

A Trustworthy Saying Titus 3; John 3:1-17

Central point: We can trust in the grace of God, through his mercy, to save us, change our lives and enable us to do good deeds.

Trust!

“Trust, trust, trust Trev!” RAA ad – “its all about trust!”

This saying we read is one you can trust – reliable, worth remembering.

Its source – God

Its core message – God’s love for humanity

Its power – to transform lives, change hearts, resolve our eternal future.

What does it say?...

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying.

The Kindness and Love of God

- “appeared” – this is about the wonderful event of the incarnation, Jesus coming “at just the right time” [Rom 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.]
- its about God “Our Saviour” - not judge, condemner, ignorer, but Saviour
- its about God’s mercy. This reminds both of God’s love for us and that our salvation is God’s initiative. **He** saw the need to save us, and chose to act, not leaving us helpless. Do you realise how significant and wonderful that is?!
- Titus 2:11 puts it a similar way but uses the word grace - ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.
- And as we know like elsewhere in Scripture we are being reminded again that it is not because of “righteous deeds” which we may have done, which as Paul the apostle put it are like filthy rags. While there is a very strong link between the outcome of a saved person desiring to do good things for God’s glory, the human heart so easily tends towards saying “I” have done something to earn salvation...

Do you think of God as miserly? Or generous? Do you go about your day grumbling that he doesn’t done this or that?

Or do you look around and give thanks? Thankful for those foundational things that God has done for us - mercy, grace, forgiveness, salvation...

Well, this “trustworthy saying” says

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior

God is in the habit of being generous. In OT times the Holy Spirit came upon “special” people – prophets, kings, and at special times, but since the coming of Christ, as we see in Pentecost, the HS is poured out on all those who believe and trust in the Messiah.

The images here of “rebirth” and “renewal” in the work of the HS are that salvation comes through being “born again”, which despite our reaction to possibly American evangelists is a very Biblical phrase.

This is something that Nicodemus is chastised by Jesus in John 3 for not understanding.

This “re-birth”, means we can stand in God’s presence with confidence through Christ’s actions on the cross and be confident of an eternal future. As we read in v7

7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Born again - re-birth, a new life, a *transformed life* and renewed, refreshed.... By the HS. This is no less than God himself with us, in us, bringing to birth a new life, now set apart for him, now serving him.

No washing away of sin, no re-birth, no HS, no inheritance of eternal life.

If you don’t think of it like that, maybe it is an issue of obedience, maybe you have never truly repented and brought your heart to the Lord? If not, you must do so!

This is the Good News!

This is what God offers us through Christ!

And, this is what we can offer others who do not know about or understand what it means to be a follower of Christ.

I think many people in our world do not realise this.

Its not about an institution called the church, not about a building, not about ceremonies or services – its about the opportunity through God’s grace to be born anew, a new life with God, where he gives us his HS to help us live the life he wants and assure us of eternity with him.

Fantastic!

The Transforming Power of the Gospel

Eg – person transformed? A privilege in ministry to see people’s lives changed.

The before picture pretty stark - 3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

“At one time we too...”

The image is of a people who lived for themselves. That their lives were ruled by various things – they are described as *enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures*. And if you read what the people of Crete were like this may be an accurate picture - We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Paul has generalised from the behaviour of the people in Crete to the approach of a godless humanity by saying “at one time we too ...”

While we might not put it this way I think we can understand this. There are things we know we do that hinder better relationships with those we love, and at times we despair that we can conquer them.

Obsession with our health, computer games, preoccupation with work or your house or your sport or your hobby... these things can be good, but at times we recognise that we use them as excuses to avoid deepening relationships or fixing broken ones.

The picture painted elsewhere in the Bible is of people living at a distance from God because they don't trust him enough, and living without love for their neighbour because their own needs come before others.

You can see why the Bible is still relevant for humanity – we still don't love God and it is a rare, although delightful, thing to find someone who genuinely puts someone else's needs before their own.

The Bible calls this sin. But selfishness is a good way of describing the actions of most of us.

“But...”

“But...” ... there is a transformation here and it is all about what God does for us.

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared.

The negative picture of “hating and being hated” is referred to as a **past** life, where our **new** life, transformed by God's love, mercy and grace and the indwelling of the HS has changed us.

Newton – slave trader, who tried to show others the folly of their Christian beliefs became a pastor and a force for the abolition of the slave trade.

Of all of the sins to which he later confessed, his habit of chipping away at the faith of others remained heaviest on his heart. In an essay Newton said: "I hope it will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me . . . that I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders. In 1772 he penned the most loved hymn of Amazing Grace.

How did this transformation occur? Through the kindness and love of God.

Saul the Pharisee - persecutor of Christians, happy to see them stoned to death, now the defender of the faith and Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles – how? Through the loving kindness of God, which he knew only too well.

And I have seen this – people decide to recommit to broken relationships, marriages are restored, forgiveness flows where hate used to be; there are children reconciled to parents, and there are good, godly people who now ask the question – “how can I live God's way?” And commit themselves to prayer and reflection and ask for God's help to change what is wrong, broken, flawed.. in them... And I suspect many of you know this too.

There is a difference in these people Titus is to help lead.

A Reminder

“Remind the people...” v1

Titus had to remind them to not argue and be divisive. He had to say - Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

(that's the “lazy” problem the people of Crete had I suspect mentioned in chapter 1).

Have a listen to this exhortation - Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

Runners on the start line listening for the gun... attentive to it – that is how we are to be when we hear God's directives for our lives... From stopped ears to open ones – eager to do what is good.

Ready to do good

Desiring to obey those in authority

Speaking kind words rather than words that tear down... how are you going?

Seeking peace and being concerned about the needs of others

Tempering our attitude and speech...

What do you think Paul would say we need to be reminded about?

Be thankful?

More gracious, less prepared to view people with suspicion?

More active in loving and supporting those in the church?

Conclusion

I believe that as a Christian, if you have not understood God's grace, you will not truly be able to love others. That's worth pondering.

I think Paul wanted Titus to stress the “trustworthy saying” (how God's grace has been shown to us) as that is the bedrock of our faith, the beginning, the source is God's grace... and its outworking - living lives of godliness – is the most natural result in the world for those who are children of God.

If you understand God's grace you will be motivated to show grace to others.

If you **don't** understand God's grace you will be stunted in your capacity to show that sort of love towards others.

If you understand God's love God, you **will** be able to love your neighbour and be careful to devote yourself to doing good

Do you believe this trustworthy saying?

Do you accept this trustworthy saying?

Rejoice in it! And live it!

Amen

Titus 3

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ² to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

³ At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

⁹ But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. ¹¹ You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.

¹² As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. ¹³ Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. ¹⁴ Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

¹⁵ Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all.

John 3:1-17

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

³ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]"

⁴ "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You^[c] must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."^[d]

⁹ "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.^[e] ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^[f] ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."^[g]

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.