shows us first our need of salvation in verse 3. We are enslaved by nature. We are locked into a life of malice and hatred.

second, we see the source of salvation in verse 4, the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior. Third, we see the ground of our salvation in verse 5, not works done by us but the mercy of God.

[41 : 37] Then fourth, the process of our salvation in verses 5 and 6, which is regeneration and justification done for us by God. Fifth, the goal of our salvation in verse 7, we become heirs of eternal life in God's glorious kingdom.

And sixth, the evidence of our salvation in verse 8, that we are turned around and we begin to live a life that is devoted to godly living, to good works. And in the center of the passage at verse 5, controlling every element in it is this comprehensive truth.

He saved us. Well, thanks be to God for it. Now we're almost done. We're on the 18th green and the clubhouse beckons. You can smell the tea and the tea cakes.

Just a very brief final word at this point. Verses 9 to 11 sound a warning to Titus about people who may be attending the church meetings but who are not wanting to live the Christian life.

Troublemakers who are stirring up controversy and division. Getting little cliques together perhaps and whispering about things and causing difficulty and trouble in the church.

[42 : 48] Paul says in verse 9, avoid them and in verse 10, have nothing more to do with them. Now he does say give them a chance to come round in verse 10.

He says warn them. In other words, talk to them and try to persuade them. If they don't respond to a first warning, give them a second warning. In other words, be patient, be charitable. But if they don't respond positively, then Titus, you must find a way of breaking relationships with them because their continued presence will damage the church.

And he describes them in verse 11, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful. He is self-condemned. So friends, we mustn't be naive.

Every church has to face this kind of problem from time to time. And sometimes tough action is required. So let's each of us pray for ourselves that we might never become divisive troublemakers. Oh, that Edward Lobb. Yes, I remember him. He seemed all right for a while, but eventually, I'm afraid he had to leave. It was under a very dark cloud. Stick your own name in there and pray it doesn't happen.

[44 : 00] Far better to live by verse 15. All who are with me send greetings to you. This is a lovely, a positive attitude. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Greetings. Let's greet each other at the end of this service. At the end of every service. Because greetings foster love and give a great deal of support. Hello, Jemima.

Oh, nice to see you. How are you at the moment? Is that shoulder of yours better? Oh, it is, thank you. And how's your ankle? That's how the oldies talk, isn't it?

Let's, at the end of the service, let's make a point of greeting those who are different from ourselves. Different in age, different in ethnic background, different in life experience.

The church is a delightfully diverse group of people. It's one of the joys of being part of this church. We need each other. And there's great joy, not simply in greeting each other, but in all the conversations that follow on afterwards.

[45 : 06] Well, let's pray together. Let's think of this wonderful, this glorious gospel that the Lord God has planned and purposed from way back, from before the beginning of everything, knowing that Jesus would come to the rescue.

Our dear Heavenly Father, how we thank you for your goodness, your loving kindness, and your mercy. Mercy to sinners like ourselves. You have saved us.

You have caused every believer to be born again and justified. and you have given us the promised inheritance of eternal life. By your grace, enable us to live godly lives, zealous for the good lifestyle that honors your name.

And we pray that our individual lives and the life of our church may adorn the doctrine of the gospel, may bring pleasure to your heart, and honor to the name of Jesus.

and we ask it in our Saviour's name. Amen. Amen.