



TIME OF GRACE®

The Power of "And": Knowing It and Living It

Study Notes

Summary

Some Christians talk all about grace and not much about works. Others focus on obedience after breezing past Jesus on the cross. Paul picks a middle ground. He focuses on the love of God in Christ and explains how that shapes our lives as Christians.

- **Titus 3:4,5:** ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.
 - a. Saved— _____
 - b. Righteous— _____
 - c. Mercy— _____

- **Titus 3:5,6:** ⁵He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, . . .
 - a. Washing— _____
 - b. Rebirth— _____

- **Titus 3:7:** so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.
 - a. Justified— _____
 - b. Grace— _____
 - c. Heirs— _____

d. Hope—_____

e. Eternal Life—_____

Points to Ponder

1. **Agree/Disagree:** It is beneficial to listen to a sermon even if you don't understand it.
2. **Agree/Disagree:** It is beneficial for a child to memorize a Bible passage even if he/she doesn't understand it.
3. **Agree/Disagree:** It is beneficial to sing along with Christian radio even if you don't understand the lyrics.
4. Study Nehemiah 8:1-12. Where in this story do you see the spiritual power of understanding?
5. Bloom's Taxonomy is a tool used by teachers that says that before you can apply knowledge, you have to truly comprehend it. If that's true, why is slowing down to ask, "What does this Bible passage mean?" crucial to your spiritual growth?

Homework for Next Week

Read Titus 3:8-15.

Time of Grace Ministry
The Power of "And": Knowing It and Living It
Titus 3:4-7
October 25, 2020

Pastor Mike Novotny

This is one of the best sections in the entire Bible if you speak Bible.

Today, here's what I want to do. I want to walk you through this epic section of the Bible and I don't just want to read to you the words. I want to explain to you what these words mean because I'm convinced that if you get this, you'll know just how good it is. So keep your pen handy as we're going to jump into our first verse for today. Titus 3; we're going to kick things off with verses four and five. It says, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. Not because of righteous things we had done but because of his mercy." I see three big Bible words in this section and I'll put them up on the screen. The word "saved," the word "righteous," and the word "mercy."

Now here's my kind of on-the-streets, regular person's definition for the word "saved." It's just rescued from danger. When you're in a really dangerous, like terrifying to think about situation, and someone makes you safe, they saved you. Which makes me think of the day that my oldest daughter almost drowned. I think I've told some of you this story. She was just a little kid and we were at a friend's backyard pool. The adults were sharing stories and laughter on the deck. My firstborn was in her floaties, flapping around in the sun, until the moment she decided to take the floaties off in water that was deeper than she was tall. And just thinking about that moment is like anxiety-inducing for me. I had a family at my last church who actually lost a child in a freak pool accident like that and I think about my daughter and what she means to me and all the joy she's brought to me; to think of the danger of that moment. But thank God she got saved. My wife glimpsed her in a moment and dove into the pool, cover-up and all, and she lifted our firstborn up to a place where she would be safe. She was in danger but her mother saved her. And that's exactly what your heavenly Father did for you. See, you and I by birth were in danger; the kind of danger where if you think about it, it should make you feel anxious. That by nature, we set our eyes and directed our lives towards things that weren't God. They weren't always sex, drugs, and rock and roll but we were so committed to our schooling or our sports careers or our first job or some relationship that we focused all of our attention and our greatest love on that and we turned our backs on God. And if a person dies who is not seeking God and treasuring God and trusting in God, guess what they don't get? God! We were this close to dying without God but then he saved us.

The word "righteous," if you're taking notes, simply means something that's alright with God. Here's my definition for mercy: It's not getting what you deserve. Mercy is one of the words that my kids know better than any other. I'm not sure about you dads out there but my kids love - like adore - playing a game that I call "You mess with the bull." Have you heard of this game before? My kids love to mess with me. Like, I'll be innocently, innocent dad, just brushing his teeth, getting ready, and they'll sneak in with their little ninja socks and wind up - whack! And

spank their father! Now, I know these days they say, like dads probably shouldn't spank their kids but are kids allowed to spank their parents? I'm not sure exactly what's happening but if you mess with the bull, you get the horns. So I put the toothbrush down, I tear off after them, I grab them, I pin them down, I've got my knees on their arms and I get out all 10 fingers because it's about to get real and what do my kids scream? "Daddy, have mercy!" And since I'm their pastor, I say, "What's mercy?" And they say, "It's getting a gift you don't deserve." And I say, "That's grace." And they say, "No, no, no, Daddy. It's not getting the punishment you deserve." And I say, "Why would I do that?" And they say, "Daddy, because God had mercy on you." Smart kids, huh? And they're right. He saved us not because we deserved it, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy; because God is not just about justice. Our sins, there are so many, but God's mercy is so much more.

He repeats the idea: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior." There's a whole bunch of Bible words in here but let me focus on two: The word "washing" and the word "rebirth." Washing, in this context, is just another way to talk about baptism. And rebirth, or being born again, is the Bible's fancy way of saying getting a new kind of life from God. So Paul says here that when God wants to rescue someone from danger, he can do it through the washing, through baptism, because that baptism is a washing of rebirth; it gives you a new kind of life. I always think of it this way: When you were born the first time, your mother did the work and she pushed you into a whole new kind of life. You opened your eyes and everything was different and it's kind of the same with God. When you're born again, when he gives you new life with Jesus, you open your eyes and everything is different. When your sins are washed away, when you start to realize that God doesn't just love righteous people but he loves real sinners, everything looks different. The way you see yourself is different. Before, maybe you bought the world's teaching that you're so great and you're so wonderful and you're a good person and you never do anything wrong and you deserve a break today and you're worthy and you're enough. And then you see God and you realize, you know, no. No, I do stuff I shouldn't do and that's not alright with God. And sometimes, I know better and that's not alright with God so maybe I don't deserve a better place. And yet, when your eyes are opened, you don't just see yourself in a new kind of way; you see God in a new kind of way. Not as some stern judge up in heaven waiting to send lightning bolts down on sinners but a father of crazy compassion, a God who's so patient. A God who sent his one and only son as a pure gift because he loves people who simply don't deserve it. And once you have that kind of life, then everything's different. Then the way you see relationships or money or marriage or divorce or sex or your career or the purpose of your existence is brand new. Your eyes are opened because you've been washed and that washing gives you a new kind of life.

I love how my favorite Christian artist, Christopher Powers, depicted this. He made a picture that looks like this; that when God pours out the Holy Spirit generously - the Holy Spirit's the dove in this picture - when he comes flying into your heart, he scatters the darkness and you see. Like the song "Amazing Grace" says, how sweet the sound. You know, I once was blind but now I see. I see the cross of Jesus. I know that it's for me; I know I'm not the exception to his promise that sins are forgiven. I know that I have life with God because he's the God of mercy and I've been born again through his son.

And this, brothers and sisters, is why we have to clap at baptisms. I'm not sure if you've been to many churches before but every church has a different way of talking about the washing of rebirth. I kind of grew up in a church where everyone just sat and stared. And when I read this passage, it just doesn't seem right anymore. He saved us through the washing! If I told you the church lobby was through the back doors, you'd go through the doors to get to the lobby. So when Paul says salvation is through the washing, he means you go through baptism to get saved, which means one of the doors to get to God, to escape the danger of your past, present, and future sins is baptism. And if that's happening, if God is giving new life, if he's washing sins away and connecting people into his family, how could we stare? No, we have to celebrate because God is giving the kind of life that matters in the end; a new life through the Holy Spirit through Jesus his Son. God saved us, not because of righteous things, but by his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit.

And now here's what that means for you. Verse seven is Paul's last verse we're going to cover today. He concludes: "So that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." You think you could write down five definitions in one minute? Alright, let's try. "Justified" is a word that means declared not guilty. If I try to justify myself, I'm giving you a bunch of reasons why you shouldn't blame me or think that I'm guilty. Here it says that God justifies us. He gives the big reason, Jesus, why we're not guilty in his sight. He does it by his grace. Grace is getting a gift that you don't deserve; it's the flipside of mercy. You escape the punishment you should get - mercy. You get a gift you never expect - that's grace. The cop pulls you over, 77 in a school zone, and gives you a Kwik Trip gift card, that's grace. Not getting the ticket is mercy and the result is that we become heirs. Heirs, as you probably know, are people who are chosen to get something good; often connected to a death, like the death of Jesus. We're heirs who have the hope, which isn't a wish or a want. A hope, in the Bible, is a for sure future and it's not just any hope; it's the hope of eternal life, which is my favorite one. It means to be with God forever. Whoa! So put all those fancy Bible words together and here's what you get: When God saves you - through baptism or through the preaching of the word - you get a new kind of life. And the result is that you're not guilty in God's sight. He doesn't condemn you to hell and he doesn't run away from you in this life. Instead, as pure grace, as an incredible gift, he decides that you get to be an heir and you have a for sure future of seeing God.

And friends, if you can understand all those words, you might get why this is one of the best sections in the whole book. So if I put the chart back up here, how'd you do? Would you be okay with the scantron? No? That's alright; his mercy is so much more. But now you know and I hope you don't forget it because there's this thing I've learned as a Christian, even after all these years, that the Bible is only an amazing, inspiring, life-giving book when I understand what it says. That Christian music only gets to my heart and provides me more than some short-term emotional high if I know what it says. That prayers that people pray for me, they mean the world to me, if I know what it says. So I've learned that worship only comes after "what does this mean?" So I want to encourage you today, when it comes to life and church, when it comes to Bible reading and Christian music, if you would do half as much so you would have time to ask that key question: And what does that mean? You'll tap into the secret of getting the Bible and getting the Bible is what makes the Bible such a good book.

And I want to apply this section of Scripture to a bunch of you who are here today. So let me start with the parents. Hands nice and high in the air; where are my parents here today? Alright, parents, this is very, very important for you. Your children will never love church or the Bible or maybe Jesus unless they know what it means. You can pray with them a thousand nights in a row, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep," and if they don't know what it means for a God to keep their soul - do you, by the way? - the prayer will not bless them; it will be empty religion. And we can make the next generation memorize the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Hallowed be your name? What does that mean? Then we're just praying and God isn't flattered by words we don't get. We can sing the songs and we can give the messages, we can pray the prayers, and when kids are little, we teach them things they don't yet understand but there has to come a point as fast as possible where we pick the time to ask, "And what do you think that means?" Come Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed. What does it mean for a God to bless gifts? What would happen if God didn't bless this food? What does that mean? One of the best spiritual things a parent can do is not just repeat things from the Bible but to remember the "And what does that mean?"

Next, I want to speak to those of you who are scared; who are maybe scared that you have messed things up too badly to have hope with God. If you feel that way after this sermon series, I don't blame you because the book of Titus makes you realize that the things we have done are not always alright with God. I think about this section that talks about what a pastor must be. He must be someone who loves what's good, he must be blameless, he must be self-controlled, he must be holy, he must be disciplined. You older men, the book of Titus said you must be self-controlled, you must be worthy of respect, you must endure your faith and in your love for people. You older women, you must use your words for good and not for harm; not to be devils who tear people down with your gossip but to be Christians who build people up with your words. You young women must not get things backwards in hot pursuit of a career, neglecting the people you vowed to love and gave life to. You young men must be self-controlled; you can't do what all your buddies do. When you read the book of Titus, that God's reputation is at stake, that the way that we live either makes God look like a bozo or he looks like the best, man, you really stop thinking that you're a great person.

And some of you might start wondering if you're a person who's even close to God? It happens every month here at our church family that someone does something they've never done before and maybe for the first time, the question comes, "Am I saved?" If I really had faith, God, why would I do that? If I really followed you, why would I keep doing that? So if you're scared, if you doubt that God is with you right now, let me read just three words: He saved us. He saved us. Not because of righteous things we had done but because of his mercy. These are the most beautiful words in the whole world for a sinner like me and for people like you. He's not Santa; he's Jesus. He's not making a list and checking it twice so be good for goodness sake. He's not into karma, Ten Commandments, five pillars, or general morality, just try your best. He saves people who don't deserve it and so you don't have to be afraid. And you don't have to be scared. And you don't have to minimize the things you have done. You can confess them honestly because God saves people because of his mercy. So we can confess it in this place; we don't have to deny it to each other. Our sins, there are so many, and they're so great but thank God, thank God, his mercy is so much more.

Next up, I want to speak to those of you who are searching. You know, some of you do not have a lot of peace in your life, which to most people on our planet would sound insane. If you're like 99 percent of the people in our church, or people who connect with us on Time of Grace, you are part of the one percent of the global population. How many of you drove to church today? How many of you had climate controlled atmosphere in the vehicle you drove in today? How many of you have a computer in your pocket right now while you listen to me talk? Yeah, how many of you threw out food in the past month? Yeah, like the world would look at us and they'd say, "Well, obviously you're happy. You must be so content with your life!" But that's not the way the soul works and this passage has such a beautiful answer for people who are searching for a new life. What we need is not another like, another car, another Netflix show, another song, another kiss, another hookup, another party, another purchase, another outfit, another Christmas. What we need is rebirth; a whole new kind of life. A life where our greatest happiness is not found in stuff but in seeking God. Like fixing our eyes on him, closing our eyes and trying to imagine how glorious he must be and then reminding ourselves that because of Jesus, God is here and God is holy and in his presence, we find this spiritual strength that nothing else can give. And I want to tell you today, if you trust in Jesus, that vision that you see in your mind is true because you're not locked up in a place far from God. No, Paul said it this way: Having been justified by his grace that we're declared not guilty in the courtroom of God and it's a totally free gift from Jesus. That we have the right today to seek him, to see his face, and to know eternal life is not for other people; it's for us as people. So don't believe the lie that one more thing is going to give you the life you're looking for. What your soul was created to seek was God. And because you're justified, you have him.

And finally, I want to speak to those of you who are suffering. When I prepared my notes for today, I actually wrote with all caps lock on and six asterisks next to it, "Feel the burden." Mike, feel the burden of all the people you've counseled this week because suffering people, they know that life is not a joke. If one of your kids is battling cancer, if you're trying to figure out life after his passing, if you've been depressed or anxious for 10 years and 500 church services hasn't fixed it, if you're scared for one of your friends, your brother, your sister, your suicidal loved one, if you know that cancer, it doesn't play favorites, it just picks really good people, then you know that suffering is no joke because I know that the pain of this life can take away some of the things that I love and some of the things that you love but there's nothing that happens in this life that can touch that. God with us, forever.

So brothers and sisters, if you're suffering, remember this - that when Jesus ran out of the grave, he gave you a living hope, a future that can't be touched or taken away. And I know that's true because I read the best part of the Bible. Here's what it says: 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, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. That's what this says. And now you know what this means.

Let's pray.

Oh, God, thank you so much for your word. Thank you for these words. For those of us who are searching or scared or suffering, for those of us who want to be good parents and we want to find

the joy and peace you promise in this book, thank you for writing down these words. Thank you for packing them all together into one paragraph; that we could just fix our eyes on a few sentences and find everything that our souls need.

God, I pray for everyone who is here today. I pray for parents; that they would be wise in the way they disciple their children. I pray that they would not rush those moments but would slow down to meditate and to chew on your word so they could taste and see that you are so good and that the next generation would grow up thinking that whatever sin has to offer, it is nothing compared to you. I pray for everyone here today who is guilty and feels it; everyone who's under the assault of the Father of Lies to think that they're too unworthy and too undeserving to be loved and liked by you. Scatter that lie, God. Kick the devil to the curb and fill hearts with a peace that comes from seeing Jesus, the Savior of the world.

And I pray for all of us who are searching, God, for a better life in the midst of this pain. Help us to fix our eyes - like you gave me that moment this past week - to see you in all of your glory and to breathe and have a satisfied heart. It's what all of us crave and, Father, it's what you give by your mercy and your grace. Thank you for hearing the prayers of your people. We know that we're your children; the heirs that you have chosen and we pray boldly today in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. And all God's people said, "Amen."