

## Titus 3:4-8

As noted throughout this short Letter, **JESUS works**. Paul begins in 1:1-4 and opens up with “a knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness” (v. 1). There is a funneling effect in Titus. He begins in 1:1-4 and continues to build through 2:11-15. The fullest expansion of this idea culminates in 3:4-8. In one sense, this is our “final” pause in Titus around his melodic line, **JESUS works**. One can no more drive this tune from their heads than one can escape the rampaging of a charging grizzly. The best one might do is “play dead.” The problem in Crete was the thinking that one can outrun a bear sow separated from her cubs. Good luck with that. This song, **JESUS works**, strikes the tune for every paragraph noted in our study.

As we consider this final pause, what more can Paul add to an already full plate?

When we go about describing God, we will often refer to His divine attributes or characteristics. We attempt to reduce God to single qualities such as love or holiness. Yet, God is always more than the sum total of His attributes. We speak of God saving humanity for His glory, which is true. But it wasn't His holiness that drove Him to do what He did. It was His love for those He created.

If we were to ratchet this entire *Story* back to the beginning, we would read of a God who created this entire world so that He might meet with His people so that they might know and experience the joy He has within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This text tells us it was His love for us that drove Him to save us. This love is so powerful as to save us from our past sin in order to produce good works. He moves us from the disobedient to the obedient, from existing as orphans to actual heirs. From those who deny Him by their works, to those who confess Him through their works.

This is how powerful God's love is. His love secures His end. Neither you nor I can stop the hand of God from acting. Verse 3 shows the innate estate of humanity. Our condition required, yea, demanded intercession apart from which no one would or could be saved. What follows is God's Mission.

God alone moves us from chaos to cosmos, from disorder to order. This is what the Gospel intrinsically does. Neither you nor I can stop this. God takes us from where we are as sinners and through His redemptive activity, turns us into heirs. He is the one who makes all things new. We often ask ourselves as to God's motive. **Why did God do this?** Our text tells us. He loves us. In our horizontal existence, we speak of loving people or being loved. Sin taints every human expression of love. Yet, in the shadow, we can see reflections of the divine.

However, it is still impossible for us to fully understand the depth of God's love when the text tells us that God loves us to the degree that His Son would take on human flesh and become for us what we could never become for ourselves, the sin-bearer. Through the New Testament and in particular this letter, we read of Jesus being the voluntary and vicarious sacrifice for sinners. It is only in Him that the wrath of God against us and the sentence of God could be satisfied.

Friend, I do not know if you have ever experienced buffet eating right when the establishment opens, but it is a sight to behold. It is amazing how much food some individuals can pile on a single plate, which I find interesting only in so far that you can keep going back for more! Perhaps it is to minimize energy by cutting the number of trips! Paul is doing this. He keeps piling the plate and coming back for more.

This final paragraph pushes us past the point of “filled” to that of “satiation.” It is almost painful, but we are able to push ourselves away from the table and simply enjoy the thought of “no more.” One of the “regrets” of buffet eating is that you do get full! The good news is you can keep going back for more once the appetite returns, and there is always more.

Such is the nature of the gospel. You can keep coming back for more! There is never a time when the table is not set. Sometimes things can look a little messy, but it is always prepared. Why? Because **JESUS works!**

This paragraph describes the grace of God (2:11) as an expression of his “goodness and loving kindness” (3:4). This passage uses the word *Philanthropist* to describe God. God loves His people. Oh, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring such Good News. The appropriation of this grace is not based on our work but His (vv. 5, 6). Wow, what clarity. Yet, this appears to be a problem in Crete. Why would anyone think or want to think that it is through their work that God’s goodness and loving kindness is appropriated?

With the continued emphasis on “good deeds,” Paul’s language seeks to center the instruction. The JESUS SEED always produces GOSPEL FRUIT. This FRUIT is produced in you and through you to those around you, but it is not a FRUIT you generate. Its source is not found in you. It is the JESUS SEED that produces GOSPEL FRUIT.

When the JESUS SEED plants within the soil of one’s soul, there takes place a washing, a new birth, a renewal. What happens? The JESUS SEED produces GOSPEL FRUIT: “knowledge of the truth, accords with godliness” (1:1). It is this justification that assures one of eternal life (v. 7). It all ties back to 1:1-4. Notice how Paul says it in our text, “those who believe devote themselves to good works” (v. 8). We read this as if we are the one’s doing the work, but our text assures us that it is not our work but the work of the Holy Spirit who plants within us the JESUS SEED. Wow, wow, and triple wow. Not to get this right, is to be wrong and to teach otherwise is to teach a false gospel. Such a gospel is not GOOD NEWS, but BAD NEWS.

The opposite of this is found in verses 9 and following. The leadership of local churches must take the charge against those who would teach otherwise seriously. The leadership is to assure the teaching of sound doctrine “from the cradle to the grave.”

Again, what an incredible Letter. We would do well to reread this short epistle right now.

