

## **Our General Disposition Toward All, Part II - The Indicative**

Call to Worship: Psalm 8

1st Scripture: John 3:1-8

2nd Scripture: Titus 3:1-7

Hymn (supp)- *Victory in Jesus*

Hymn #129- *Fairest Lord Jesus*

Hymn- *And Can it Be*

### **Introduction**

Last time, we considered Paul's charge to Titus, exhorting him to remind the Cretans to be subject to their governing authorities. And this led Paul to define the type of disposition that Christians should have toward all people, "speaking evil of no one, being peaceable, gentle, and showing humility to all men."

This morning, we move on to consider the indicative motivating factors, which ought to drive us to desire, pursue and strive to maintain such a godly disposition toward all people. You see, Paul knows that, naturally, we will be prone to responding harshly toward others, especially corrupt governing authorities and any who would oppose us, in any way.

### **I. The Indicative Motivation**

And again, we know that Paul is going to bring out a relevant indicative here, because he begins verse 3 with the word "For," clearly leading us to understand that he is now going to give a compelling motivation for obeying the imperative, given in verses 1&2.

And you will notice, as we work through verses 3-7 that Paul carries us into our own past, present and future states, where he will feed us with critical reminders, which ought to drive us to treat all others appropriately, within the same redemptive context that we ourselves have been brought into, by our merciful and gracious God.

1) Our past state. "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (vs. 3). You see, what is our natural tendency, when looking at the wicked and sinful lives of the unsaved? Is it not to forget that, "That was once us?" And so, Paul states, as it were, "Don't speak evil of anyone, be peaceable, gentle, showing humility to all men...because you were once there. We all were. We had, and lived out of the same wicked heart and nature, that

still owns them. We too were once foolish, willfully transgressing God's laws and living as if He didn't exist. We too loved and did what was evil in the sight of God. We too were deceived and blinded by our own sin, heading on a course that leads straight to hell, caught up in all manner of sinful lusts and pleasures, that do nothing more than satisfy for a moment. We were in that rat race. Our eyes were not always opened. We had no problem engaging in malicious acts, envying others and coveting material things that do not last. We were hateful, as well, hating others, with no broad picture of what this is all about, and no concern for the God who created us for His glory. We lived that life, under that same sky of darkness, serving those same sinful desires, dead in our sins, without any natural hope of coming to the truth."

Our past is their present. But furthermore, the only reason that our present is still not the same as our past (and their present) is no thanks to us. We had nothing, whatsoever, to do with affecting the change in our lives, which has rescued us from our past and brought us into the present...any more than a dead man could ever make himself alive.

2) Our present state. Verses 4-6 reveal how we've come to our present state, beginning with that wonderful word, "But," and not followed by anything that we have done for ourselves, whatsoever. Notice, "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior..."

You see, Paul is here showing us that we ought to extend compassion toward all people, because the only difference between us and anyone who remains unsaved, is that we have been objects of God's free kindness and grace. We were just as lost, dead, wicked and naturally corrupt as everyone else, "*but* when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared..." Notice, this verse brings us back to chapter 2:11, where we were told, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has *appeared* to all men..." Here, the same word for "appeared" is used, indicating that once again, in 3:4, the Apostle is referencing the first coming of Christ [Note also, 2:13, which emphasizes the final coming of our Lord, when He returns]

And so, what the Apostle means to say here, in verse 4, is that, we were all like those who are presently lost and condemned; we were in the same terribly lost and helpless state, drowning

in the defilement of our sins, until we had come to benefit from; until we were rescued by, the kindness and love of God our Savior, which appeared in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We were dead, we were lost, we were without hope with everyone else, until the only able Savior came and rescued us. And He did this, out of the sheer kindness of His mercy and grace. We didn't even naturally desire to be rescued, and would sooner have drowned in our sin, had He not secured the entire package of our rescue, including the removal of our dead, corrupt hearts, in exchange for new ones, so that, we would even desire to respond to the call of the gospel!

Notice, verses 5-6, "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior...*" You see, one of the reasons that we ought to be very quick to exercise mercy and compassion toward others; one of the reasons that we ought to speak evil of no one, is because the only thing that presently separates us from anyone else, is the sheer grace of God. We have no good works or deeds to turn to; we have no righteousness to offer, such that we can say, "We are naturally better than them" or "There is something in us, that is naturally more loveable, likeable or worthy." No, God, in Christ, has pulled us out of our wicked defilement, and He has saved and delivered us, not on the basis of any works of righteousness which we have done (because there were none), but rather, it was solely on the basis of His free mercy and grace, that He saved us!

And that gracious and glorious, grace motivated salvation, which met us, did so, when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were without any spiritual life, whatsoever! We hated God and wanted nothing to do with Him. Though we were drowning, we had no natural desire to even cry out for help, let alone, secure it. And so, our condition was so dire, that God, by His Spirit, actually had to first regenerate us; He had to give us life, so that we would even obtain the faith that is necessary to receive the salvation that is freely offered in Christ. He had to open our eyes unto the truth of our desperately lost and condemned condition, before we would even turn to Christ, so that we might obtain life. You see, even if we had it in us, to choose to believe in Christ, our salvation is still free and undeserved, which should lead us to show compassion toward those who are still outside of Christ. But, the fact that even our choosing of Christ, only

became a desire, because God first chose to open our eyes and hearts to the truth, all the more, should motivate us to pursue the general disposition of compassion, gentleness, peaceableness and humility toward all people. Do you see that here, brethren? “...*not* by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, *through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior...*”

The glorious appearing of the offering of Christ, as our salvation, has appealed to us, and has benefitted and been applied to us, personally, because of the regenerative and renewing work of the Holy Spirit in us. You see, the language here, speaking of the “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,” takes us back to John 3, where our Lord had dealings with Nicodemus. We recall there, that Nicodemus, had come to Jesus by night, and was able to acknowledge that the Lord must have come from God, since He was able to perform many signs and wonders. But then, the Lord got right to the point and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). And of course, Nicodemus, incapable of grasping the spiritual reality that Jesus was seeking to convey, responded, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” (vs. 4). Elaborating further then, our Lord responded, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (vs. 5).

And it is here that we find that glorious truth, which I believe Paul borrows from, here in our main text in Titus 3, when he speaks of the “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” You see, what was the main point that our Lord was seeking to get across to Nicodemus? Simply acknowledging the fact that Jesus had come from God, and recognizing that He performed miracles could not possibly bring a single soul into the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, one could not even *see* the kingdom of heaven in truth; one could not even grasp the slightest portion of the reality of heaven, apart from being born of the Spirit. A new birth is required, if any are to see the kingdom of heaven, and come to Christ for salvation. The Spirit must be operatively at work in an individual, before he can ever come to the truth, because we are all naturally dead in our sins. He must be regenerated and made alive. And he must experience the washing and renewing power of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with God's

predetermined design to save that individual, having chosen him in Christ, before the foundation of the world. [Note: The mysterious work of the Spirit is like the wind. You don't know where it comes from or where it is going, but you see the effects of it, in the rustling of the leaves on a tree...so are those who are born of the Spirit]

And so, all of this to say, brethren, that all the more, we ought to be motivated to show unconditional compassion toward all people; our general disposition ought to be a disposition of grace toward all, especially in light of the fact that the entire work of our salvation; indeed, the very faith that we had, which led to us receiving forgiveness and salvation in Christ, has been initiated and established wholly by the work of God's sovereign grace! Oh, the wonder of the glory of our salvation in Christ! The Holy Spirit washed us clean in the fountain of Christ's blood, and has renewed us; He made us a new people, born again, in the likeness not of the first Adam, but of the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. And hear this brethren: God did not simply give us a fraction of the Holy Spirit. He didn't simply give us a taste of the washing power of the Holy Spirit. No, we are told, "whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." God soaked us and saturated us by the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, so that, we would be without a stain of offense toward God, and so that our justification in Christ, would be full and complete. To be sure, our sin left a crimson imprint; we were filthy beyond recognition. But, by the application of Christ's glorious shed blood, the Holy Spirit has washed us white as snow! He was a waterfall of grace poured out upon us, such that, every inkling of defilement was removed from us, in Christ. And furthermore, He now works, in cooperation with us, to sanctify us, so that we would be conformed into the glorious image of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Having rescued us, wholly by grace, from our former depravity, and having regenerated, washed and cleansed us, unto the present state of unending grace that we now enjoy, finally, Paul reveals as well, how this has further carried us unto the anticipation of our future, certain hope.

3) Our future state. Verse 7: "...that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Having already been (past tense) justified (declared just/righteous in God's sight, with all guilt removed) by His grace; having received freely and fully all of the blessings of our new life and salvation in Christ, we have become heirs; we have

been given an inheritance, which in due time, will be received in full in glory. And this certain inheritance is guaranteed, in accordance with the rock solid hope of eternal life, which we have already been freely given in Christ. We went from rags to riches. Indeed, from the worst form of condemned defilement to the most glorious reality of being adopted into the family of God, where, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we share in the inheritance that belongs to God Himself! We share in the immortal blessings of securing eternal fellowship with our Triune God, at His right hand, where the highest state of joy is to be experienced forever.

All of this, God has done, entirely by His free grace, mercy and kindness. It was not that we were somehow naturally lovable or worthy, in even the slightest degree. Rather, it is because God Himself is gracious and has chosen to be kind toward us, unworthy sinners.

And so, coming full circle, I think we get Paul's point here. I think his indicative motivation should do more than suit the purpose of compelling us to obey the imperative of seeking to, "speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men." In short, brethren, every single iota of an aspect of that which has brought us out of the state that all of unsaved mankind is still in, and into the present state of peace, joy and sanctification that we now enjoy, with the glorious expectation of the glory to come, has been ordained, secured and applied by the will and work of our Triune God alone! How then could we ever garnish our own self-righteousness, and refuse to look upon anyone else in this world, with eyes that are full of grace?

## **II. Closing Thoughts and Applications**

1) "Speak evil of no one, be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men." That's the imperative command. For you, yourself, were once there, and have only come to your present state, entirely by grace. That's the indicative. How will you view even the worst of sinners, going forward, brethren? Will you view liars and thieves and corrupt governmental officials and homosexuals and transgenders and abortion doctors and prostitutes and every other form of sinner, through a gospel lens, or through a self-righteous lens. Parents, what do you teach your children about such people? Do you mock them and present them as hopeless, or do you present them as desperately lost sinners, in need of the gospel of grace?

Jump in a mental time machine, for a moment, and go back to speak with your pre-saved, unregenerate self. What would you say to that lost sinner? How would you address yourself, in that state of lostness and blindness? Now, carry that same heart and attitude into the present, and speak to those who are yet in such a pitiful, desperately lose state. Brethren, such a mind and heart, can only be formed and maintained, by meditating on the indicative that we have just gone over, this morning.

2) Friends, if you are not a Christian here, this morning, this text carries some very good and hopeful news for you. You see, while you are still in the same dreadfully lost condition as all of God's people were once in, you can experience the same change that we have experienced, entirely by the grace of God. Yes, you are not worthy, even as we were not worthy, but God is in the very business of redeeming unworthy sinners by His grace. The whole purpose of the cross of Christ was to save wretched sinners of the worst kind. He came for the sick and corrupt and defiled. But you see, if you are to be saved in truth, then you must repent and believe into Christ. The gospel!!!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25