Sovereign Grace Saved Us
Titus 3:4-7

Intro: Salvation is of the Lord
Consider two men who drowned in the ocean at the same time, their lifeless bodies are pulled out by lifeguards, put next to each other on the beach, and CPR is administered.

After about 30 seconds, water comes spewing out of the first guy's mouth. He's hacking up a lung, gasping for air, sits up and looks at the other guy, lifeless while CPR is still being administered. And he says, "What's his problem? He can't even breath! Why doesn't he just sit up like me? I'm fine!"

Why would that NEVER happen? No one rescued from the ocean, resuscitated back to life…would belittle a person is still dead, like they were a few seconds ago. No one would brag about his own ability to breath after someone else's breath was put into his lungs.

It is an absurdity analogous to the way many Christians treat non-Christians.

When we look down on non-Christians in contempt for behaving like non-Christians—dead in the sins—we're acting as though we were not once just like them OR we did something to change ourselves.

Titus 3:1-7 is written by Paul to Titus to remind the churches on Crete of what it looks like to live out your belief in the gospel to an unbelieving world. **[vv1-2]** And why should we treat them this way? **[v3]** *We must be gracious to enslaved sinners because we also were once enslaved*. That's what compels compassion…BUT only to a certain point.

If we think we got ourselves out of that awful spiritual state, then our compassion for those still in it, can only go so far. We must realize the only reason we're no longer enslaved to our sins, and thus, the decisive difference between you and those still enslaved…is sovereign grace!

That's when you'll have compassion. And that's Paul's point in vv4-7.

Notice the drastic change. **[v3-4a, *BUT*]** "When YOU…came to your senses… repented of your sins …turned over a new leaf… changed your ways…" That's NOT what it says. You may have done those things when you became a Christian, but the decisive cause of them is not you! **[vv4-5a, *he saved us*]**.

That's the controlling phrase of vv4-7: *he saved us*. Who? This is talking about God the Father. When we trace the pronoun "he" throughout this passage, it's distinguished from Jesus Christ and the HS.

V4 mentions "God our Savior" and v5, says that "HE" [that is, *God our Savior*] *saved us*" and it was "*according to HIS* [God our Savior's] *own mercy."* And it came "*by the regeneration/renewal of the HS*." So GOD saved us BY the HS. AND, v6, "*HE* [God our Savior] *poured out the HS THROUGH Jesus*."

Do you see how each person is powerfully involved in salvation? That's what it took to get you out of the helpless state of v3. The Triune God pulled you out and resuscitate you!

Which is why you should be gracious to those still dead. You'd be there too had it not been for the sovereign grace of the Triune God. He saved us. That's the point of this passage.

The point is NOT: He made salvation *possible*. He *tried* to save us. He made us *savable*. The point is: He SAVED us!

Now, from that controlling phrase, Paul answers four questions: 1) At what ***point*** did God save us? 2) On what **basis** did God save us? 3) By what ***means*** did God save us? 4) For what ***purpose*** did God save us? Let's answer each question from this passage.

Question #1: At what point did God save us? ANSWER: When his grace appeared to us *personally*. **[vv4-5a]** When was that? When did God's *goodness* (lavishing benevolence) and the *loving kindness* (which means affectionate care for those in deep need)… when did these qualities *appear*?

We've seen that word *appear* already. **[2:11]**

If you remember, in that context, the *appearing* of God's grace refers to 2,000 years ago when Jesus showed up in history and showed forth, in a way like never before, how gracious God is when his Son hung suspended on a cross for sinners. That's when God's grace *appeared*.

Now is that the same *appearing* of grace in **[3:4]**? Is that talking about when God's grace was shown on the cross? Look what Paul goes onto say. **[vv5-6, emphasize "us"]** Notice the emphasis of the personal effect of salvation on US. This is talking about the moment you got saved! It's talking about your conversion.

The *appearing* of God's grace in v4 is not talking about the grace of the cross that *accomplished* your salvation 2,000 years ago. It's talking about the grace of regeneration that *effected* your salvation when you first gave your life to Jesus.

He saved you when heard the gospel and he opened your eyes, breathed new life into your dead heart, and you embraced Christ.

Do you remember when that happened? Some of us might not, and that's ok. Our conscience experience of going from death to life might not be as vividly remembered as others. But it happened!

It happened to a man in our church who was wrapped up in gangs/violence/drugs/alcohol, but then he started reading the Bible, and he couldn't help but see its truth. And the light went on. And he's a different person today.

It happened to a lady in our church who was hostile to Christianity for years, until the HS softened her heart to started listening to the gentle truth-speaking from her husband. And she's a different person today.

It happened to a guy in our church who was homeless, addicted to drugs and sexual promiscuity. But one day someone came up to him on the street, gave him some food, and told him the best news in the world that he could be forgiven of all his sins through faith in the Savior who died for him. And he believed. And he's a different person today.

It happened just a few weeks ago, in this room, as a young man was sitting under the preaching of Titus 2 and the call for Christians to adorn the gospel with their lives. And he assumed he's been a Christian for 8 years, but realized, "I've NOT been adorning the gospel with my life. My heart hasn't been changed." And so, he finally bowed the knee to Christ.

SALVATION HAPPENS! Oh Christian, it is so easy to get cynical. "Is God really in the business of changing people?"

- You've been sharing the gospel with the same person for years and they're still asking the same old questions they did when you first started talking.
- You pour into that new Christian, and it seems like there's growth, but they start giving into the things of the world and walk away from Christ.

Listen, don't get cynical! God still saves! His grace will keep appearing to dead sinners until Jesus returns. How can you be sure? Because is grace appeared to YOU.

Question #2: On what basis did God save us? Answer: NOT on the basis of our works but on the basis of his mercy. **[v5a-c]** That's a surprising statement because the term *good works* is mentioned 7 times in Titus, all of which refer to how *necessary* they are…

- 1:16—"There are some who profess to know God, but they deny him by their *works*. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any *good work*." Good works are a necessary evidence of knowing God.
- 2:7, "Titus, show yourself in all respects to be a model of *good works*." Essential to being a pastor is modelling good works.
- 2:14, Jesus "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*." This is why Jesus died!…to purchase for himself people who love to do good works.
- 3:8, "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*." Believers ought to have deep concern and committed to doing good.

All throughout the book of Titus, good works are portrayed as *necessary*…for what? To get you saved? NO! They're *unnecessary* for that! **[v5a-b, *not because of…but according to*]**.

That's BASIS language. Thjat's why I posed the question the way I did: On what BASIS are we saved? *Think of when a house is built, the concrete slab (the foundation) is laid first and all everything else rests on that foundation. If it's uneven, the house won't stand*. If the foundation/basis of your acceptance before God is your own good works, it'll crumble.

And sadly, that's the default position of nearly every person in the world, "The way I am made right with is by doing good." Which usually means: "My good outweighs my bad." But, even if it could be measured that way, it doesn't work like that.

Doing good does not erase the bad. Giving to charity doesn't make theft disappear. Speaking kindly doesn't delete mean words. Helping a neighbor doesn't wipe away sexual sin. It's not how it works and we know it!

That's why so many can't get rid of their guilt of past sin, no matter how much good they do! So what is the basis of our salvation? **[v5a-c]** That's the basis of your salvation! MERCY and mercy alone!

The basis/foundation upon which you will be forgiven of all your sins and accepted by the holy God of the universe is his compassion/ pity on needy sinners. That compels him to withhold his justice *from us*.

Note that: Mercy doesn't withhold justice [period]. Mercy withholds justice *from us*... BECUASE justice was poured out on Jesus. **[Gospel]** That's a strong foundation that cannot be shaken. Is that your foundation?

I heard a pastor talk about the reason why the Protestant Reformation swept through Europe in the 1500-1600s. Do you know what the Protestant Reformation is? It's the movement that recovered the gospel of grace highjacked by Roman Catholicism, which said the basis of our salvation is not grace/mercy alone, but also our works.

This pastor said, "Friends, this is precious, that you can go to sleep tonight KNOWING that you are OK with God. There wasn't a person in Europe in 1500 who could do that…at least not according to…what the church taught. That would've been [considered] heretical pride."

He said, "So when this gospel first started being declared of the free grace of God in Christ, it [wasn't just a silly reason for Protestants] and Catholics to fight…it was, 'Oh my goodness! I can KNOW that God loves ME and that I will spend forever with him? I don't die in some kind of doubt, fearing this horrible century after millennium after ten thousand years in purgatory to be purged and cleansed and THEN come to paradise? But I actually can die with the same confidence the thief on the cross [had], that today I will be with Christ in paradise? I can know that? YES! Oh friends, there's a reason the protestant reformation lit up Europe." (https://www.facebook.com/reel/4562730037295794)

This is why I stand in this pulpit regularly warning you of any religion that bases salvation on our works, rather than entirely on God's mercy shown the cross of Jesus Christ. I don't care if it calls itself Christian. !f it's a religion of works, it ain't Christian! And it ain't true. The basis of our salvation is mercy alone!

Question #3: By what means did God save us? What was the actually WAY you got saved? Answer: By the resurrecting power of the HS. **[vv5d-6]** "Washing" has the imagery of cleansing the filth of sin. *Regeneration* means he gave you new life. And *renewal* is a Greek word that wasn't used outside of Christian literature at that time. It's a distinctly Christian word. And it means "to make new."

That's how God saved you! He cleansed you of your filth, revived you from your death, and made you new in him. How? **[v6]** That word *poured* is a key word in the Bible describing the giving of the HS to the NC people of God.

- It was prophesied in Joel 2:28, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will *pour out my Spirit* on all flesh."

- It was fulfilled in Acts 2 when a crowd of Jews believed in Christ, it says, “The Spirit was poured out.”
- In Acts 10:45 it says that “…the gift of the Holy Spirit was *poured out* even on the Gentiles.”

All of God’s people in the NC have God’s Spirit *poured* onto and into them. Which is why Paul says in Romans 5, “God’s love has been *poured* into our hearts *through the HS* who has been given to us.”

What does that imagery of *pouring* conjure up? *When it’s raining really hard, what do we say? “It’s POURING!”* That’s why Paul says God poured the HS out on us *richly*. See that in **[v6]**? That just means *abundantly*.

God didn’t hold back when he saved you. He gave you all of his Spirit. Not part of him. Not most of him. He poured his Spirit into your heart so that you have all the goodness and love and power of God working for your good.

Don’t tell me you don’t have what you need to live this Christian life! You got what you need!

If he brought you from death TO life, from slavery to your passions for sin TO freedom in passion for him, from wasting your days in malice, envy, and hate TO now knowing joy, peace, and love…

Don't tell me you don't have what you need to obey him…to endure hardship… to keep going. The Spirit of God has been richly poured on you *through Jesus Christ*. See that? **[v6]** It is through the finished work of the Son of God on the cross that purchased the promise of the NC of the pouring out of the Spirit of God.

He saved us when his grace first appeared to us in the message of the gospel. *He saved us* NOT on the basis of our works but on the basis of his mercy alone. *He saved us* by the resurrecting power of the HS.

Ok…for what? That's the last question.

Question #4: For what purpose did God save us? Toward what end? Answer: to give us hope. **[v7]** *So that* denotes purpose. This is WHY he saved us.

But before he tells us why he saved us, he goes back to the basis of our salvation. **[v7, *being justified by his grace*]** Justified is a legal term that describes God's judicial declaration as the righteous judge to declare us just in his sight. He justified us, on what basis? Grace.

See how this is basically the same thing he said before? We're not justified—declared just before him—on the basis of our own JUST-ness, our own good works. We're justified on the basis of his grace!

We just gotta be reminded of that again before we start talking about eternal life because nobody's getting eternal life based on what they've done. And that is the purpose/goal of our salvation. **[v7b]**

Do you know what an *heir* is? It's the rightful recipient of an inheritance. *Like a first born son who would inherit all that belonged to his father,* we are heirs/rightful recipients of the inheritance of everlasting life.

How do we have any right to that? We don't, in ourselves. We now have a right to it because *he saved us* and gave us that right.

But notice, the purpose of God saving us is not merely that we would be heirs of eternal life, but that we would be heirs of the HOPE of eternal life. Some of you need hope today.

On Monday night, I was on the phone with Gay Curry, as she sat in the hospital watching her husband of 68 years struggle to breath. I couldn't be in the hospital with her because a stomach bug swept through our home.

So she asked if she could hold the phone up to his ear and have me say a few words to him. I said, "Of course." I told him I love him and sorry I couldn't be there with him, but I said to him, "Don, I PROMISE I will see you again."

He died a two days later. I didn't make it to the hospital. Did I break my promise? I knew it was unlikely I was gonna make it to the hospital before he died. But I also knew I would see him again. How can that be?

Because have a hope! Gay Curry has a hope that, when her husband breathed his last, that wouldn't be that last of him! Why? Because the goodness and loving kindness of God our savior appeared to Don many years ago…

NOT because of works done by him in righteousness, but because of God's own mercy, when he washed Don in the regenerating and renewing work of the HS, whom he poured out richly on Don through Jesus Christ. So that, being justified by pure grace, God made Don an heir of the hope of eternal life. *He saved us!*

Conclusion: The Lord is Our Salvation
Let's bring it back to the overarching point of this passage. Since God saved us, and his salvation is totally of his sovereign grace, it is ridiculous to demean those not yet saved.

The only right response is compassion because we were once in the same place and the only reason we're not, is sovereign grace. Adorn that doctrine this week in the way you love those around you.