

2.21.2024

Titus – Making Things Right

Chapter 3 - (vs. 5-6)

If you would turn with me to Titus 3, as we continue to set things in order. If I were to give you certain characteristics that seem to weave themselves through this particular epistle, it would be these four that I have listed. So, let's go through these four, and pick up where we left off there in chapter 3. To set in order, clearly, certain characteristics have to be present. The first is that you have to begin with divine truth, divine standards; something that doesn't move and is immutable, i.e. doesn't change. It is absolute. It is an anchor for your soul. If you have things or advice that are constantly fluid, then there is no stability. So, there is clearly going to be a kind of confusion and mayhem.

The first place that we start is with divine truth. If you look in particular in the beginning of Titus 1, he starts off, "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." In other words, there has to be that sense of truth. As Jesus will clarify, "I am the way, and the truth." What we really have with Jesus is the personification of truth. You can have a definition, but literally, to watch truth lived out is a marvelous thing. So, what a great testimony that is to what God is, and that is truth.

Verse 2 goes onto say that it's impossible for God to lie.

"In the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago".

Once again, that sense of stability and non-changing immutability of God that if He said it, it's going to happen. So, truth begins with God. If you start with man's philosophies or psychology, anything that man has conjured up, you're eventually going to find failure, but God doesn't disappoint. That's where we begin.

The second thing you're going to see in the book of Titus is that you need to appoint faithful paragons for oversight. You see this at the beginning. It was interesting to me as I was going through this that you can see the Old Testament taking us through this. Ultimately, it comes into the New Testament. In other words, these characteristics are seen as a progression of the maturity of humanity throughout the Old Testament. For instance, in Genesis, you begin with "In the beginning was God." So, "In the beginning, God" is how it starts. You begin to see the necessity of realizing all things come from Him. Of course, as the hymn goes, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

If you look in Romans 1, you begin to understand why God is upset. Scripture says very clearly that even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God; nor did they give thanks. So, here again, you begin with God and divine truth.

You see appointing faithful paragons for oversight in the Old Testament with the patriarchs. It was God that really established the sense of order in the family whether it's the fathers; it goes on, and you begin to see there are leaders, prophets and teachers. So, as you look in the Old Testament, you see God ordaining certain ones. For instance, you see Abraham and Moses. Then, you see Joshua leading people into the promised land. You also see Samuel who is judge, prophet, and he is somewhat priest within that particular setting. Then, you see David is king. God begins to demonstrate the necessity for oversight. You see that being stretched out throughout the Old Testament. Of course, you see that at the beginning of Titus 1, right?

(Titus 1:5) "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and..."

What's one of the first things that he says here?

"... appoint elders in every city as I directed you."

So, there's the oversight. Then in verse 7, he uses the word "overseer." So, you're going to see that. Then, you're going to see within Titus that call to align with and submit to that ordained authority and order that God has established. There is an ordained order. You see in Titus that older men are teaching younger men; older women are teaching younger women. Then, it even begins to talk about a wife submitting to her husband. These are ordained positions. So, it's not up for debate, it's what God had ordained. The same thing with children and not telling their parents what to do. You begin to see that God has established this. So, he puts this to practice in Titus. He goes, "This is the way you ought to teach." So, he's not just talking about what they should teach, but how they should teach and the order in which they do that. Then, you see the young man, and whenever he's at work he has a boss, a master. So, what does he do? He submits to that authority that God has ordained. As we go back to Romans 13, all authority is ordained by God. If you oppose authority, you have opposed God. So, He's established that.

This is what he reminds him of specifically if you look in Titus 3:1. How does he start off in verse 1 and how do I know that he's reminding him? He says, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed." So, we're talking about aligning yourself with and submitting yourself to the order that God has ordained. You begin to see how necessary establishing order is. I think one of the problems oftentimes is that there is no established order in households. So, it's up for grabs. I guess democracy sometimes works in America, but it's not going to work in the household. Ultimately, it doesn't work anywhere, really. Anyway, that's the third.

Then, the fourth is that which generates, inspires, moves, and motivates us to do things. It's ok to have all these things within our grasp. However, you're not going to do them unless the Spirit of God moves you to do them, or you are moved to do them. So, we see the necessity to

receive, and in chapter 3, to recall the love of God which inspires you to do what you need to do. In other words, when you go back to chapter 2 in particular, it says in verse 11,

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,

(Titus 2:12) instructing us...”

Empowering us; in some cases, maybe pushing us to the point of helping us fall on our knees and realizing how wonderful and merciful God has been to me. Why wouldn't I do this? You begin to realize just how powerful the grace of God is to us. It's that whole thing in Romans 7 and 8 in which he begins to talk about the law and how it's so hard to do the things of the law because it just makes me want to resist. Here you have the sense of submitting to ordained authority and order. Well, that's like the law, right? It's one thing to say that, but to willingly submit, to actually do that with a happy face? That's a pretty hard thing to do. So, what is it that makes me want to do this willingly? That is, receiving the mercy of God. He could have done so many things that were hurtful to me, and I would deserve it all. Yet, He shows mercy to me. Now, when you and I are shown mercy, what do we want to do? It's that sense of gratitude that motivates us and moves us to do the things that we do. You can hear the voice of Christ saying, “Do this for Me.” Wives submit to your husband as unto the Lord. That's what the text reads. Once again, it's not because “he's such a wonderful guy and he does great things for me; gets me flowers every Valentine's Day.” I probably shouldn't have brought that up. It has nothing to do with that. It has to do with, “I'm doing this as unto the Lord because He told me that this is the order that He ordained, and He's going to bless me for doing this.” There is that realization that God begins to work on behalf.

When you look at Proverbs, there's a simple passage that talks about if your ways are pleasing to the Lord, He can make your enemies to be at peace with you. So, obviously, He can change your spouse too. Anyway, the receiving of the grace of God is that which begins to inspire us and gives the power.

That's why here again, you go back to Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God...” It moves people and it changes them. That's why Paul's whole argument in the book of Romans is “the just shall live by faith”; it's that relationship with faith that empowers me, not the law. However, people say, “We're no longer under the law.” I know that we're under grace, but grace wants to obey the law. Here again, you have the interesting picture of the Old Testament in which you begin with Divine truth, which is God. Then, you begin to see Him appointing the patriarchs and the leaders as you begin to progress through the Old Testament. Of course, then you have the law that God ordains to actually keep you in check. As Scripture will say, the law is a tutor to lead us to Christ.

Matthew 24 talks about the last days, and because lawlessness has increased, the love of many will grow cold. I know that a lot of times people don't put “love” next to the law, but it's saying that the law really begins to strengthen your conscience. It does something else too. It humbles you. So, as you read in Romans 3 that it closes every mouth; it keeps the bragging down. It's

saying that when there is lawlessness, people get emboldened, and they feel entitled. So, they become aggressive and very demanding. Where there's law, they begin to go into the realm of submission. So, there is this kind of tutorage that brings you into a place that is humbler so that you're more receptive to the grace of God because God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. That's one of the great advantages of the law.

If you look with me in Galatians 4, you'll see this with me which we will eventually get to on Sunday, but we don't want to wait. So, we're going to jump in there. It's actually like you got a peek before the movie ever came out. Galatians 4:1 says, "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything."

In other words, the child who is inheriting perhaps great wealth owns it, but he's still a child. You can't give him all that stuff. So, he's just like a servant. Really, he's no different than the servant's child and this is what he's going to say.

(Galatians 4:2) "but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father."

He's talking about the people watching over him telling him "You can't do that" and "You can do this." When a kid is small, older people are telling him what he can and can't do. So, he literally is living by the law even though he's heir to all things. Here again, the more consistent the parent is in training under the law, the more receptive the child is going to be to grace. Obviously, if in fact somebody's doing it oppressively, that would work the reverse. We're talking about a household in which the law and righteousness is held to. There is a sense of building a conscience in that child; a sense of right or wrong.

For instance, let me give you an example. In Leviticus, it says that you are to love your neighbor as yourself. Well, a kid begins to think in terms of that and you begin to foster that kind of thinking to where you might say to the kid, "I know that you have this, but wouldn't you like to share with Johnny?" Then, the kid looks at you, and says, "No." "But wouldn't you be happier if you did?" "No." "Share with Johnny." Through the progression of teaching, after a while the child goes, "I got this, and I'm going to share it." Your hope is that as he grows, he will embrace that heart. It will be easier for him to embrace the heart because he's been trained in that. That's the point of the law.

So, it says, "but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father."

(Galatians 4:3) So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world."

That is to say, the rudimentary teachings of the parentage or principles that are given to us, i.e. a kind of law.

(Galatians 4:4) "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

(Galatians 4:5) so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

In other words, now he goes from being like a servant, doing things because he has to, to having the Spirit of Jesus in him. So, he has now matured to the point where he wants to do the right thing.

If you look at the next verse, it reads this way, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"

So, what we have is the progression, once again, of that which motivates and inspires us; the grace of God. So, the Spirit of God begins to overwhelm up inside and says, "You want to do this because you love Dad, right?" Now, that's what makes maturity because now the child has grown up to the point that he's not doing what he's doing because he has to; he's doing what he's doing because he wants to. That's the difference of the Spirit of God.

As you train a kid, you obviously want to start with the law, but you ultimately want to end with the heart. You want to draw them to that. Sometimes people think, "I'm going to throw out the law in order to just focus on the heart." And that's not going to work. God has ordained this sense of maturing. That's why in the book of Titus, you see these stages that are being represented throughout the passage. I think it's remarkable the way that it aligns with the progression of the maturing of humanity as you look through the Old Testament. So, if you go back there with me, in Titus 3, you begin to realize all these things and the grace of God. Just the power of the grace of God when you think about it, not only is it stated in Romans 1:16, but it's stated in Romans 5:2 that in this grace, we stand. That's an interesting phrase that he declares there in Romans 5:2. That is to say, it's able to make a stand. So, this grace that we receive is so powerful that it changes us, yes, but then it produces a continuance that will sustain, always be, and maintain throughout your life. It's sort of like the phrase, "love never fails." So, you have a sustaining power in this wonderful power of grace.

As you look in particular at chapter 3, he begins to talk about the power of the kindness of God.

(Titus 3:4) "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared,

(Titus 3:5) He saved us..."

That's what really produced this change.

If you pick up with me in verse 3, we'll begin with that thing that we're saved from. Not only are we saved from an eternity of hell, but we're saved from a life of degradation.

"For we also once were foolish..."

In many respects, it's fundamentally saying "without understanding." You get immersed in just living life and all of the influences around you begin to tell you how you should think and live. Then, expectations of everybody around you saying, "This is what you should be doing," and

“This is what you shouldn’t be doing.” It’s really easy to lose sight of what is important. So, after a while, you almost have to shake your head and say, “Ok, why am I here? What am I supposed to be doing?” So, the phrase, “For we also once were foolish” is interesting. He’s talking about not having a sense of understanding. He actually uses the next word, “disobedient.” It’s a compound word, “without faith” which is oftentimes translated as “without obedience.” It’s interesting because if you don’t trust somebody, you won’t do what they say. So, that’s really what it’s talking about in that sense. So, there was a time in which you really didn’t understand. Well, the question is what didn’t you understand? The answer is pretty simple according to the passage. You didn’t understand how much God loves you. Remember, it’s grace that moves you and motivates you?

As you go back into Titus 2:11, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.”

You have no idea, but when the light is shown in this respect, you go, “Really? He loves me? So, He’s not going to withhold any good thing?” If something good happens to them, most people are just waiting for the other shoe to drop and think that something bad is going to happen; there is going to be a weighing out. “God’s not going to give me too much good.” They’re always concerned that lightning is going to strike them if they do something bad, and they’re always living in that kind of thought process.

So, we once were foolish, without understanding and without a sense of faith, really.

Then, it says, “deceived” which means “easily swayed” by the world. Ephesians is going to add an interesting play on that, if you look with me in Ephesians 4. We oftentimes quote this passage, but sometimes it’s just good to see it in print. So, if you look with me in Ephesians 4, if you drop on down to verse 11,

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

(Ephesians 4:12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”

It says this in verse 14, “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”

One of the statements that is made in Ephesians 2 as well as Ephesians 6, talks about Satan who is the prince of power of the air. Someone asked me the other day, “Why the air?” I responded, “Because the air blows the water.” Scripture talks about the sea of humanity. Why do we use that metaphor? Well, the reason is it’s a perfect picture of humanity because of how easily we are moved and swayed. One moment, humanity will be pushing godliness, and the next moment, debauchery. It’s just like “Where did that come from?” You can almost feel the wind blowing.

“The wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse...”
(Isaiah 57:20)

I think it's one of the reasons why Jesus would teach so many of His lessons to the disciples in the boat with the water. He's saying, "Look, this is the world that you live in. You need an anchor." So, they begin to see the volatility of man and how capricious and fickle people are. It's just bizarre, isn't it? I'm going, "You believed this yesterday, what happened?" You're going to see that in Galatians, "Who bewitched you? How did you change so quickly from this?"

So, Titus 3 says that you once were without understanding, you weren't believing who God was, and because of that, you were easily deceived by others. I think one of the reasons why we're so easily deceived by others is because the world allures by the senses. Let me see if I can clarify the difference between the church and the world. The world allures by senses, your pleasures, desires. The church allures with truth. This is why as a church you don't want to get into the realm of the superficial. That's the realm in which the world works and if in fact you have moved somebody based on that, like in the world, people are prone to change from one day to the next. There is no real solid ground in that. But if in fact you're anchored in truth, it never changes. It's that immutability that we were talking about in the beginning. You have divine truth and something to hang onto. Here again, that's why the church is the pillar and support of the truth. The church has to be careful not to get into that way of thinking, "We're going to lure them in by having hot dogs every Sunday." It was a while back, but one of the churches had hot air balloons on Sunday, and they were luring people through that. Another church had lottery tickets under the seats. So, you could win a Mercedes Benz if you went there.

Then, Titus 3:3, says that you were "enslaved to various lusts." "Enslaved" has the connotation of "willingly submitting to." The interesting and bizarre thing about that is he's been saying "Submit to authority." We get so bent out of shape when somebody says, "Submit to authority," but we submit to our lusts and our pleasures every day. "You know, you're obeying your lusts." "So? I want to." Well, that's the point. You should want to obey what God tells you to obey. It's just that we want to choose. Once again, we're foolish ourselves and without understanding. It's just how wonderful God is to us and how much He loves us.

If you look at the passage, we're "enslaved to various lusts;" all kinds of cravings, "...and pleasures." When you think about it, it can be pretty alluring, "pleasures." In fact, I think that a lot of times, we actually define our day based on "Did we get our way?" and "Was it pleasurable?" So, if you can say "yes" to both of those, it was a good day. Maybe not. What did the pleasures produce? Did it bring about unity? Did it bring about deeper relationships? Did it create character? You can go down the list of all the things that are really valuable. Oftentimes, you walk away going, "It did just the opposite."

So, his point was that we were submitting and yielding to all these things. Then, it goes on and talks about "spending our life in malice." The picture of malice is really just a sense of being

angry and pernicious nature. The reason why I use the word “pernicious” is because it’s a gradual thing. You know how you start off having a bad day, then before long you end up being grumpy? Then you begin to resent this person or resent this thing? You find yourself just being angry all the time at everybody. Of course, that might have come by watching the news, but we can’t just blame the news on that.

So, it goes on and says, “...in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.” Now, in a way, there’s a progression in this. The progression is you start off pursuing pleasure and your cravings, and you’re going to end up being angry. Now, we would never devise that formula. We would sit down and go, “You know, getting my way, getting my stuff, doing what I want and what makes me feel good is going to bring me happiness.” Scripture says, “No, it’s going to make you mad.” Nobody would ever put that together.

If you look with me in James, it echoes this in James 4:1.

“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?”

So, go out to fulfill all your pleasures and see how happy you are. No, you’re not going to be happy, you’re going to be mad. Eventually, somebody’s going to get in your way, and you’re actually going to see people as barriers to what you want.

(James 4:2) “You lust and do not have; so you commit murder...”

Where did “murder” come from? “That guy wouldn’t give me what I wanted.” You get used to getting what you want. Then, you’re just really upset because you don’t get what you want. I told Connie, “You know, it’s bizarre, I used to be thrilled to death that we had enough money to buy french fries at McDonald’s. Now, I’m going, pfft McDonald’s...” What happened? Where’s the gratitude? Why am I not so thankful for junk food? It’s just a wonderful thing. The point is how we become so unthankful. What’s interesting is that not only is this kind of bad nature, malice, a part of that, but if you look in the text, it’s rooted in “envy.”

I think it’s necessary for us to focus on that for a second. “Zelos” is translated “jealousy” and “phthonos” is translated “envy.” The reason why I call your attention to this is because like in James, God will say that he jealously desires; that is where we get the word “zealous.” So, oftentimes, the thought is that it’s wrong to be jealous. Well, here again, it’s kind of semantics in the English because our definitions are not as clear as Scripture’s definitions. For instance, in John 2 it talks about Jesus going into the temple, and He casts out. His disciples go, “Remember that text says ‘zeal’ ...” which actually means jealousy, but “...zeal for My Father’s house will consume me.” Well, that particular word is dealing with a fervor and a desire for something. So, James will say, “Don’t you know that God jealously desires you?” It’s really depicting a fervor. It would be like a husband upset because his wife is going around with another man. “Don’t you know that your husband jealously desires you?” That’s not a bad thing. Here again, I think that sometimes we put them both in the same category.

“Envy” has to do with me not wanting somebody to have something. There’s that sense of “I want to deprive them of having it. It makes me mad that they have something I don’t have.” That’s a different word. So, Scripture is talking about how I’m not rejoicing over those that are rejoicing. I’m upset because I don’t have it too. There’s an interesting example of this; a guy had come up to another guy that was trying to talk him into communism. So, he was trying to tell him how wonderful communism or socialism is.

He says, “Do, tell me about how this communism works.”

He goes, “Well, you buy two pieces of land. You give me one and you take one.”

“Oh, ok. Alright. So, what if I have two houses?”

“Well, you give me one, and you take one. Everybody’s happy.”

“Ok, what about cars?”

“You take one, I take one. See how wonderful communism is?”

“What about Chickens?”

“No!”

“No?”

“No!”

“Why?”

“I have two chickens.”

So, it’s the heart of man that doesn’t want to give what he has, and he gets very upset over the fact that somebody else has it. That really is the definition that’s being dealt with in this particular passage; a life of malice. “Now, I’m just angry because somebody else has something.” That causes hate if you look in the passage; which this is the only place that the word “hateful” is used in all of the Scripture. It actually has a picture of somebody gaining a reputation for being odious or hateful. So, it’s a picture of somebody being hateful just by their very nature. When he uses the word “hateful,” he’s saying that you’ve worked on this, and it has become your reputation.

He goes on and talks about “hating one another.” Really, he’s talking about “detesting.” “I just hate this person. I don’t want anything to do with him. Why? “Because they had something I wanted” or “Their life is better than mine” or whatever reason you have.

If you look in verse 4, the game changer is the kindness of God. Once again, that’s the whole thing that we continue to see within the passage. It’s the kindness of God that does the changing in our lives and brings about that which causes us to be happy for somebody else. In fact, I think one of the reasons why it’s such a wonderful thing to share the gospel with people

is you're actually giving them something; it's producing this unselfish attitude. So, when you lead somebody to Christ and something good happens to them, you rejoice with them going, "Yes! We're making it!" So, you actually become a cheerleader for the person that you led to the Lord.

So, it says in verse 4, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared,"

Once again, it made itself manifest. I just want to focus on that one word there, if you'll look with me in Romans 3. He puts it so clearly. I've oftentimes thought about this. Sometimes there are verses that you pass over very quickly, but that the love and kindness of God manifested; it's been made so clear. It always takes you back to that John 17, doesn't it? Jesus starts off in the prayer, "Father, this is the time. I'm getting ready to go to the cross. This is the time when You're going to be glorified. They're going to see You for who You really are." Up to this point, everybody's thinking, "He's just mean; He's just bad; He's thunder; He's lightning; He's spooky." and Jesus gets up on the cross, and God says, "He's the exact representation of Me." (Hebrews 1)

So, if you look in Romans 3, it says,

(Romans 3:24) "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

(Romans 3:25) whom God displayed publicly..."

You couldn't miss it. It's always bizarre when you think about it. You could literally go all over the world and find people wearing crosses. I don't care what nationality. You can go to Africa, you can go to Australia, you can go to China; you'll see people wearing crosses in every part of the world. Where did they get that from? He was literally publicly displayed as an atoning victim for me. There's no way you can walk away from the foot of the cross and say, "I don't think God was sincere. I don't think He genuinely loved me."

"... in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness..."

How do I know that God keeps His promise? There He is. How do I know that He really loves me? There He is.

The word "righteousness" covers a gamut of things. Not only is He just in the sense of right and wrong because He couldn't overlook your sin. He couldn't be a just judge, and say, "Oh, you murdered somebody. Eh, forget it." He couldn't do that because it wouldn't be just. He not only demonstrates justice, but He demonstrates mercy and grace at the same time by Himself taking the penalty. One of the reasons why the Pharisees would want to give alms was because it was a picture of generosity and kindness. It would oftentimes be their definition of righteousness. So, you see that in the Old Testament. In some passages, you can translate "righteousness" as kindness, mercy or generosity. There's a thought.

If you back up into Titus 3,

(Titus 3:4) “But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared,

(Titus 3:5) He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration...”

Another way of putting “regeneration” would be “a recreation.” You actually see that in 2 Corinthians 5, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have passed away...” How does that happen? Once again, it’s His mercy that washes us.

Just to give you a parallel of this, if you’ll look with me in Ephesians 5 as it tells the husbands to be like Christ. In Ephesians 5:22, a lot of times we stop at the end of verse 22. “Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” Then we stop and don’t read any further.

(Ephesians 5:23) “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”

So, ultimately, she is really submitting to the Savior.

Then it goes onto say,

(Ephesians 5:24) “But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

(Ephesians 5:25) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

(Ephesians 5:26) so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.”

The emphasis of this phrase isn’t that the husband goes around quoting verses like “Submit.” There’s nothing cleansing about that. It’s saying that his life as savior in her life is so powerful that it changes her and cleanses her. When she begins to see that kind of sacrifice and love that is bestowed upon her that is not looking for anything in return and is just somebody that ministers to her. One of the things that you see in the gospel of Mark is Christ as the servant, and He doesn’t stop serving. His family thinks He’s going crazy. “It’s nighttime. Tell them to go home” and Christ says, “No, we need to serve them.” All the way through the gospel of Mark, you see Him immediately serving. That’s cleansing. Could you imagine if every husband would give himself for his wife that way, how powerful that would be in causing her to want to submit?

So, the same thing is seen within this “regeneration.” Christ actually recreates us through that act of mercy; it’s like you’re a new person. I’ve never known anybody that would do that for me. Here again, you go back to the story of Zaccheus. “You want to come to my house? Nobody likes me. I’m an outcast with everybody.” “No, no. I’m going to your house today.” Then, the

woman that sits at His feet and begins to wash His feet with her tears, hair, and oil. What's causing this woman to not want to be a woman of the streets anymore? What's causing this woman to want to change? She's been forgiven much. Somebody has accepted her just as she is, and now she doesn't want to do that anymore. It's transforming. Then, the prodigal son. You have these stories all the way through Scripture that really give these pictures of what it looks like to be redeemed; to be forgiven. The woman that's caught in the very act of adultery, "Go, and sin no more." Why would she sin no more? Because she's been redeemed. Something about that has cleansed her from wanting those things anymore. It's like an instant do over in your life. If you had to do it over again, would you do it differently? Yes. We have a do over in Christ and all things become new. The fact that He doesn't count our trespasses against us, how cleansing is that?

(Titus 3:5) "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy..."

Saved us from what? He saved us from being foolish, disobedient, enslaved to various lusts. Why am I not enslaved anymore? Because I don't want to. There's been a transformation in my life. There's a "washing of regeneration." As it says at the end of verse 5, "and renewing by the Holy Spirit." "Renewing" gives the inference of ever-changing for the better. In fact, there's a great picture of this in 2 Peter. I've oftentimes thought about this particular passage. It's one of those passages that you should probably put in memory. It says in 2 Peter 1:5, "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith..." Why? By His divine power He has given us everything, and its true knowledge. What is the impetus? What is it that motivates me? Well, it's the grace of God that moves me. He says, "You have everything to get you on the path." When you get that second breath and that sense of "my chains fell off; I'm free;" what are you going to do with your freedom? "I'm going to live for God the rest of my life."

"... Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,

(2 Peter 1:6) and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,

(2 Peter 1:7) and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

(2 Peter 1:8) For if these qualities are yours..."

What's the next phrase?

"...and are increasing."

That's what it's talking about. It's that renewing of the Spirit of God. In other words, the wonderful thing about the Spirit of God in me is that He doesn't let me get stale; or as the Old Testament will say, "rest on your lees." He doesn't let you stay there. That's why Christians that are not following the will of the Lord are probably the most miserable people on the face of the

earth. They say there's a lot of depression with Christians, and there's a good reason why. It's because they not only have their conscience, but they have the Spirit of God nudging them. For the most part, the people that I have found to be the most satisfied are those that are happy with whatever they have. "I've learned to be content with whatever circumstance I'm in." However, the focus isn't on what they have or what they possess; it has to do with loving the Lord and the relationship that they have with Him.

When you think about it, "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful..." What is it that robs us of a joyful life? When I'm sitting around doing nothing, I'm pretty miserable. Connie and I were talking about this, and I said, "Why do you like going to church?" That's an interesting question for a pastor to ask his wife. "To hear you teach." That's what she said. I said, "Forget about that. Besides that." She said, "I enjoy serving." There is a joy, as we oftentimes sing the chorus, in serving Jesus. When there's a person that's not serving anybody, once again, I'll show you somebody pretty miserable. I think one of the reasons why when Jesus says in John 15, "I came to give you fullness of joy." Then it goes on, "Now, the reason I called you is that you bear fruit and that your fruit would remain." So, you go, "Is there a connection?" The connection is always your life being productive; you're accomplishing things of value. You're not going to find anybody that is happy when all they're doing is fulfilling their own pleasures. You'll never find happiness there, but you show me somebody that is doing something that has worth, value and is lasting, and I'll show you someone that's happy. There is contentment. I can tell you that the times I'm happy are when I'm serving. Now, I wish I could tell you that every time I'm serving, I'm always acting happy. Sometimes, I grumble and complain about the things that you have to deal with in the serving, but when all is said and done, I look back and I go, "Thank you for not letting me waste my life," in spite of my resistance sometimes. When it talks about you ought to be serving, it says to do this without complaint or grumbling as Colossians will make reference to this.

"For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful..."

What a great promise that is, isn't it? It goes on and says at the end of verse 10, "as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble."

My mother was asking me, "So, why do you keep doing all these things?" and I said, "Mom, it keeps me off the streets." In a way, nothing could be truer than that in the sense that it keeps me from doing things that are harmful. When you're busy doing good, it's like the psychologists say, the human mind cannot occupy two thoughts at the same time. Now, you can go back and forth really quick, but it's impossible for the human mind to occupy two thoughts at the same time. So, "whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute" (Philippians 4:8). If you're thinking about these things, guess what? You can't think about the bad things. The same thing is true when you're serving. As long as you're serving and focusing on other people, it keeps you off of complaining, wanting more pleasure. So, the wonderful truth in this is that

according to His mercy, He not only recreates us, but He renews us to the point where we actually get better. That's the maturation process.

Real quick, let me just say something about the statement I made about getting better. I have found that the growing process is much like human growth. Obviously, Scripture wanted us to make that analogy, and wanted us to parallel those two. So, we see that throughout the Old Testament as well as in Galatians 4 and Ephesians 4, the whole body being fitted together, growing up into the nature of Christ. Also, in 1 Corinthians 13, "when I was a child, I used to think as a child. I became a man and put away childish things. I began to act in love." We understand that there is this growth process. Peter will say, "Grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord." People oftentimes think that growth in and of itself is a linear thing, but that's not growth at all if you think about it. I mean, a young person is like this, then sometimes he's like this, but you're moving forward. Oftentimes, you wrestle with the things that begin to come into your life. If you can look at somebody like Jacob in Scripture, and say to yourself, "He was growing." Now, there were times that he probably didn't feel like he was going anywhere, especially when he was with Laban, but God was growing him to not be a supplanter. He was moving him in that direction. Not unlike Joseph. Joseph starts off and he's telling on his brother, and he was the good kid which I never understood what that was. He was the one that had the wonderful bells and whistles that his father gave him. Then, all of a sudden, he's sold into slavery and somebody's accusing him of immorality. He ran from that. It seems like it goes from bad to worse. Probably, if you were to look at his life at a particular time, you would say, "He's not growing at all; he's growing backwards." No, no. He was growing, and God was holding him for that particular work in which he was going to have this authority over his brothers; he wasn't going to lord over them by virtue of his growth experience. I guess the point is that it's not a matter of feeling better, but you're still growing. Sometimes they're growing pains and are going to hurt.

Titus 3, if you go back, it's the Holy Spirit that moves us and motivates us. I like the way that it's put in verse 6, "whom He poured out upon us richly." It's that wonderful picture of God's love that pours out. In fact, that's mentioned before in Romans. I love the way that it's put here in Romans 5. It starts off this way,

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

(Romans 5:2) through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace..."

When you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior, it's like this introduction into God's goodness. It's when you receive Christ and you go, "I'm forgiven?" and somebody says to you, "Yeah. He's forgiven you of all your sins." You go, "Wow, what an introduction." It's sort of like you can hear the heavens, "Gary, meet God. God, meet Gary," and you go, "Wow, I was thinking you were the other guy that made my life miserable, but you're the guy that loves me." He goes, "Yeah." So, grace introduces us to God.

“...in which we stand...”

He goes on and says, “Now, it’s this grace that will hold you steady in all of this.”

“...and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

(Romans 5:3) And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations...”

Because we know that the difficulties in our lives are rooted in grace. So, it’s the favor of God that is working in our lives, right? So, it’s making me stronger; it’s actually improving my character which is not a bad thing. People are going to like you more. You’re going to be more approachable and more productive.

(Romans 5:4) “and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.”

“Hope” is a confident expectation. One of the reasons why people are so miserable and depressed is they have no sense of joy for tomorrow. “Proven character” has a way of making you feel good about tomorrow. It sure does.

(Romans 5:5) “and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts...”

It’s a bizarre thing, but as you go through trials and tribulations, as you begin to embrace and stand on the grace of God, there is a sense of His presence, as Peter will say, “the glory of God resting on you,” while you’re going through this. You’ll feel that confidence welling up inside. You’ll almost say something like, “I wouldn’t have traded this for anything in the world. I’m so thankful that the Lord brought me through these waters because I know this is what I needed; it’s what was best for me.” In retrospect, God gives you that wonderful thought. Oftentimes, right in the thick of it, “there is a peace which surpasses all understanding.” You can just feel the presence of God going, “Well done.” If you’ve never heard that voice in your heart, you ought to try it. So, it’s a great picture as you see the great motivation and recollection in our hearts is what God has done for us and how it inspires and empowers me to maintain. It keeps me out of being miserable. When you think about that, I could spend most of my life in malice and being mad at everybody else because they have something that I don’t have, but God rescued me from that.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us and how wonderful it is in which You’ve transformed us. You have recreated us and You’re molding us into maturity. You’re taking us into this renewal that is bringing us to reflect the image of Your Son. We give You thanks for this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

