



Titus 3:3-8

Study Outline

Launching Question

'I wish we had more sermons on practical topics like "Christians at work".'
Do you agree? Why / why not?

Overview of the gospel

Work out a way to look at what Paul actually says in verses 3-7:

Complete each phrase: we were once ... but God ... not because ... but because ... through ... so that ...	<i>OR</i>	Write out the .. why ... how ... what ... for ... of salvation
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Knowing the gospel of God's kindness and love

Why is the gospel offensive? (*several answers*)

How is v3 different from how the non-Christian would describe himself?

How do we know God is kind and loving?

What does this tell us about the gospel?

When did these things appear?

What does each part of the Godhead contribute to our salvation?

Why is this encouraging?

Paul uses several pictures for our salvation: how does each help us to understand God's mercy better?

How should this massive change/new start affect the way we live?

Why should being born again make us humble (cf end of v 2)?

Teaching the gospel of God's kindness and love

Why is Titus to teach 3-7? What will result if he does / doesn't?

Why is Titus to appoint elders like 1:9 (after what we've seen today)?

Why will the gospel be attractive (according to v 8)?

How does this passage speak into our 'Launching Question' discussion?

What teaching do we need? Why?

All four of our studies in Titus have included a section on what the gospel is.

Why is that? Is it significant?

Conclusion (to whole letter):

What lessons are there from Titus for our church at the current time?

What lessons are there from Titus for me and my Christian life?



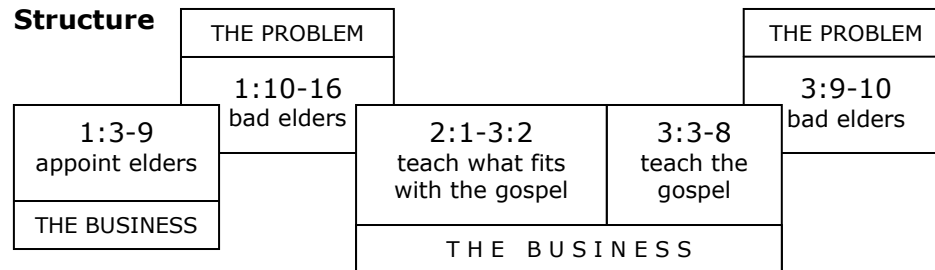
Titus 3:3-8

Titus Study 4

Background

Titus and *1 and 2 Timothy* are written by Paul to his young protégés who had been sent as trouble-shooters to local churches (Titus to Crete, Timothy to Ephesus). Titus is to *straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders* (1:3). He is told to teach *the truth that leads to godliness* (1:2),

Structure



Theme Sentence for 3:3-8

The gospel really is 'the truth that leads to godliness': teach it!

Structure of 3:3-8

3-7 Here the gospel that must be taught:

- we needed saving
- God our Saviour saved us, by the Holy Spirit, thru Jesus Christ

8 Teach it ... and those believing it will live a godly life

Ideas for application from 3:3-8

- The gospel is all about God: his character, his action, all the Godhead working together. Beware versions of Christianity that emphasise us instead – what we do/must do, what we feel or get out of it, etc. Instead enjoy the security of knowing it all depends on who he is.
- The secret to a godly life is knowing this gospel. We tend to think it's about techniques, or rules, or anything other than that gospel of God's mercy. The more I'm taught that, the more I will devote myself to good works. And so if my life is lacking in godliness, I need to know 'these things' better.
- What the church needs most are teachers who will spend their time 'insisting' on the gospel - such a simple Job Description, but vital for my salvation and my godliness.

- 3 The 'For...' at the start of this verse indicates that Paul is giving a reason here. What this reason is depends on who is the 'us' in verse 3:
- 'we Christians were ...' would explain why we should show humility towards others: it's because we used to be no better than them.
 - 'we Paul and Titus were ...' would explain why Titus is to tell the Cretans to change their behaviour: it's because Paul and Titus used to live like that, but the gospel changed them so now they don't.

Does this choice matter? It only does because of the decision why this summary of the gospel in 3-7 is here: does Paul write it to encourage the lifestyle of all Christians, or to encourage the teaching of Titus?

These notes opt for the second of these alternatives because:

(a) Paul is making a contrast between 'them' (1) and 'we' (3);

(b) v8 repeats the 'And I want you, Titus, to stress/teach this' theme.

So the main point is: Look at the change the gospel works in a person's life; that's why, Titus, you need to teach the gospel to see 'good works' result (8), and why you should teach what accords with that (2:1-3:2).

Paul's diagnosis is that the non-Christian's world is not a happy one, but foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved. The non-Christian believes himself the opposite of those things: totally together and so wise, not disobedient (- who is there to disobey?), enlightened as to what the world is really about, and, of all people, the most free. But he's wrong!

- 4-5 This is one of the NT's great 'But ...'s (cf Rom 3:21; Eph 2:4; 1 Tim 1:13b; etc): the change is that God has saved us. We tend to ask 'have you given your life to Christ?' or 'are you committed?' ... which are man-centred in comparison with the Bible's grammar. Look at the basis for it: 'not because of x, but because of y'; not our deeds, but his character. What appeared was 'his kindness and love': God shows what he is like and displays his glory when he acts to rescue (cf Exod 6:6-8).
- 5b This is a very important verse about the Holy Spirit. In passing, note the different roles of all three members of the Trinity in our salvation. The big change from v3 is through the Spirit whose job is 'washing' (cf Ezekiel 36:25-27 for these two things similarly put together). The result of this washing is new birth (even though people may react against this phrase, the only authentic Christianity is 'born-again Christianity'* cf John 3:5) which is a thorough brand-new-ness

* You might like to consider the reasons why people react against the phrase 'born-again'. For example, it's 'American' (!), it's threatening (ie I'm in, you're out), it's arrogant (as if I'm claiming to be better than you), it's overly self-confident (ie I know that I'm 'in' however I behave). What does Paul say in these verses that would dialogue with all these objections?

('regeneration and renewal' is almost certainly an example of parallelism where two words refer to the same thing).

But the more significant thing in this verse (given much contemporary misunderstanding about the work of the Holy Spirit) is how he is poured out on us: it is through Jesus. The Holy Spirit always takes the work of Jesus and applies it to our lives, and similarly Jesus is the one who gives the Holy Spirit to us. They are inextricably linked. This verse makes no sense if you make the pouring out of the Spirit separate from the saving work of Christ, as if a subsequent experience: no, every Christian has the Spirit (cf Rom 8:9-10).

- 7 The result of the gospel is 'hope': Christians are people with a future. 'Hope' in the Bible is not how we use the word (eg 'I hope it will be sunny tomorrow', a sort of wishful thinking) but 'confident certainty'.
- 8 Here is both the application of this paragraph, and a return to the main theme of the letter: *knowledge of the truth leads to godliness* (1:1). There is a direct link between **the truth** that we 'know' (in the sense of believing, and building our life on) and **the lifestyle** that results. More than this, the power for a changed lifestyle lies in that gospel. If someone is living wrong, they need to be taught the gospel, and what is in accord with it. The gospel is what every Christian needs.

So Paul's application is that Titus is to 'stress'/'insist on' this 'trustworthy saying' (ie the gospel he's just defined) because what will result are Christians devoting themselves to good works. Contrast the 'profitable' works that will result with the 'unprofitable' (9) results of the empty talking (cf 1:10) that currently marks the teaching in Crete. The real gospel will make me useful (for example to help those in need 14).

This theme needs applying. For example, sometimes Christians wish that the sermons they heard were about more 'practical' issues (such as 'Christians at work'). But these verses make it clear that what will build Christian lives is to have teaching stressing 'these things', and (2:1) 'teaching what is in accord with sound doctrine'. This is what will lead to my godliness, and what will make me useful, doing good works. If I feel that my Christian life is not as godly as it should be, then I need to be taught the gospel more. Knowing God truly is the basis for pleasing him (cf 1:16). That is why Paul writes 3-7: to encourage Titus to teach 'these things'.

This further underlines the reason why Paul has written his letter with such urgency to Titus. He wants him to 'straighten out what was left unfinished' (1:5) by appointing elders who hold firmly to this trustworthy message of the gospel of 3:3-7 so they 'can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it' (1:9). Otherwise, with just the elders of 1:10-16, the church will be left at the mercy of those currently ruining whole households (1:11). What the church needs are teachers of the gospel.