

Titus 3:4-7

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[0 : 0 0] just a look for a wee while this morning at Titus chapter 3 verses 4 to 7 verses 4 to 7 but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life first thing I'd like us to notice here in verse 4 is after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared the kindness and love of God and some of you will remember that last Lord's Day morning we were looking at Psalm 107 and verse 43 the last verse which reads whoso is wise and will observe these things even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord we have the loving kindness of the Lord at the end of Psalm 107 we have the kindness and love of the Lord here in Titus in these two parts of scripture that are about a thousand years apart

David himself lived and even if whether or not David specifically wrote Psalm 107 it might have been somebody else who penned it we don't have a title at the beginning of it so we don't know exactly which of the psalmists whether it was Asaph or somebody else but David lived from about or reigned from about 1010 BC to about 970 BC or then about so about a thousand years before Christ Titus is written about in the 40s, 50s maybe 60s AD so you're looking at a full thousand years between the writing of the one and the writing of the other and yet there is the same characteristics of God coming through the kindness and love the loving kindness of the Lord we have the continuity here without wanting to go too much into alliterations here in our opening looking at these verses I'd like us to recognise continuity, context and contrast that will come to those first of all the continuity as I've mentioned the loving kindness of the Lord despite the vast years that have elapsed a thousand years a whole millennium between David and the Psalms and Paul's letter to Titus here

God has not changed and he does not change his characteristics are the same his love is the same his kindness is the same and as it was the same to Titus and as it was the same to Paul and as it is the same to David so it is the same to us we think oh two thousand years since the since the New Testament was written two thousand years since the time of Christ oh such a long time so much has changed God has not changed to him and his but the blink of an eye his but is yesterday when it is past he continues the same yesterday today and forever whatsoever it is that he accomplished or did or caused people to undertake then he is perfectly capable of doing again now in the present age changing people's hearts changing nations bringing about such such phenomenal changes in a nation's life in a nation's spiritual condition he is perfectly capable of doing that with less than lifting his little finger just as he was thousands of years ago because he has not changed we have the kindness and love of God our Saviour here in this verse 4 just as we have the loving kindness of the Lord which the wise will understand at the end of Psalm 107 thousand years and God does not change two thousand years since then and God does not change we have the continuity which we can rely upon in the living God secondly then we have the context every text is a context and here we have in verse 4 the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared what is that coming after that after what what we see in verses 2 and 3 the reasons why

Paul is talking about the kindness and love of God is because we have made it we ourselves also were sometimes verse 3 foolish disobedient deceived serving diverse lusts and pleasures living in malice and envy hateful and hating one another and he says because you know that's what we ourselves were like you shouldn't verse 2 speak evil of anybody else you can't judge anybody else you can't condemn anybody else you can't say how wicked and evil they are for we ourselves were sometimes foolish and disobedient we might understand was it stupid and illogical we weren't consistent we were self-absorbed we were deceived and gullible in the sense of of just believing whatever the world says and serving diverse different lusts and pleasures now the word serving is the sense of being a slave to in the sense of being addicted we do things that we are addicted to because it gives us a certain pleasure but the more we become addicted to it the less and less the pleasure gets and the more it just becomes a need just so that we can cope we are no longer it is no longer serving us for our pleasure we are slaves to it and this is the sense it's serving diverse lusts and pleasures we were slaves to these things in the sense we could not break out of them living in malice and envy whatever somebody else had we wanted if we had certain ambitions and somebody else was an obstacle we hated them and they hated us right back we were hate filled and hating one another what is this if not a description of practical atheism now I'm not saying all atheists are necessarily nasty horrible people but it is a description of life without God it is a description of how mankind is without the gracious influence of the Lord we were sometimes foolish and disobedient stupid and illogical because we cannot see the facts and the evidence of the world around us we are illogical there is nothing more illogical than an atheist who will deny the scientific evidence of what God has done in creation who will cling to falsehoods rather than admit the truth who will be completely inconsistent in the application of supposed equality or rights or whatever just so long as their own prejudices are preserved this is the disobedience the illogicality the deceived gullible serving diverse lusts and pleasures living in malice and envy this is a description of life without God it is a description of what mankind is like and even those who are themselves

Christians scratch the surface myself included to my shade scratch the surface and the old man and the old nature is never far beneath for me it's traffic and driving that brings out the worst other people that are in the way block up the exits won't let me overtake whatever and the old nature comes to the surface very quickly malice hatred envy all these things I want to get ahead this guy's blocking me yes one is a Christian one ought to be better than these things and yes you have to ask for the grace of God to overcome these things everybody's got their different sins and problems and so on that's one of the many for mine but it's just an example scratch the surface the old nature isn't far away the devil is defeated but he's only just outside the perimeter he's looking for any chinks in the armor he is outside the fortress but if he sees you left a window open or a door or anything you'll be in there and the minute he sees you entertaining a pet soon he's in there right away the old nature this is what we ourselves

[8 : 43] Paul said were like and we don't have to go too deep to find it it can bubble up to the surface so readily this is the context the context in which the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared and because this is the context we see the contrast the contrast between ourselves what we were like in all our unattractive old human nature and what God is like in his purity and holiness and patience and love because God sees us in our need and he pities us just as if somebody sees the misery of an addict shooting themselves up or whatever or do they have disgust or fear or do they have compassion think of the hell that person must be living in in their chains of addiction

God sees the compassion he feels the compassion he sees the need the kindness and love of God appeared God our Saviour toward man appeared this is the condition in which we were and instead of turning away in disgust he looked on us in love he looked on us in mercy and he dealt with us now for example you were and I were to say to you well imagine somebody in your home who was let's say doubly incontinent and couldn't wash themselves or feed themselves and you had to do everything for them you had to dress them you had to make sure they were able to sleep at night and if they woke up screaming in the middle of the night you had to go and think oh my goodness this sounds like a nightmare couldn't imagine looking after anyone like that and then if you say yes but imagine this is your newborn baby and then suddenly oh yeah well that's different because it's weed you know that's why it needs change and it needs fed it needs everything yeah so we think of it because it's a baby and it needs help and it's our baby and we love it so of course the fact that they need doubly incontinent and they need washed and fed and changed and put to bed and we have to get up in the middle of the night and then wakes up screaming and yeah but that's just part of dealing with babies and so the complete difference between what is something in abstract and something in person because if I were to say to you now imagine somebody coming into your home who's got all these things wrong and needs all this attention and say oh things are the don't know if I can deal with that but then if it ends up being a baby that you bring into your home own baby bring in a home from hospital whatever yes it's not exactly fun being winging up in the middle of the night and all these things but we do it and we don't think twice about it this is how

God looks at us we think oh who would want to care about for us and we're so filled with filth and enmity and malice and hatred and all these horrible things how could God ever care about for us God looks at his infant children as it were and he sees them in their need and he beholds them with love and after that the kindness and love of God our saviour toward man appeared it is how he views us we do not view one another with such compassion but he views us in such need and such mercy the other week when I was coming back from the high induction story it was quite a wild night the time was getting home and rain was blowing and gusts and it was pitch black and it was solely the night all the lights were out and all the villages and everything and coming up down the road there opposite of Carragir there I just thought to myself a pitch black night blowing again with the rain driving across the road so quite a wild right driving along I thought what I have to do if suddenly I saw the headlights somebody coming out into the road maybe caked in mud or bleeding or wounded and I thought well I would hope I would stop and I'd help them and you know they'd be in need obviously but I have to admit my first thought would be absolute terror

I would think change I hope nobody does jump out on the road and flag me down at night like this because it's all kind of spooky and if they're all looking a bit scary I wouldn't know what to do but then if you stop and think well if they're flagging you down it's because they're in need you're the only car on the road at this time of night it's bucketing rain you must be soaked through if they're caked in mud they've always had some horrible accident if they're bleeding something terrible has happened to them this is a person that needs help and they're asking you for help and when you think all these logical things you think well yeah okay that's what I've got to do I'll have to stop and I'll have to help them I was really hoping nobody would jump out of the car in the middle of the night in the driving rain a stormy night because my first reaction would be alarm I'd be scared and I'd be like oh James who on earth is this person jumping out are they going to try and murder me or whatever and we think the worst because that's our human nature we don't stop and see this person is actually somebody neat this person looks a bit scary this person maybe looks a bit filthy and maybe hasn't washed off the dirt because we haven't been able to if we see somebody in a scary situation do we have compassion or do we initially have revulsion or disgust or fear or whatever well we know what our human nature feels but the more we are filled with

God's spirit the more we are washed and renewed and cleansed by him the more we become like him the kindness and love of God sees us in our contrast our contrast of what we are like and what God is like thank God there is such a difference to how he reacts to us in our need and misery and filth compared to how we would be inclined to react to those in similar conditions Paul says we ourselves were sometimes foolish disobedient deceived hateful and hating one another but after that the kindness and love of God our saviour toward man appeared God has pity on us he has kindness and love now notice it says God our saviour okay well that's a common enough reference for example in Jude verse 25 you know to the only wise God our saviour he glory and majesty dominion and power both now and ever likewise and we're turning back a couple of pages in first

[15 : 28] Timothy in chapter 1 verse 1 Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ chapter 2 verse 3 of first Timothy this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our saviour we think well just a minute truly Jesus is our saviour okay God is our saviour too mate how many saviours do we actually have if we go back to the beginning of Titus chapter 1 we see verse 3 but having due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our saviour and at verse 4 to Titus my own son after the common grace grace mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our saviour yeah yeah that's right Jesus Jesus is our saviour we can't really think so much God is our saviour Christ is our saviour how many saviours do we have chapter 2 verse 10 again not purloining but showing all good fidelity that they may adorn the doctrine of

God our saviour in all things and at verse 30 looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ now reference here in verse 4 chapter 3 to God our saviour and here a little bit further on verse 6 which he shed in us abundantly through Jesus Christ our saviour is it two saviours is it one saviour what have we got here 1st John chapter 4 tells us this at verse 14 we have seen and do testify that the father sent the son to be the saviour of the world if we have only one saviour and we have repeated references not only to Jesus Christ our saviour but to God our saviour and there's not two saviours there's only one saviour then by all these different verses we learn unequivocally Jesus Christ is God now I think well yeah we knew that you know second verse of the trinity and all that but there are plenty of people out there who say no no no

Jesus Christ isn't God he's less than God he's the son of God but he's not the same as God plenty of people who may or may not on occasion come round your door and bring a doctrine that Jesus Christ is less than God he's not the whole God Jesus Christ is God Christ is the saviour God our saviour Jesus Christ our saviour we have only one saviour and if that saviour is both God and the Lord Jesus Christ at one and the same time then by definition Jesus Christ is God he's not less than God he's not lower than God he is God incarnate God God in the flesh God in person and anyone who tries to tell yes yes but he's not the same as God he's less than God if he is not God then the sacrifice that he makes upon the cross is merely the sacrifice of a man a very good man perhaps a perfect man even but a man nonetheless which means that the most he can ever pay for with that perfect sacrifice is his own sin well oh yeah but he doesn't have any sin okay what can he purchase with the sacrifice of one man let's say at most the life of the salvation of one other man in whose place he might pay his sacrifice for a woman but if he is

God then that sacrifice is sufficient for all his people in every age and every nation in every time if he is man it becomes limited to one man one man if he is only man but because he is holy man and holy God we have one savior the savior verse 6 through Jesus Christ our savior verse 4 God our savior we've only one savior we don't have two saviors if there is only one savior he is both God and he is the Lord Jesus Christ Christ Christ is God it is part and parcel the fundamental building blocks of our salvation if Jesus Christ be not God we are not saved and anything and any doctrine or philosophy that would diminish the place of Christ would send us all to hell perhaps unwittingly but that is what it would do so after that the kindness and love of God our savior toward man appeared verse 6 which he shed us upon through

Jesus Christ our savior we have one savior not two not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the holy ghost now notice what you don't have in these verses you don't have any reference to faith as such this is a letter being written to one who is assumed is in a state of grace one who is assumed had faith and the people he was teaching and seeking to minister to in the church of Jesus Christ were assumed to have faith there is no mention here of us being saved you know because of through faith but it is by works of righteousness not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the holy ghost it is all about what God has done through his son Jesus

[21 : 22] Christ our faith yes is the instrument the tool that is used the means by which we connect to that which God has done but it is all in all his work not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the holy ghost now this washing of regeneration we made a wee bit of reference to it in the children's address here the sense of it here is one version of the bible puts it in terms of the water of rebirth the washing of regeneration the washing of water but the word Ephesians 5 26 says that he might sanctify and cleanse it that's the church with the washing of water by the word now the sense here is of both the word of God which is the instructing of our souls but the washing of water is a reference undoubtedly to baptism the baptism here the washing of regeneration that's not what causes us to be born again the water on us but it is the symbol of that which God does the sense here the washing the water in the original we've got it translated as washing of regeneration it's not a physical water obviously that regenerates us in any way but God does not mark us with empty signs baptism is meant to signify that which

God himself either will do in the fullness of time or has done if we are in adult baptism and we haven't been baptized before if we are infant baptism then it is testifying to what we trust God will do in the fullness of time either way the sign and the things signified are connected they are not just in isolation God does not want his signs his seals his sacraments to be near empty rituals they are not just a sort of thing we do and go through as a sort of baby naming ceremony or whatever it is meant to connect with the fact of being renewed regenerated born again it is the symbol of the new birth which God promises to bestow upon all who will receive it by faith now you see this regeneration when something is generated like in the word genesis it is the reproduction of it it is the rebirth of it if we are regenerated then we are born again and that is what the water of baptism is a symbol of it is not what actually does it it is a symbol of it but there is an interconnectedness between the two

God does not intend that the two should be in isolation from each other the one should signify and be connected with the other and this is one of the reasons why despite what other parts of the church may think infant baptism is perfectly doctrinally biblical it nothing signifies better the free grace and the complete helplessness of us to do anything to effect our own salvation than the fact that we receive that symbol as helpless infants it is not something we have done or we have said or we have worked for we receive it helplessly as babes in arms and so there is a beautiful picture there of how the grace of God works the washing of regeneration the water of baptism symbolises the regeneration the new birth that God alone is able to do but what is depicted there by regeneration and baptism this is one reason why the church doesn't allow us to be just baptized every other week we have the

Lord's supper on a regular basis twice a year we don't get baptized twice a year and then have it done again and again it is once and for all you are once baptized in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost and the reason for that is because what it's symbolising is that rebirth that new birth now however much I may want to regress back into my childhood I cannot physically go back into my mother's womb and be born physically a second time once I'm out I'm out and there is no way of putting a baby back in again and trying to start again or do it all over again just as the physical birth can only ever be once so the spiritual birth new birth being born again is only ever once that which is the water of baptism symbolising is that once and for all regeneration what is meant by the renewing of the

Holy Ghost is distinct from that because the Lord says the washing and regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost as though they're just sort of two different ways of saying the same thing they're not the washing of regeneration is the once and for all new birth justification you might call the renewing of the Holy Ghost is what we might call sanctification the ongoing process of being made more holy renewing day by day which the Spirit supplies is it is like the shirt that I held up earlier it may be washed a hundred times over the course of life and nature so each time it is washed it is cleansed it's like new again it is refreshed it is renewed now as we are renewed by the Holy Ghost it's not like that's where the shirt isn't a good example but it's not like we're going back to square one it's like each time each layer that we build up when we're renewed by the

[27 : 50] Holy Ghost we are becoming more and more like Christ think of it like a pair of shoes when shoes are new and you first put them on they're tight and sore and they're maybe not very comfortable to walk in and you know you can wear them a wee while and then you take them off and we talk about breaking in those shoes particularly men's shoes which you might have to wear more formal occasions when you have to dress properly and you know after a wee while they get scuffed or whatever so you have to clean them and then that softens up the leather again you wear them again and what happens little by little over the course of time is not that your foot becomes moulded to the shape of the shoe but rather the shoe becomes moulded to the shape of your foot that is how it becomes more comfortable because it is in fact as it softens up it is moulding into the shape of your foot so it becomes more comfortable it becomes a better fit it is no longer hard and tight and sore to get your foot in and feel hard round your feet but the more you wear it and as you clean it and all the wax and the shoe polish and the buffing going in that softens up the leather and it becomes moulded to the shape of your foot think if I may say it reverently think of

God as the foot and think of us as the shoes and when we are made new maybe we don't fit that well with God because we are so completely of the world but little by little as we are slipped on and slipped off the Lord's foot as we walk with him and as we are cleansed and cleaned and renewed and buffed up and shined up and then we become scuffed and dirty again we become moulded to the shape of the divine foot we become more like Christ that is the renewing of the Holy Ghost it's not back to square one each time like snakes and ladders where you suddenly go all the way back again to square one no it is like each time it is building and renewing what has been achieved so far it's like layers being built up as we get like Jacob's ladder nearer and nearer to heaven renewing of the

Holy Ghost which he shed in us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour Christ has given us the Spirit he has poured out the Holy Spirit upon us that's what he said it is expedient for you that I go away if I go not away the comforter will not come to you but if I go away I will send them to you and that's the Holy Spirit which enables us to believe and to trust in Christ which changes our life changes our heart causes us to become more like him he shared that with us abundantly there is no shortage of supply of the Holy Spirit we may be more or less reluctant to receive it we may be more or less keen to engage with the Holy Spirit we may want the world we may prefer be more comfortable in the world but if we are to become like Christ we need that spirit and more and more supply of it which he shared in us abundantly through Christ our

Saviour one Saviour not two that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life justified just as if I never sinned that's what justification is by grace free gift of God we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life I've mentioned in the past an heir is somebody who stands to inherit either an estate or a fortune or money or land or a house or whatever it may be somebody is named as somebody's heir it means that when that person dies their heir will then stand to inherit all the things that are left of them if for example let's say I was a duke then it would mean that when I died my eldest son would become the duke after me or if I was a king then the next eldest son would be a king after me that would be the heir just as Prince Charles is the heir of Queen Elizabeth and Prince

William is the heir of Prince Charles they stand to inherit when somebody else has died now if we are to become heirs it means that somebody is going to die in order for us to inherit now in order for us to inherit the promise Christ has died Christ has died once and for all that's what the new and old testament are about where a testament is there must also necessity be the death of the testator Hebrews chapter 9 so because Christ has died we are now heirs of all that he has laid up in glory but if we are actually to enter in to that there has to be another death unless Christ comes again of course there has to be another death and that's ours flesh and blood doth not inherit the kingdom of God that's what Paul writes to the Corinthians therefore as long as we are here upon this earth we cannot inherit heaven and its glory we are heirs but in order for an heir to inherit the prize and the estate and the glory and the fortune somebody's got to die and in the case of us and the glory and the fortune and the prize that we stand to inherit and of which we are heirs it is we ourselves who must first die if we are to enter into that glory that that's that's not so good is it none of us really wants to die and looks forward that's a bit grim to think about that it's a bit morbid thinking about that but the fact of the matter is we have a God who deals in reality not in myth not in fairy tales not in fortune telling but in reality and the reality of this fallen world is that until and unless

[34 : 18] Christ returns in glory everyone on this earth will eventually die now because we are mortal creatures that is a certainty it is an inevitable fact and there's no point else to know so the question is then given that this must happen to you and me unless Christ returns first in which well case there's plenty else to think about but unless Christ returns first this is a fact so do we want our death to mean something and to earn us something to achieve to purchase something or is all going to be for absolutely nothing is it simply going to be the gateway to a lost eternity or is it going to be the opening of the door to the greatest prize that heaven and earth could ever have laid out for us given that this must happen to you and it must happen to me do you want it to mean something do you want it to be for something do you want it to get you something so often people are concerned with the legacy that they will leave behind what will people say of me when I am gone what will people think of me in this world when I have died never mind about your past consider your future never mind what people will think about you after you have gone think about what you will inherit because you have gone let your death which must be inevitable as is mine unless Christ returns let it be that which will cause you to inherit that that for which if we are in Christ we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life that very hope is the thing that we hold on to it hasn't been realized yet as Paul writes to the Romans we are saved by hope but hope that is seen is not hope for what a man seeth why did he yet hope for faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen but once we die and leave this world behind we pass from time into eternity and it will be either lost eternity an eternal separation from the

Lord or it will be a blessed eternity in which that for which Christ has made us heirs is that which we now inherit no longer the first in line to the throne but now actually sitting with Christ on his throne crowned with that which he gives us the glory the honour the joy but above all the immediate presence of Christ that glory that joy that wonder and prize and inheritance to which we are heirs at present if it will actually going to become ours then the somebody who must die is you and me we must pass from this veil of time that we may inherit that blessed eternity it is because of Christ's death that we are made heirs it will be in our own death in Christ only if we are in

Christ it will be in our own death that we stand to actually inherit that which we have been promised that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life that is what we stand to inherit when you inherit something all that happens is somebody dies and suddenly it's yours you don't work for it you don't earn it you don't amass a certain amount of money to have purchased it if you are an heir you stand to inherit just because somebody dies that somebody for the greatest prize of all that somebody is us you and I when we die if we are in Christ we inherit all the promises that are laid up for us now given that it is inevitable is that not good news well as here in these three four verses verses four to seven here we have the whole gospel in a nutshell we have the continuity of the same God of all eternity from the old testament to thousands of years past and he remains the same in his kindness and love who so is wise he will understand the loving kindness of the Lord we have the context of our own sin and lostness our disgusting filth and old life which God views with compassion we have the context we have the contrast of how the

Lord views us compared to how we view our own sin we have the fact there is one saviour not two and that one saviour is Jesus Christ who is God by whom we are made heirs of this wondrous inheritance that he has laid up for all those that love him being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy we say this let us pray God reaffirm