

Safe! From a Life of Bondage

Titus 3:1-4; Eph 4:17-24

Been awhile since we've been in Titus; Started this ministry year with the theme of Spread the Word, and have been working through Titus in order to understand what the word is that we are to Spread

Titus is particularly appropriate for us a young church in that the letter was written by the apostle Paul, to his trusted co-worker Titus as he went to the island of Crete to give instruction to the young churches there

Our method is that as Paul addresses a topic or subject, we have stopped for a brief series on it, by seeing what some other passages have to say

So we have covered everything from serving God with the gifts he provides, marks of maturity, qualifications for leadership, God's design for marriage and the family, and the reason that Christmas changes everything from 2:11-14

That brings us up to chapter 3:1-8 which will serve as the spring board for our series entitled Safe! Covering the bases of salvation from a biblical perspective

In the first 4 verses of Titus 3 we find that we are Safe! From a Life of Bondage

Read Titus 3:1-4

Having just explained in 2:11-12 that the life and message of Christ (the grace of God) trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live upright, godly lives in the present age . . .

Paul comes back to it just a few verses later – just in case you didn't get it in theory, here it is again in very practical terms

In between, in v15 – make sure you declare these things boldly, not holding anything back, but urging one another to live them out, and sharply reprimanding those who don't

Essentially, this is a huge exhortation (urging) that because God saved you, act like it

Don't live like you did in your old life, but live the new life you've been given

Problem is – he doesn't tell us how; he just assumes we know it and do it

For the *how*, we have to turn to Eph 4 where he says essentially the same thing, but there he tells us how

Read Eph 4:17-24

The way to be safe/free from a life of bondage and sin is to . . .

Clean up your act – inside and out (17, 19, 22; Titus 3:3)

- This is what it means to *put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life* (22); Make a fundamental break with your past

The picture of putting off and putting on a garment was widespread in the ancient world – before and after the time of Christ

OT – refers to being clothed with strength, righteousness, even salvation

Judaism, in it's writings, also refers to being clothed with humility and reverence

Even the Gnostics (DaVinci Code) used a ritual donning of a garment to indicate that a person was filled with the secret powers of the cosmos

Many religions used such terminology, but no religion refers to putting on or taking off your *nature* or *person* – that's unique to Biblical Christianity

So the old self refers to the sin nature of a person in bondage

Paul is like – tag that nature for demolition; take it off, throw it away, get rid of it

We watch FBI Files on Discovery Channel

One documentary – some guys committed a crime and then took off all their clothes and burned them to get rid of any evidence

While their motive was impure, their method was exactly the method we should follow when putting off the old self – we need to get rid of our sinful ways for good

If you want to be free from the bondage/grip of your sin, take *irrevocable* steps to shed the circumstances, relationships, or thought patterns that drag you down

Make sure you do that on the . . .

• **Inside – in your heart** (22)

Before Christ your heart was corrupt through *deceitful desires* (22)

Corrupt – It's morally rotten; it's in a state of ongoing moral decay or ruin

That's because of deceitful . . .

Desires that whisper – “It's fine, relax; It's all good”

“Go ahead; It's not that big a deal; You can handle it; God knows your heart

Deceitful desires – because run contrary to Scripture, but make the behavior seem okay

When the Bible says – *flee youthful lusts* . . .

Deceitful desires say – it won't hurt to think on this or entertain it for a bit

When the Bible says – *resist the devil*

Deceitful desires say – just try it; then you can identify with sinners; it's not going to hurt anything *one* time

When the Bible says – *guard your heart*

Deceitful desires say – hey, just check it out; see what's going on with that whacky thing over there

“It can't hurt just to see; you're not going to open the door to anything bad”

If want to be free from a life of bondage – clean up your act on the inside, in your heart

And on the . . .

• **Outside – with your behavior** (17,19)

Very simple – stop doing the wrong things, and start doing the right ones

Put off your old self – do away with your old habits and behavior

17 – Starts by saying, *Now this I say and testify in the Lord*

I'm telling you this not just on my authority, but more importantly on the authority of Christ himself

You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do (17) – you must no longer live wrong like they do

Stop living like the unsaved who suffer from a distorted mind marked by *futility* (17b)

Like those who *have become callous* (19) – who've lost their sensitivity, and no longer feel shame or embarrassment over their sin

Like those whose consciences are so atrophied that sin no longer registers a stab of pain

Like those who plunge into all kinds of degrading activities, and are *hungry* to do so (*greedy to practice every kind of impurity* – 19b)

Paul refers to them in Titus 3:3 as – foolish, disobedient, lost, enslaved, spiteful, envious, hated, hateful

That's the way *they* live, *but that's not the way you learned Christ!* (20)

That's not the way you learned how to live as a follower of Christ, HBC

You heard about him, and were taught in him as the truth is in Jesus (21) –

You were taught the truth that Jesus embodied, having trusted him as Savior/Lord when you heard . . .

So stop living/sinning like you used to; like those who haven't yet trusted him as Savior and Lord

Put off your old self, and clean up your act

Can't tell you how often I hear people say, "I can't do it; I can't stop sinning; I can't seem to live right"

Listen – God *never* tells us to do something in the Bible, that we're incapable of doing in his strength

That's why we can say with Paul – *I can do ALL things through him* [Christ] *who strengthens me* (Phil 4:13)

Which means you can't whine with excuses like – "I can't do it" or "I don't know how" when it comes to putting off your sin

You can too; And most of the time, you *do* know how, you just don't *want* to; Or, you're looking for an easy way out

Stop using those excuses – God hasn't told you to do anything that you and him together can't accomplish

In order to be safe from the bondage of sin . . . Clean up your act – inside and out; And . . .

Change your mind – top to bottom (18, 23)

Not only stop acting like those who don't know Christ, but stop *thinking* like them as well

Leave no stone unturned – from your highest aspirations to most foundational values

Let God change your mind; Your way of thinking

23 – *Be renewed* has a long-term, passive sense to it in the Greek, so the idea is that this renewal of your mind is a *process* that is brought about by *God*

We don't do it on our own – it is the HS at work in us that changes our mind and the way we think

And the renewal, the change, happens in your innermost being – *in the spirit of your mind*

So that the pattern and direction and basis of your thought process changes

That's why when a person is saved, their entire outlook and worldview changes

They have completely different way of processing information; a different grid through which they run things

That's why Christians think differently and respond differently to catastrophes, death, life, everything

You don't somehow manufacture this *change*; it's a product of *God's* work in you as you apply yourself to it

It's a life-long process of being renewed in your thinking; of taking on the mind of Christ and thinking biblically

• The change is dramatic – WHEREAS THE UNBELIEVER . . .

17 – operates *in the futility of their minds*

They have no clear direction or fruitful purpose in life

The believer is purposeful/intentional in their thinking; clear in their direction

Because they know who they are – child of God; & what they're about – glorifying him

18 – lacks spiritual understanding (*darkened in their understanding*)

Impeded by a mental fog that blots out the light of God

Unable to sort out spiritual matters, even if they're aware of them, *because of the ignorance that is in them* (18b)

The believer is increasing in spiritual understanding as the Holy Spirit helps them apply and appropriate the truths of God's word that they are learning

Unfortunately, there are far too many Christians, even in our church, who are learning very little and applying even less

And they end up being swayed by every wind of doctrine or aberrant practice, ignoring sound teaching, looking for the latest thrill, and involving themselves in things that are messed up, borderline, and even unbiblical

18 – is separated/*alienated* from God and the life he gives

The believer is reconciled to God; restored in their relationship

18 – is often deliberately ignorant of the God's truth

The believer seeks more of God's truth by studying the Scriptures, and has an increasing hunger for it

18 – is hard of heart; and past feeling because they have so given themselves over to sin

The believer is soft of heart – sensitive to HS's leading; alert to God's work

This *hardness of heart* is the progressive inability of a person's conscience to convict them of sin

The more you reject the truth of God, the more rebellious and deliberate you'll *be* in rejecting the truth of God

Know what the theological term for that is – thin ice

Don't go there, and rebuke those who do

To break free and be safe from a life of bondage and sin . . . allow God to change your mind – top to bottom

Clean up your act – inside and out; Change your mind – top to bottom; and . . .

Transform your character – start to finish (v24)

It's not God's intent that we simply make cosmetic changes in our life in order to be safe from a life of bondage

Nor to make major changes for a short time; Or to refurbish our old character/nature

We are to throw away the old and put on the new – for good; start to finish

From spiritual re-birth to physical death, our conduct needs to match our new status as children of God, declared righteous (justified) in Christ

He's looking for a total transformation, start to finish

That's the *new self* that we are to *put on* in v24

I have these old jackets and jerseys in my closet from my glory days of the past

Trading jacket (7 years); College basketball jacket (18years); HS football jersey (22 yrs)

At least once a year Becky asks me what I intend to do with them – they're just hanging in a corner of our closet

Every year I tell her I'm keeping them for nostalgia sake – don't mess with 'em

That's fine for thinking about the past every now and then

But if I continued to wear these every week, not only would I embarrass my family and make a fool of myself, but I'd be living in the past, *unable* to put on the suit coat of the present

What's more, if they represented my old nature, my sin nature (which they don't), just having them in my closet would be bad
They would be a constant temptation to re-indulge in things I should have put off a long time ago
We have to put off the old so we can put on the new, and transform our character and nature start to finish

It starts with God saving us (Titus 3:5), and ends with God finishing the work he began in us when we see him face to face
In between, we are to continually transform our character to reflect his likeness; the likeness of God himself
That's a bit daunting, huh? We've been given a new nature in the *likeness of God*
What an awesome privilege; What an awesome responsibility
And that likeness is characterized by righteousness and holiness

These are the two major qualities of God that are reproduced and cultivated in genuine worshippers – his love of all that is right; and his aversion to sin
Note a little nuance here – the word for holiness is not the usual word meaning set apart, but a different word that means free from contamination/*bondage*
Transform your character to reflect the righteousness and holiness of God that is yours in Christ
That must be your passion and commitment, start to finish

Summary

God didn't save you so that you would keep on living in the past and thinking the same way you always did
He saved you so that you could be free and safe from the grip of sin and a life of bondage
Clean up your act – inside and out
Change your mind – top to bottom
Transform your character – start to finish
All in the strength that God provides

Close