

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## The Fruit Of A New Heart

by Dan Trygg

“Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, <sup>2</sup> to malign no one, to be uncontentious, kind, showing every consideration for everyone. <sup>3</sup> For 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. <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for humankind appeared, <sup>5</sup> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> in order that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. <sup>8</sup> This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, in order that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for people.”

Titus 3:1-8

This passage describes the change of heart, attitude, lifestyle, and quality of life that is the *purpose of the new birth in Christ*. Paul delineated this to Titus to clarify to him *what his focus should be* in caring for the new believers on the island of Crete. **Many of these themes are expressed repeatedly throughout the book, because they are so important.** They are fundamental to healthy, balanced spiritual development. This passage, in particular, contrasts the difference between the motives and character of our *previous*, non-Christian life, ... versus the motives and character of our *new* lives in Christ. It is obvious from the context, as well, that **this new quality of life does not just happen all by itself. It must be consciously nurtured and affirmed by intelligent choice**, or it may not become evident at all. If this were not the case, Paul's repeated admonitions to Titus would be unneeded. The clear truth should be evident to us from every quarter: **The mature, consistent Christian life must be chosen. It must be exercised and developed through hard choices against past habits and old desires.** This truth, this reality that is so often overlooked, or disregarded, must be given its proper emphasis. **We must decide to incorporate faith into our world view and navigational grid, or it remains powerless to change the outcome of our experiences.** It is like nothing more than a dream, if we go on our way following our former world view and approach to life. I repeatedly meet with Christians who ask in frustration, “**Why won't God change me?**” They expect that He will somehow do spiritual brain surgery to their minds, and they will automatically choose to live differently. Frankly, He did not set things up that way. Yes, **He has radically transformed those who believe in Him**, those who have a new heart. This inner change, **this different orientation in our inner core, must become the starting point of an entirely new pattern of life. We choose to walk in this new direction, ...or we choose to live out our former manner of life.**

In verse 3, Paul describes how we all formerly lived our lives. **This was a state of being which we were immersed in, and operated out from.** Our choices and thoughts came from the ingredients which we saw from this perspective. **We knew nothing else, and could do nothing else.** Look at what our condition was: **We were being “unperceptive”.** This Greek word, translated as “foolish” in some translations, is a negated form of the word meaning “to think, understand, perceive”. Hence, we were *unthinking*, or *without* understanding, or *not* perceptive about reality to some extent. Of course, “we only see what we see”, and “we only perceive what we perceive”, so we probably were unaware of what we were missing. We undoubtedly had no idea that our world view was riddled with misconceptions, at all. **We were being “disobedient”.** This word means to be “unpersuaded” or “untrusting” of someone, hence unwilling or resistant to what they suggest, or ask you to do. It can even come to be as extreme as “stubbornly resistant”. The root cause of the disobedience or resistance is the fact that you are not persuaded or convinced that you can trust this person, or that what they suggest or ask of you is truly in your best interest, or the right thing to do. If we look at this from this perspective, this disobedience is not strictly about behavior, it is about a perception of reality, and, once again, you only see things as you see them. There is a sense in which you are trapped within the bubble of your own perception of the world around you. **We were “deceived”.** The Greek form would be more accurately rendered as we were “being led astray (by someone else) ones”. Clearly, we did not *realize* we were being misled. **We were also “enslaved to various lusts and passions”.** The sense of the original word is that we were in an ongoing state of bondage, serving as a slave. This isn't a description of free, willful, arrogant disobedience, rather a pathetic, pitiful picture of being trapped, and having no way out. The word, “various”, refers to a broad range of possibilities. **We were “leading our lives in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another”.** The verbal form here is again a participle, emphasizing the ongoing state of being we were living in. Note the attitude toward others, and theirs in response. “Malice” can cover everything from a general “evil” (i.e., a selfish disregard for what is good), to an “ill will toward another person”. “Envy” implies comparison and self-dissatisfaction. “Despicable” is actually a

passive verbal form meaning “being hated by others”. Ever feel *that* growing up? Ever feel that some people don't like you? What does that make you feel inside? Do you feel self-conscious, maybe resentful? Other definitions are “sullen” or “gloomy”. “Hating one another” is one possible response. This can also mean to “disregard” or “ignore” one another. If you put all of these pieces together, the quality of life and relationships described is not too positive.

**“But when the kindness and love for humankind of our Savior God appeared, ...He saved us.” This is the turning point in history that can change the dismal picture described above into one with hope and vitality.** God's “**kindness**” is descriptive of His moral goodness and benign attitude toward us that is expressed in kind, considerate, thoughtful action. It is a soft, tender word-picture, one where one person sensitively accommodates his or her actions to the other person's sensibilities. There is *no pre-conditional demand to change*, simply *an acceptance of the other where they are*, and doing for them what is needed or helpful. The phrase “**love for humankind**” is actually one word in Greek, *philanthrōpia*, from which we get the word “philanthropy”. It is derived from *phileō*, tender affection, and *anthrōpos*, human. Together, it refers to *tender kindness* expressed toward people, *especially those in distress* (e.g., Acts 28:2). God's salvation, ...the en-fleshment of part of His own self to live among us, and die in our place to redeem us out of bondage..., came *not* because *we did anything* to earn or deserve it. Instead, it was *freely given* “**according to His mercy**”. This word for *mercy* means “a compassion for someone in need that leads to action”. It has two components: (1.) *emotional identification* with their pain and need; and (2.) an *active response* to remedy the problem in some way, or to comfort the hurting in their pain. Before moving on, allow me to draw your attention to the beautiful, tender picture of God's love which Paul has expressed here. God is *not* presented as a wrathful, angry dictator, but as a caring, tender benefactor, who has taken steps to help us in our state of affliction. *He* knows what we are missing, ...though *we* might not even have the perspective to realize the misery of our own souls! He knows a much more fulfilling life, and would like us to experience *that*. Why? Because *He loves us!*

**What form did His salvation take?** We all know that *He sent Jesus to die in our place*, but what did *that* do for us? What does it *mean*? **Paul says this salvation has two aspects**, “He saved us by means of *a bathing of new birth and renewal of the Holy Spirit...* in order that... being justified... we might become heirs according to hope of age-type life”. **First, there is the new birth**, literally, an “anew-birth”, a different word than in Jn. 3:3. This word implies a *regeneration*, either a radical *re-creation*, or possibly a restoration of something to its original, pure state. It is a “*washing of regeneration*”. We are cleansed from the impurity of past sin and made new at the same time. **Second, there is a renewal**. This word is the second part of a compound object of the preposition, “by means of”, i.e., of washing ... *and* of renewal of the Holy Spirit. (Some confusion arises if it is misunderstood as being descriptive of the washing *itself* [i.e., “washing-of-rebirth-and-renewal”]). **Seeing this as a two-part process agrees with Rom. 12:2, and fits readily with our experience. There has been a rebirth, but there is also an ongoing renewing of the mind.**

**Paul also says that the salvation has a direction, or purpose.** It has come to make us heirs “according to the hope of age-type life”. **We are to inherit a different quality of life**, life consistent with the Kingdom to come, the Messianic age. This qualitatively different life is partially described in verses 1 and 8. It is easy for us to think of “eternal life” as something we will receive *when Christ returns*. The Bible is clear, however, that *it is available now* (e.g., Jn. 5:24), and **it is for us to learn to walk in** during our earthly sojourn. In *our* culture, people inherit things when their parents die. In the *first century culture*, it was not uncommon for an heir to begin to enjoy the inheritance allotted to him while his parent was still alive (e.g., Lk. 15:12). In the same way, **we are to begin to take possession of what has been given to us now**, ...to incorporate this new quality of life made available to us into our present day-to-day experience. **The renewal process is the result of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.** Again, however, He will not just “zap” us. **He wants to teach us, to counsel us, to help us, ...all of which implies that we are significant players in this process of renewal.** In Romans 12:2, the apostle instructs *us* not to conform ourselves to this world system, but to be transformed (or, “transform yourselves”) by the renewing of our minds, that we might test out by trial to discover and approve the will of God, that which is good, well-pleasing and mature. **Clearly, we are to work at developing a new understanding and outlook of life.** This is key to putting off the old life, and putting on the new (Eph. 4:22-24). If we look at Paul's instruction to Titus, part of how we can *begin* this process is to identify the differences in attitude, motivation, and action between our *old* way of living, and *God's heart*, and then allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in new thoughts and actions. **Note here the kindness and philanthropy of God's heart, and how that is to work out in our lives**, as His Spirit-led children. We are *not* to speak evil of people, or quarrel with them, **but to be kind, to show every consideration toward others, and to be mindful of good deeds**, to “stand ready for action”. Why? Because *these are the outworkings and fruit of the new Christ-like heart in us*. As we put aside the old mindset, and present ourselves to the Lord as “ready to serve”, the new inner motivation and heartbeat of the Spirit will arise in *our* lives to lead *us* to express *God's* heart, full of kindness and philanthropy toward other people.