

Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 30/1/2022

Series: "Living Godly lives in a godless culture" Part 10

Titus 3 v 3-7 "When God shows up everything changes"

Scripture references from the ESV

Titus 3:3-7 ³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

NB Today's scripture reading in church was the whole letter of Titus (3 chapters). For obvious reasons,

there isn't room to include this but it would be beneficial to read the full letter for yourself.

When we start a big project, it can feel overwhelming and perhaps make us despair of ever completing it. However, when someone who knows what they're doing and has the skills to help us turns up, then everything changes. It might be that, as we read the Bible, we need something like that to happen for us.

When we read the Bible, and start to measure our lives against the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can begin to despair. We may wonder whether we will ever become what God commands us to be, and question whether we are making any progress in becoming more like Jesus. In this situation, we long for someone with the right skills to come along side and begin the work of change in us. **Titus 3:3-7** tells us this has already happened.

Someone has shown up and everything has changed for us

Last week, we saw that to seek the welfare of our communities means living lives of submission and love. (**Titus 3:1-2** see p4). The challenge for us is how do we live out the life spoken of in these verses.

Sin has curved us in on ourselves so we find that it is hard:

- to submit to the things that go against our wills, likes and preferences. We're happy to submit if it suits us, but not so happy to submit to those in authority with whom we disagree.
- to love unconditionally as the Bible calls us to. We're happy to love those who love us but not so happy to love without expecting anything in return, and to love those who hate us or are unlovely.

Sin has made us want to be in control of our own life, free from constraints that we don't like, and only loving those who love us. We react in the same way towards God for the same reason - sin has curved us in on ourselves.

- We naturally find God's commands restrictive because our wills are in rebellion to him
- We find it hard to love God first and foremost because so many other things call for our affections

If we really stop and think about it, we have to concede that

**A life of submission and love both to God and man is impossible -
unless something changes in us.**

Titus 3:3-7 not only shows us that this change has happened but also how it has happened and how we can apply it so that we can continue to change. We are people curved in on ourselves because of sin, but we can live outward looking lives of submission and love. When human life is spiralling out of control into destruction, the only hope is the gracious intervention of God.

When God shows up, everything changes

We need to consider two contrasting influences:

1. **An ignorance of God that leads to a life of destruction (v3 above).** We see a sequence of events here.

Foolishness (in Bible terms not knowing God and living as if he doesn't exist cf **Psalm 14:1** see p4) leads to a godless life of sin. Where there is no knowledge of God, sin rules over the lives of individuals. (**See also Romans Ch 1-3** in

your Bible). This foolishness (ignorance of God) leads to disobedience, which in turn leads to lives that are led astray because there is no restraint on them. Going on though, we see that there is a restraint because the sinful life leads to slavery. That slavery is to sinful passions that cause us to act in ways we cannot seem to avoid, in anger or hatred, or perhaps in putting our life of ease before knowledge of our God. Finally, this leads to envy and malice, and that poison of envy and malice has created a culture of hate.

It all begins with ignorance of God. In his goodness, God does restrain evil so that the world is not as bad as it could be if he left us completely to ourselves. This is his common grace, but what these verses perfectly describe is our human culture, generally. It is not a pretty picture. Yet take note of how **v3** begins – **We ourselves were once..**

Paul shows us that for Christians something has happened.

At one time, we **WERE** the people of **v3**, but now we **ARE** the people of **vv1-2**.

Now, we **ARE** a people who live a life of submission and love.

Now, we **ARE** a people who live a self-controlled life.

We are not perfect and there is still room for growth in those areas but **v3** is not a description of Christians because

We are not what we once were

Why is that? The second influence in the lives of humanity is

2. The miracle of God that leads to a life of beauty (vv4-7). These verses show all that God has done, starting with the fact that **God showed up as our Saviour.**

When life on earth was out of control and heading for destruction, **God appeared**, shining the light of his own existence and character for humanity to see. He did this first for Adam and Eve, after they had plunged humanity into the destructive path of sin. God came to them and broke into their lives with a message of grace that promised salvation. From then on God continually broke into human life with gracious promises and acts of salvation, until supremely he came in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Still today, he breaks into our lives by his Spirit so that our eyes are opened and we see the reality of all that God is.

Because God has shown up in our lives, everything has changed. Paul shows that:

- a) **God saves us** – we don't save ourselves. We can't ever put ourselves right with God. God does it all
- b) **God makes us alive** – he regenerates us, renewing us and changing us to the core. How?
- c) **God lavishly pours out his Spirit on us** – thus by his Spirit implanted in us, we can know God personally and respond to him with faith and repentance
- d) **God justifies us** – the Lord Jesus Christ puts us right with God by taking away our sin and clothing us with his own righteousness, resulting in our justification as we put our faith in Christ.
- e) **God gives us an inheritance** – because we are his adopted, blood purchased children we inherit eternal life but over and above that, we get to inherit God himself.

The Lord Jesus Christ becomes ours for all eternity to the joy of our own souls

All that God does comes about '**through Jesus Christ our Saviour**' (v6)

Without Jesus there would be no salvation, no new life, no renewal of our lives, no being filled with the Spirit, no justification before a holy God and no inheritance. We only have all of this because Jesus, appearing in human flesh, broke into the chaos of human life on earth, and by his Spirit, broke into our personal chaos and destruction. What can we learn about God from this? God is good, generous to all people and full of loving kindness to all (v4).

- In Christ, our God embodies the characteristics that we are commanded to live out (**Titus 3:1-2** see p4).

Jesus submitted himself to the constraints of humanity and of his culture. He submitted to death – even death on a cross. He did all this whilst

- speaking evil of no one
- avoiding quarrelling (he did confront people but not in a quarrelsome way)
- acting with perfect gentleness and showing perfect courtesy towards all people

When Jesus breaks into our lives, he communicates the very qualities we need to live out the commands given to us.

He does this through the Holy Spirit at work in us. We are not what we once were because God has broken into our world and into our lives with his grace to change us, to fill us with himself and remake us into the image of his Son.

We are not what we once were, and therefore we can now do what we are commanded to do.

• **Meeting God in his word is essential for us if we are to live the life commanded here** – the destructive life (v3) resulting from ignorance of God is in the past for believers. We have the assurance that God is changing us, and he will complete what he has begun. However, we need to work with God in this process of Biblical change and to ask

- 1) **What** am I currently facing as a result of the evil of my own indwelling sin and the evil of suffering that comes from external circumstances?
- 2) **How** do I respond to the evil in my own heart and to the suffering from external circumstances?

These questions uncover what is happening in our hearts, and give us the opportunity for self-diagnosis. Then ask

- 3) **What** is God currently saying to me from his word?

God breaks into our lives, speaking into them with his word. Sometimes he may shine a spotlight on a particular text, or use something from a sermon or a Christian book, or perhaps use a Christian friend to open up a truth from scripture for us. We need to be alert to what God is saying to us through his word, then we need to believe it and apply it to our lives. One way to do that is to pray that word back to God asking him:

- To give us faith to believe the promise or
- For forgiveness where he has rebuked us or
- To give us strength to do what he commands or
- To assure of the love he has revealed through his word at that particular moment

As we exercise faith in God's word, so we experience the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. One reason many Christians lead defeated lives is that they don't rightly engage with God in his word. Since that is where we meet God, we need to be

familiar with the Bible and particularly with the Gospel. Paul is preaching the Gospel into the lives of these believers, seeking to motivate them to the life of submission and love that he has commanded.

There is no greater motive than the love of God and when we know deep down that God loves us:

- we will gladly submit to him and to all his commands
- we will gladly love others, laying down our rights to meet their needs, even those who hate us.

As we meditate on the Gospel, we meet a Saviour who submitted himself to the cruellest death in order to secure our salvation, and who did so out of the deepest love anyone has ever had for us.

When we meet this Saviour in that way, when he shows up in our lives as the lover of our souls, our lives can't help but be transformed because

when God shows up, everything changes.

Titus 3:1-2 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Psalm 14:1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is none who does good.