

NOT WHAT WE USED TO BE!

Titus 3:3-7

One of our favorite pastimes is trying to impress one another by telling people what wonderful things we've accomplished.

We enjoy telling people how good we are.

One place that won't stand up is when we stand before God—at judgment.

God won't be impressed with great things we've accomplished! Scripture refers to message of salvation as "the Gospel"—*good news*.

Before we can understand how good the "good news" is, we must understand how bad the "bad news" is.

Just how bad off were we before we received "good news?"

When our first child was a toddler, Helen was talking to her one day about God and a few simple spiritual concepts.

She happened to mention that "Everybody does bad things."

Our daughter responded: "I don't do bad things!"

Helen answered: "Well, yeah, *everybody* does sometimes."

Deanna responded, "But mommy, I don't *want* to do bad things! We may not *want* to do bad things. But we all struggle with that problem.

Before coming to Christ, *we didn't have much to brag about!*

Our life was marked by foolishness, disobedience, and self-delusion.

While at our worst, we tried to convince ourselves we're pretty good!

While rebelling against God,

we kept comparing ourselves to ***the wrong standard***.

What IS the standard?

Most people use 1 of **2 standards man proposes. Man's scales:**

1. The balance scale—"God has a balance scale. He piles good deeds on one side, bad on other. If good outweighs bad, we pass!"

2. The relative scale: Beat your neighbor!

"I'm not so bad. Look at how my neighbors live!"

The problem is we use **the wrong standard!**

What standard *should* we use to evaluate our condition?

What really matters is **GOD'S SCALE!** He sets the **standard!**

God measures with an absolute scale!

God Himself *IS* the standard.

He requires absolute perfection! Nothing less will do!

Problem with man's scales: **Standard** is man-centered;

it rationalizes fact that everyone fails sometimes. *That's the problem!*

We're not comparing ourselves to failing people.

We're measuring ourselves beside a perfect God who *never* fails, Who is holy; just, perfect, and requires the same from us.

God's standard calls for absolute perfection.

So how are you doing? NOBODY makes it!

Anyone who breaks a law (*even 1!*), pays penalty as a *law-breaker!*

"But Judge, look at all the laws I obey. I only broke ONE!"

On the basis of **God's standard**, we all have a problem:

No one makes it! We may not *WANT* to do bad things.

But we're all trapped under sin's control.

J. Vernon McGee's game: "**Jumping to Catalina**—No one jumps 26 mi. to Catalina! *Nobody* makes it... Some people out jump me. But...(they) won't make Catalina." **All come short.**

Before we can appreciate what Christ has done for us, we have to remember what He saved us *from*. B.C., we were in sad shape!

OUR REBELLIOUS PAST 3:3 "*For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions & pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.*"

Picture of our condition when we came to God is pretty grim.

There's no hope in ME! What **I** am will never cut it with God.

Paul points out that we should be kind to neighbors (3:2)

because we used to be like them!

It helps us be considerate to godless pagans when we realize we were once like them—still would be—but for God's grace.

Look at what *used to be* true of us: **We were...**

1. **foolish**, 2. **disobedient**,

3. **deceived**, 4. **enslaved**.

We were slaves, not just to those awful passions and pleasures that all those nasty people "out there" live for

We were *enslaved* by things **WE** desire out of life,

by things **we** delight in—things we enjoy and find pleasure in.

Before Christ came into our lives, those desires and things that bring us joy, made us their slaves. We lived for THEM!

We went through life ...

5. **Doing bad things** 6. **Jealous**

7. **Hated** 8. **Hating each other** Not pretty picture!

Lives marked by foolish thinking, disobeying God's standards, deluding ourselves, and hating each other!

Beatriz: "Helen, before I came to Christ I was *always* angry!"

Until *Christ* changes our life, we live self-centered—looking out for #1!

We become angry people, judging everybody else!

We have "*a chip on our shoulder!*" And it's a *BIG* one!

If you doubt that, look at the way people DRIVE!

That should convince anyone how bad our problem is!

We were *the opposite of everything God wants us to be!*

Instead of being submissive, we were rebels

Instead of trying to do good, we're predisposed to evil.

Instead of loving each other, we hated one another.

Fortunately, story doesn't end there! God didn't leave us that way!

God changed all that!

GOD'S PRESENT TRANSFORMATION 3:4-7

What a difference the kindness and love of God has made!

He's taken the ugliness; made something beautiful out of our lives.

That's another reason we ought to live a different lifestyle!

We're motivated by the change God made in our life!

THE FACT OF OUR TRANSFORMATION 4-5a

"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us ..."

Easy to miss essence of sentence: **"But ... God ... saved us!"**

He changed what we used to be and made us new creatures.

When did it happen? “When kindness and love of God were revealed.”

“God demonstrated His love for us in that *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!*” Rom. 5:8

MEANS OF OUR TRANSFORMATION 5b-6 “*He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy...*”

Why did God save us?

He did NOT save us because of our good works!

He didn’t base His gift on our good works; *we didn’t have any!*

We were characterized by evil—opposite of what God wants

He DID save us because of HIS MERCY

We’re saved **by grace**, through trust in Christ and His work.

God gets all the glory.

David Robinson in *USA Weekend*: Something different about his life. He focused on “*grace*.” He defined it: “***kindness given to someone who doesn’t deserve it.***” He made clear that’s what God has given him. That’s what God did for *us all*.

He showed kindness to people who don’t deserve it!

How did God save us?

3 THINGS GOD DID FOR US TO SAVE US:

1. He saved us by cleansing of the Holy Spirit 3:5b-6

“He saved us ... by washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

Spirit is poured out abundantly on us to wash us, to cleanse us from everything that contaminates us. Every stain is washed away!

2. He saved us by giving us new life and a fresh start

3:5b-6 *“He saved us ... by the washing of **regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit** ...”*

Only way to holiness: to be born all over again, given a new start.

3. He saved us by Christ’s completed work **3:6**

“He saved us ... through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

It’s not *our* works that produce salvation; it’s *HIS* work!

Paul tells us: GOD DID IT!

What *the Father* has done = loved and saved us

What *Holy Spirit* has done = cleansed us; gave us new life

What *the Son (Christ)* has done = died to save us.

IT’S ALL ABOUT GOD!! No mention of what *we’ve* done.

What did WE do? *We’ve done NOTHING!*

We’ve done ***nothing*** to earn salvation, or even help God out!

“Church is only organization that has as indispensable prerequisite for membership that the candidate not be worthy to belong.”

We’re saved by God’s grace

We don’t deserve His kindness.

We have nothing to brag about—It’s His work! We enjoy *benefits*.

Change in our life shouldn’t make us proud; it should make us grateful!

The Message: *“It was all His doing; we had nothing to do with it. He gave us a good bath, and we came out of it new people, washed inside and out by the Holy Spirit.”*

PURPOSE OF OUR TRANSFORMATION 7

“So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”

**God’s purpose: to make us His heirs,
to give us the hope of eternal life**

As members of God’s family, we *already* ARE His heirs.

Reception of our inheritance is yet *future*.

Legal position we have as heirs, is consistent with hope God gives us of receiving eternal life.

Do you have that hope this morning?

Do you know that if you were to die today, you would go to be with Him?

That’s what grace is about.

God has given us what we could never earn for ourselves, as a gift.

He asks that we stop trying to do it ourself—that we trust His Son, that we take the gift of eternal life He wants to give us free!

Tit 3:3-7 Cause of our godly lifestyle: *God changed our lives!*

Logical implication: **change should be visible in our lifestyle.**

Message shows why we ought to live different lifestyle than others.

We used to live the same way as everybody else. We were no better.

God didn’t save us because we were better than everyone else. He saved us **to demonstrate what He can do! *He transformed us.***

When people mistreat us, when they act like pagans around us, we ought to remember what God saved us *from*.

*We should remember: “**There, but for the grace of God, go I!**”*

When impressed with ugliness of our society, pause a moment, **remind yourself:** *“that’s what God saved me from!”*

It ought to produce gratitude!

Thank God for what He’s done in your life.

Ask God to continue work in your life to make difference obvious. This may sound strange—*you’ve never experienced change in your life.*

This isn’t a gift for a privileged elite.

God has promised eternal life to anyone who calls on Him

He only asks that we **stop trusting our efforts to earn eternal life, and receive gift** He wants to give us.

God has accepted His Son’s death as payment in full, for all the wrongs we’ve committed.

His life is that valuable! **He waits for us to trust Him.**

God has taken people filled with rebellion and hatred, and made something beautiful of our lives. *That’s why we’re different!*

Has He done that in your life?

Have YOU been transformed?

Are YOU resting in Him?

What difference has it made in your life?

Do you have cause to thank God: *“there, but for the grace of God, go I?”*

—cause to celebrate because you DON’T go there anymore!

1 Pet 3:15—*“Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you”* => **My Hope** with Billy Graham training Sat a.m. in the chapel. **My hope**—what’s the basis for our hope? Are we sharing that hope with neighbors who have no hope?