

Wondrously Saved with More to Come

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As we were singing that final hymn I was reminded of what is often said by good theologians: you cannot understand the baby in the manger until you understand the man on the cross and the whole of what we celebrate as Christmas, the incarnation of our Lord, is intimately tied to the work of Christ both in his obedient life and in his death on the cross and in his resurrection and his ascension into heaven. You must see it as a whole cloth; you can't separate one element from the other or none of it makes sense. And it's a blessing to my heart this morning that we're right in the middle of a passage that talks about the whole purpose of the incarnation this month. We're in the book of Titus chapter 3 and I invite you to turn there with me for our text this morning in the preaching of God's word. This text in Titus 3, we've taken it very carefully some would say, slowly some would say. Whatever the case, we're just trying to be fair to the deep rich content that is in the word of God here in Titus chapter 3 and I'm delighted that you are here with us.

Let me say this: when we think about some of the great passages of salvation in the Bible many would go to John chapter 3 and rightly so. Many would go to Ephesians chapter 2 and rightly so. I hope that what you're seeing is that Titus chapter 3 and also some of the verses from Titus 2, are some of the greatest passages and the clearest expositions in the Scripture about the totality of the work of salvation that God has done for us as believers in Christ and I want to show you this just by way of review that leads us up into verse 7 for this morning. We have been, beloved, those of us that our Christians, we have been wondrously saved and we are wondrously saved with far more still to come. We have been delivered from darkness into light. We enjoy the glories and the peace and the joy of salvation now and yet all of the goodness of being a Christian right now is just a mere foretaste of the glory that is still to come. It is astonishing what God has done on behalf of his people and I just want to review this because we're going to be moving away from this theme now in coming weeks as the text takes a turn around a different corner.

First of all, I want you to see this, this is by way of review of the past three or four weeks: the basis if you're taking notes you'll want to get these key words, the basis of our salvation is found in the price that Christ paid for us. The basis of our salvation is found in the price that Christ paid for us. Look at chapter 2, verse 14 where it says that our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

There is the basis, the foundation for our salvation, it is found in the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was born to redeem his people. He was born to buy them out of sin. All of his people across the ages and here we are in the 21st century and you and I are partakers in the greatness of that salvation. How grateful we are and how grateful more we should be to be recipients of the benefits of that work of Christ done 2,000 years before we were born. The basis of our salvation is found in the price that Christ paid for it. The need for our salvation is rooted in our lost spiritual condition.

Look at chapter 3:3, here's the need for salvation and here is why Christ came. This is why we needed a Savior. Chapter 3:3, if anyone asks you, "Why did you need to be saved?" Just go straight to this verse and let God's word answer it. "we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." We were in darkness. We were in disobedient, deceived darkness. That's why we needed to be saved. That's why we sing about the joy at the birth of Christ is that God intervened and what a joy it is because otherwise we would still be in the chains of sin and darkness with no hope to be released. Let me just say a word, just a really brief word here at this point, when you look at verse 3 and you realize the dark portrait that it paints of our condition before Christ, I want you to realize something very important about salvation: someone who truly comes to Christ wants far more than to be delivered from the punishment of hell. The true mark of repentance is someone who wants to be delivered from sin. They don't want to avoid hell just so they can continue living on in the darkness that they were formerly in. The true Christian, the truly repentant one, sees in their own heart the devilish marks of chapter 3:3 and says, "I want to be free from that." It's not that you want to continue to sin just free from the punishment, you've come to hate sin itself. You've come to want to deny yourself. You want to be separated from what you once were. You want to be delivered from false religion. You want to be delivered from the sins that are chains on your heart. You want to be delivered from the shame of being an enemy and a rebel to a gracious and holy God. You want to be free from that, not just the punishment of hell. You want to be free from sin. You hate sin for sin itself not simply the punishment that it brings.

Someone who still loves sin and just wants to be free from hell should have very strong doubts about their salvation because no one who is truly redeemed wants to continue in sin, you want to be free from it. I understand that we struggle with it, that's not the point here, it's where your heart affections are. You want to be delivered from sin. Who wants to live in Titus chapter 3? And so you come to see sin for the black thing that it is. You see it for the blackness that's in your own heart and you say, "I want to be free from this so much so, so much so that I will gladly surrender my life. All the ownership of my life to the Lord Jesus Christ and I give myself to him so that he can deliver me. I don't want to hold on to anything else." Jesus said, "If anyone wants to come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow after me." There is a self repudiation that is at the heart of true conversion. You repudiate yourself, "I do not want to be what I once was," and of course you would repudiate that. You look at verse 3 and who wants to be there? You repudiate that as part of your repentance in coming to Christ. That's our need for salvation.

The basis is found in the price that Christ paid for us. The need is in our lost spiritual condition. Thirdly, the motive for our salvation is found in God's mercy, not our merit. The motive for our salvation is God's mercy, not our personal merit. Look at verse 4, all of this so clearly laid out in such succinct words in the inspired word of God. Verse 4, in contrast to that lost condition of verse 3, verse 4 says, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy." Do you see it there? Do you see it there? Is your heart drawn to the wonderful grace of God that is expressed in that he reached into your dark condition and delivered you from it? Do you see? Do you see? Do you love? Do you appreciate the fact that there was obviously nothing in you or me that could have motivated God to save us? There wasn't anything save-worthy. There wasn't anything praiseworthy in us. The motive for salvation, beloved, had to come from outside of us because it was not on the basis of deeds which we have done. All that we brought to the table was our own disobedient, hateful self. No, no, no, listen, if you sang truly the joyous songs that we were singing just a few moments ago, if your heart rejoiced in what the ladies trio was singing like mine was just a few moments ago, if you're in that condition, it's because God has been kind and merciful and gracious to you. There's nothing that we brought to the table. It wasn't our idea. Your salvation, mark it, your salvation was not your idea. It was God's idea before the foundation of the world that he would save Andrew by name. It was God's idea before the foundation of the world that he would save Gary by name. And here you are, you're born into this world and you're walking in this dark disobedience, this dark self-deception and God says, "I'm going to have mercy on that one." Listen, listen, you and I, we as a body of believers in Christ individually one and another, we should be so utterly humbled and amazed at the greatness of that kind of grace that God had mercy on us in that condition. It had to be the fact that God was loving and gracious. It wasn't because we wanted to be saved when we were walking in darkness. We were hateful and hating one another. The motive for salvation is rooted only and exclusively in the person of God, rooted in his attributes of love, grace and mercy. That's where salvation comes from. That was the whole motive.

In 1 John 4:19, "We love, because He first loved us." The moving motivation, the initial moving power of salvation came from God and not from us. That's the motive. It's because he's merciful and he wanted to display his love and mercy to us that he did that. Now what can we do in response to that? Except just praise and honor in gratitude and glory be to God. What else can we do? Except be quietly humbled in our hearts and say, "Lord, I am the recipient of kindness and mercy that I absolutely did not deserve." You see and that doesn't drive us into dark self-introspection, it lifts our hearts and causes us to rejoice and praise him that he's been so good to us. That's the mercy. That mercy was the motive for our salvation.

The power for our salvation came from the Holy Spirit. We looked at this last week. The power for it, if we were going to be delivered out of that dark dungeon of death and deception, it took a powerful act and Scripture tells us that the power of that came from the third person of the Holy Trinity, it came from the Holy Spirit himself. Look at verse 5. There's a systematic theology about soteriology right here in these verses that we're

looking at. Verse 5, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy," that was the motive and so how did you make it? He could have been motivated but powerless to do something about it. You know, the fact that someone has a good motive doesn't mean that the job gets done, right? We're familiar with that phrase that says, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Well, God intended our salvation and he had the power to do it. We honor him for that. Verse 5, "according to His mercy, by," here's the means, here's the power by which it was done, "by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." The power. Power. And those of you that are saved, know something of that power where your life before was marked by deception, was marked by your own hostilities and sometimes manifested through your own foul mouth and then God saved you and your life changed dramatically. How did that happen? Not through self-effort. We didn't go from pursuing sin to pursuing holiness by something that we did ourselves, it was because the power of the Holy Spirit came upon us and did a work in our hearts and brought us to saving faith in Christ. That was the power behind it because we couldn't do it on our own. It was not by works that we've done in righteousness.

Now, today as we come to Titus 3:7, what we see here is the result of our salvation in Titus 3:7. For all that we've seen, the work of Christ, our need, the mercy of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, what has that brought us to? What has it delivered us to? And that is what we see in verse 7 and it is so incalculably great that only the inspired word of God could say it in such few words as what is expressed in verse 7. There's so much in this and we're going to take our time to deal with it carefully here this morning. Today's Scripture is telling us the result of our salvation. What has salvation done? It has utterly changed our status before God and it has changed our very destiny. Everything has changed for us in a vertical dimension and in a future dimension. Everything is changed by salvation. Everything is changed by what God has graciously done in our lives by the Spirit applying the work of Christ to our hearts. Everything has changed. There are two things here in this passage. Two doesn't sound like many but when you understand what those two are it leaves you in a state of such gratitude toward God and a desire to simply be gracious to others because of the overwhelming grace that has been poured out in our lives through Jesus Christ. That's what we're going to see this morning.

First of all, salvation leaves us justified. It leaves us justified. Look at verse 7 now with me. Titus chapter 3, verse 7. After he said that we've been washed by the Holy Spirit, "He poured his Spirit out richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that," here's the result, here's the outcome, here's where we are left. This is the state in which we find ourselves as a result of the power and mercy of God poured out in our hearts through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is where it leaves us. This is the result, verse 7,

7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

So that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Justification, what is it? Let me define it very simply for you here: in justification, God removes our guilt and declares us righteous in his sight. That's the simplest way that we can explain it. There's so much packed into that but in the simplest sense understand this: justification is a legal verdict from God upon your soul. It is a declaration from God the judge, that the demands of his law have been satisfied in you. That guilt no longer applies to your account instead righteousness has been applied. At the moment of your salvation, God declared judgment on you and he declared judgment on you for good.

Now, what is the content of that legal declaration? Justification, remember it's a legal verdict. It's a declaration about how you stand in relationship to the law of God and there's a dual aspect to justification. In a negative sense, God forgave all of your sins past, present, and future. God in justification forgave all of your sins minor and major. God in justification forgave all of your sins known and unknown to you. God in justification pardoned all your sins intentional and unintentional. There has been a complete washing of your slate of all of the guilt that existed in your life for your violations of God's law and God's character. All of that guilt and justification has been removed forever never to be restated to your account. Now, justification, we're going to see Scripture to help you with this. I'm just laying out the concepts for you right now. Here's what sometime is often missed in justification: justification is more than forgiveness in that legal declaration. It is more than God saying, "You're not guilty before me any longer." No, it goes so astonishingly further than that and says that God in justification credits righteousness to you. It's not simply that he looks at you and says, "You have not violated my law any longer. That's the way that I view you. That's my judgment upon you. That's the legal verdict of me upon your soul." It goes further and says, "It's not just that you haven't violated it, you fulfilled it. You have satisfied the demands of my law. All of those demands of righteousness are perfectly fulfilled."

How can that be? How can that be? How can we go from Titus 3:3 to Titus 3:7? Well, look back. I want you to see, first of all, this dual aspect. Go back to Romans chapter 4 as we let Scripture interpret Scripture for us. Romans chapter 4, beginning in verse 5 and actually let's pick it up in chapter 3, verse 21. Paul had just declared the universal guilt of all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, in the first 3 1/2 chapters of Romans and he says in Romans chapter 3:21, "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," here it is, "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." All of the words we've been looking at for the past four weeks from Titus 3 are found there in verse 24. We are justified as a gift, not something that we have done. We're justified by his grace and it's through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Now, how does a guilty sinner go from his guilt to that declaration of righteousness? And what is the content of that declaration? Now go to Romans chapter 4, verse 5. He says, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his

faith is credited as righteousness." There's the positive dimension. By putting our faith in a perfect Savior, God declares us righteous. There is a positive dimension where you have been declared righteous in light of the law of God. Under the law of God, you've been declared righteous because of your faith in Christ, because better stated, of what Christ has done on our behalf. Now look at verse 6, "just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness," he applies righteousness to your account, "apart from works." There's a full credit of righteousness applied to our account before God and then he goes on and describes in verse 7 the negative aspect of it, the removal of sin where he says, "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."

Justification, those of you who struggle with feelings of guilt over your past life before Christ, look at the word of God. Don't take my word for it, look at the word of God and look at what it says about those who put their faith in Christ: you're blessed. Verse 8, Romans 4:8, you're blessed because the true Christian is a man whose, look at it with me, verse 8, I want all of your eyes to look at verse 8 with me, "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." God is not going to take into account our sin as he deals with us. It has been forgiven. It has been washed away. The debt has been paid. It's no longer going to be brought up in his dealings with us. That's the whole point of salvation and so there you were with a sin debt that you could not pay, with a sin guilt that you could not erase and God intervened. God saved you and said, "All of that guilt, I have forgiven. I'm not going to take it into account anymore. I'm not going to raise it with you anymore. I'm not going to deal with you according to your sins, rather I'm going to deal with you according to the righteousness of Jesus Christ."

Now, how can he do that? How can God declare us righteous when in fact we are guilty? How can he do that and still be just? It's found in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ became our substitute so that we could be justified. His obedience fulfilled the righteous demands of God's law. Turn over to Romans chapter 5. This is what Christ has purchased for us. This is why Christ came. This is what he's done for us and in Romans 5:19, it says, speaking of Adam it says, "as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners," the whole human race was cast into sin and separation from God because of Adam's sin. Now by parallel, one man made the difference. One man compensated for that disobedience. Verse 19, "even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous." The righteous life of Christ in which he perfectly fulfilled the law of God, universally stated to be without sin by those who witnessed him up close, that perfect righteousness, beloved, is the righteousness that God credits to your account and mine when we put our faith in Christ. God looks at us through the lens of the Lord Jesus Christ. He looks at us and he says, "I see the righteousness of Christ in his perfect earthly life. I'm going to take that righteousness which you did not live out, which you did not earn, which you could not demand, it is my gift in justification to take the full measure of that righteousness and place it on your account and say I'm going to treat you as though you had lived the obedient life of Christ. I'm going to view you through that lens because that is what my Son did. He offered himself up and his life of obedience is now credited as your life of obedience even though you didn't deserve that. Even though

you didn't do that. Even though you never could." The significance of this is so far reaching. It means that God looks at us with his law side-by-side, as it were. He looks at his law, he looks at us and he says, "Fulfilled." The law has no more claim on us because Christ obeyed it perfectly and God deals with us, he considers us, he has imputed to our account that righteousness of Christ. That's what justification means. We're declared righteous not on what we have done but on what Christ has done. The obedience of Christ is the ground of our justification. It's incredible and what that means is, for your accusing conscience, is that your conscience must be satisfied. It must be silenced over guilt over your prior sins, it must be silenced in light of the perfect obedience of Christ. The obedience of Christ answers the condemnation of the law against you and therefore you are free and God has declared you righteous as a gift of his grace.

What about the penalty that the law requires? What about the fact that the law says that the soul that sins must die? What about that aspect of it? 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21. Turn there with me. It says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." At the cross, God assigned to Christ, he imputed to Christ, guilt which Christ was not actually guilty of but it was put on the account of Christ and the wrath of God was poured out on our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. The payment for your sins as Christ stood there as an innocent Lamb, as your substitute, God punishing Christ for the sins that you had done. He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him so that the righteousness of God might be fulfilled. The penalty that your sins required were paid in full by Christ on the cross. There aren't any more religious ceremonies to add to kind of clean up after what Christ had done. It's not that we obey so that we can preserve our forgiveness. It's already done. The price of your sin was paid in full at the cross. The demands of the law of God were paid in full, fulfilled perfectly by the Lord Jesus Christ in his earthly life and so Christ has carried the demands of God's righteousness that are upon you, he's carried the entire burden for you and now God applies that infinite merit of Christ to those who believe in Christ for their salvation. His death provided for the pardon. His life fulfilled the demands of righteousness. I'm looking for a lot of different verbs to describe this and to help you because I know in one sense it's a difficult concept. In grace, God assigned your sin to Christ and punished him for it. He accounted it to him. He imputed it to him. He reckoned it to Christ and punished him for it, an innocent Lamb. In grace, God assigns the perfect righteousness of Christ to your account and rewards you for it, opens the gates of heaven and welcomes you into his fellowship based on a righteousness that you did not live on your own. One writer said that it's, "On the basis of a death I did not die. On the basis of a life I did not live. I stake my whole eternity."

That's what salvation is. We recognize, we surrender any prerogative of pride that says that, "I somehow deserve this." We sacrifice all of that because, first of all, we know it's not true. We don't deserve that. We don't deserve this gracious gift from God so it can't be about me and yet here we are, we've sinned; we've broken God's law; we fall short; we've lied; we've lusted; we've done all of this stuff that the law forbids. How is it then that we can have any hope looking to eternity? It's because Christ was perfect and Christ paid the price and we're putting our trust not in anything in ourselves, we're looking

outside of ourselves and we're saying, "I stake everything about my acceptance with God on the Lord Jesus Christ. I put my faith completely in him alone as my only hope of righteousness before God." And God says, "That's it." That is what God accepts. He doesn't accept your righteousness, he accepts the righteousness of his Son on your behalf.

So what does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean for us to be so wondrously saved? It means that salvation has left us justified. Sinclair Ferguson said it this way making the distinction between guilt, innocence and righteousness. This is a phenomenal statement. He said and I quote, "In the sight of God, we are not only innocent but we are as righteous as Christ is." That's what is on your accounts in the book of heaven, is the perfect righteousness of Christ. You and I because of a gracious gift and a gracious work of Christ, you and I, this is such a bold statement but it's true, you and I are as entitled to be in heaven as Jesus Christ is because God in his grace has taken the righteousness of Christ and put it on our account. It's incredible. There's no other righteousness that could get us there. Think about it this way, I want you to think rightly about your position before God: suppose that you owed a man an utterly unpayable debt; a man of great wealth and you owed him a debt that was far beyond your ability to pay in your lifetime. It would be wonderful if that man graciously forgave your debt and said, "I'll wipe it away. Go free," and that debt is relieved. That would be wonderful as far as it goes but if you're completely in debt and you have no resources, to forgive the debt still leaves you broke. It leaves you without anything. The difference in justification is when that wealthy man says, "I'm not only going to forgive your debt, here's what I'm going to do, I'm going to write your name on all my bank account so that what I own also now belongs to you as a joint owner." That's what Christ has done with his righteousness for us, beloved. He hasn't simply forgiven our debt of sin against him, he has shared the infinite merit of his righteousness with us and says it applies to you, it belongs to you Christ actually paid your spiritual debt with his blood but further, he has shared his infinite merit on your spiritual account and, beloved, with the debt paid and the lawful fulfilled, it is on that basis, this is how as an utter substitute, God declares us righteous. He says, "What my Son has done is credited to you."

Now, let's back up for a second. That means a couple of things. Fundamentally we can see that there is a very real sense in which salvation is not about you and me at all. This is something that God did. This isn't something that we earned. This is about at root, beloved, oh may God open our minds and hearts to understand what's about to be said, your mind and mine: salvation is about God showing favor to you that you did not deserve. It's about him bestowing such great marvelous riches upon our soul that we could never have asked for, that we had no claim on. You could walk up to a wealthy man, you could walk up to Bill Gates or whoever, I don't care, I don't care who those men are. I really don't. You could walk up to them and say, "Hey, would you share some of your loot with me?" And he's going to say, "On what basis do you ask? Get away. You have no claim on me." In an infinitely more significant and greater way, we have no claim on this gift of righteousness. Do you start to see the foolishness of thinking that there are ceremonies that we could do to earn God's gift of salvation? Do you start to see the foolishness that if I just keep a few certain external rules and I do this or that and God would give me all of that? No. No. Oh, you start to see why Isaiah said that all of our

righteousness is like filthy rags in comparison to the magnitude of what God has done, the magnitude of the righteousness of Christ credited to our account. There is nothing that we could do to deserve that. That's why it says in verse 5, "not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness."

Go back to Titus 3 now. I just want to get today's text actually in front of you again. Verse 7, "so that being justified," being declared righteous, here it is, "by His grace." On the basis of undeserved favor, God has poured this out upon us. For something that you didn't earn, God has given you so, so, so, so much. And see, the only way that we can properly respond to that is with a sense of holy hush that says, "The magnitude of this in exchange for my guilt? God has declared me righteous on the basis of a life I did not live and a death I did not die? That's been given to me?" Someone find words that are worthy to express some kind of measure of the magnitude of the goodness of that. There aren't words. There aren't words. And there should simply be a sense of holy awe and worship and reverence and grateful reverential fear that says, "God, who is like you? Who is like you?" That was the words of the prophet Micah. The prophet Micah ends his prophecy with this and listen, he was seeing it on the front end of the cross and he said, Micah 7:18, he said, "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes," now he speaks directly to God, "You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea." What kind of God is this that is so compassionate? What kind of God is this that delights in unchanging love? What kind of mercy have we received that we are on the receiving end of such grace and mercy and kindness from the hands of a holy God? Who is he that he is like that and who am I to receive it?

You see, beloved, when we're thinking rightly about salvation, about biblical salvation, it leads us to wonder and awe and praise. If salvation, let me say this: if salvation to you, if the doctrines of salvation to you have seemed kind of superficial and unimportant, if you've grown a little bit tired of the idea of being a Christian, it's because you've utterly lost sight of the truth because the truth of the matter is that the truth overwhelms us with its power and its majesty. Salvation leaves us justified. God looks at us as if we had lived the life that Christ lived and he does not hold our sins against us anymore. Wow, that's worthy of praise and do you know what? It's not even the best part. It's not even the best part. This is the foundation for something else, something even bigger and that leads us to our second point this morning. Salvation leaves us justified, secondly, salvation leads us to glory. It leads us to glory. Look at Titus 3:7 with me again, "so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." We have now become heirs of a future. There is a future that belongs to us now but yet we haven't fully entered into. There is a future that is reserved in heaven for us that we have yet to see. Oh beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, salvation is not about this life primarily, I would say even secondarily. We are on the receiving end of something that is yet to come. The purpose of salvation transcends this earthly life. We are waiting to enter into a fuller unfolding of the magnitude of the grace of God in glory. It belongs to us as an heir. We are going to receive this gift that is yet to come. We don't have it yet but we are the heirs. It's going to come to us without fail. The certainty of receiving our inheritance in heaven

is greater than the certainty of you getting home today. The certainty of our inheritance in heaven is greater than the certainty of your next breath. We wait for God to fulfill it and we know that he will because he has promised it to us. Our hope is not a wish, it is a certain expectation of something certain to come because it's grounded in the promise of God.

Turn back to Romans 8 for a moment. We are heirs of eternal life. We are heirs of a glory yet to come. We stand in the possession of one who will certainly receive it but we don't possess it just quite yet. Romans 8:16, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." We are children of God. We have been adopted into his family, "and if children, heirs also," children are heirs of their parents' estate. What belongs to the parents will one day be passed to the children. Well, here it is: all that belongs to God we are heirs of. It's going to be passed to us. "Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." The glory of heaven is going to become ours. That is why he saved us. Oh beloved, oh beloved, God help us to get our minds around the greatness of salvation. It's not just to be forgiven in this life. He saved us not only to bless us in this life, this great, majestic, holy God saved us so that he could bless us forever. Throughout all the ages of ages upon ages of unfolding eternity, God is going to be blessing us. We're going to behold his glory. We're going to behold the face of Christ. We are going to be free from sin. We are going to be worship with the saints throughout all the ages. We're going to be with our God forever. He is never going to abandon us. He's never going to set us aside. If you're in Christ, that is your destiny. That is what you are an heir of. That is what you are going to receive. It is what you are going to possess and nothing in this life can take it away from you. No demon, no Satan, no nothing can take it away from you because an omnipotent, mighty God has determined that he wished to bless you like this and he has and the best is still yet to come. He's going to bless us forever. He has just started. It has just begun. We've just gotten a little wisp of a passing mist of the goodness of God in our life so far. The full substance of this is still to be revealed.

Turn over to 1 Peter 1. What do you say to God? What do you say about God in response? Well, Peter does a pretty good job. Peter does an inspired job. 1 Peter 1:3. You ascribe glory and praise to God in response. That's all you can do. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." It belongs to you. It's yours. It's not going to die. It's not going to go away. It's imperishable. It's perfect. It's undefiled. What I like about this passage in Peter is that it will not fade away. Do you understand that we are never going to get tired of the glory in heaven? Heaven is not going to get old to us. The majesty, the glory of it is not going to fade away. We're going to be stunned. We're going to be staggered by the majesty, the stunning glory when we enter into the inheritance that God has reserved for us and after ten billion years pass by, it's still going to be as stunning and as magnificent as it was at the start. I understand you can't quantify eternity with time references like that but somehow we've got to say something that gives us the

sense of what we can receive here in this earthly body. It's never going to get old. I don't know what it's going to be like to first enter into that, to first see Christ, but I know it's going to be staggeringly wonderful. If there could be anything more staggering than that, it's the fact that it's never going to get old. It's not going to fade away. What supremely rejoices our heart in this life is our Lord Jesus Christ. When we see him for the first time it's going to be exponentially infinitely greater and that's never going to die down. It's not going to burn out. That's the nature of the inheritance that he has for us.

Christian, let me say one last thing to you before we close this morning: this gift is secure. There is no way that a true Christian could lose this gift because it was never about you in the first place. It wasn't about you earning it through your merit and so it's not about you possibly losing it through your demerit. This is all about the power of God and the merit of Christ and his perfect sacrifice on the cross that has utterly washed away every sin in your life so that God will never raise it again in his dealings with you, to judge you for it, to cast you away for it. That's never going to happen. It can't happen. God would have to reverse what he has already determined to do. He would have to divide against himself to reverse it. It's not going to happen. If you're saved now, you're saved for forever because of the greatness of what Christ has done. You didn't earn it by your past deeds of righteousness, you cannot forfeit it by future deeds of unrighteousness. This is the bounty of the grace of God on our souls. God has determined the verdict in justification and he has determined to bless us still more in time to come.

I feel about this big right now, don't you? Eternal riches of glory poured out on you and me by one who is under no obligation to bestow it, upon one who had no merit to deserve it and yet here we are, here we are, justified, certainly one day to be glorified and to be with this great and gracious God forever. We should be grateful toward God, beloved, and the point of Paul's passage here in Titus 3 is that that should make us gracious to men, the men around us. If we are rightly overwhelmed by the grace of God, we take a whole lot less offense at the sins of men against us and at the nature of the culture around us. Yes, it's bad. Yes, it's sinful. But that's the whole point: the culture in macrocosm is what you were in microcosm and God delivered you from it. If God had grace on us in our microcosm, the command then is to for us to be gracious to what's around us, to carry the word of the Gospel. Not to retaliate when we're wronged against because our minds are so locked in and so dominated and so overwhelmed by the wonder with which we have been wondrously saved and by the wonder that we're so wondrously going to receive so wondrously much more still to come. You can't do anything to earn this.

For those of you who don't know Christ, he offers it to you as a gift. He offers it to you. He says, "Come to me." You receive Christ and you rest in him. That's what it means to have faith in Christ. You receive him, you surrender to him and you rest in him. You stop trying to earn it. You stop the attitude of rebellion and you give yourself over to him without reservation. That's the call. We receive this gift of justification by simple faith and Christ offers it to you now and says, "Come to me. I'll give this gift to you."

Bow with me in prayer.

Yes Lord Jesus, you said, "The one who comes to me I certainly will not cast out," and Lord, we've come to you, those of us that know you and you didn't cast us away. You didn't turn us away as unworthy of your presence, you graciously received us. We thank you for the gift of our salvation. We thank you that you fulfilled the law on our behalf. We thank you that you died for our sins and that you rose again. Now Father, we simply look forward to receive that inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us, undefiled, never to go away. The reservation card with our name on it is waiting for us to enter into. Lord, we can't wait and yet we will wait until you deem it the proper time.

Father, we pray for those here that don't know Christ. We pray for those that will listen later who do not know Christ. Father, we ask you to have mercy on their souls just as you did on ours. We pray that they would, as it were, hear the voice of the Spirit of God pleading with their soul and that they would respond, that they would lay down the weapons of their rebellion, their indifference, their ingratitude. Father, by your Spirit that you would open their mind and open their heart to receive this great Christ who purchased this great salvation. O Father, we don't want to go to heaven without them. We don't want them to be left behind. And Father, you're a saving God. You're a gracious God. If you've brought them under the sound of your word this morning, Father, why not just go the rest of the way in the work of your Spirit and seal redemption to their hearts. Yes, beloved friend that does not know Christ, today is the day. It's time for you now to repent of your sin and to put your faith in Christ. God's word could not be any clearer about what the gift is. You can't turn it away. You must come today. We beg you as ambassadors of Christ to be reconciled to God. Father, may you seal it to their hearts we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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