

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Washing Of The Holy Spirit

by Dan Trygg

“Remind them to order-themselves-under to rulers, to authorities, to be compliant, to be prepared for every good deed, ² to malign no one, to be unquarrelsome, yielding, showing every consideration (all meekness) to all people. ³ For we also once were unperceptive ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to strong-desires and various pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and the love-of-humankind of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not out from deeds which we had done in righteousness, but according to His mercy-that-acts, by-means-of a washing of regeneration (rebirth) and of renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ in order that, being justified in the grace of that One, *we might come to be heirs* according to hope of age-type life. ⁸ Faithful is the word; and concerning these things I desire you (sg.) to strongly affirm, in order that the ones having believed in God might think to stand ready for good deeds. These things (deeds) are good and beneficial for the people. ⁹ But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and legal disputes, for they are unprofitable and worthless.” Titus 3:1-9

Boy, as I am writing this in May of 2021, I am amazed to see how timely these words are. People who seemed to be strong and mature in their faith have somehow fallen into being *unsubmissive* to rulers and authorities, *unwilling* to be persuaded or to comply. They have spoken defaming things about people, and have been quarrelsome, *unyielding* and have not been demonstrating the meekness of Jesus to others very well. Their attitudes and world view have somehow become opposed and combative, just the *opposite* of what Paul is describing in these first two verses, ...and *they don't see the inconsistencies at all!* We are to live by the mind of Christ, not the spirit of this age (Phil. 2).

Why are we *not* to speak evil of others, or argue with them? We are to avoid foolish controversies, strife and conflicts about legal issues (Tit. 3:9 – It says *nothing* about “the Law” – it is about “legal disputes”). We are to be good citizens, people who are thought of as upstanding people, a *credit* to the name of Jesus. Why are we to not be defiant in things that are non-essentials? We are to keep our habitual behavior *beautiful, ...faultless...*, so that, if unbelievers desire to criticize us, they would see the excellence of our lives, and the slander of the enemy will be put to silence. **Besides, we must remember that *we were no different than the ones who do not know Christ!*** We ourselves were once lost, blind, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to our own lusts and various pleasures, full of envy and angry emotions, despicable and despising others. We were no different. ***What has made us change, ...what transformed us, and led us out of the darkness?*** **It was the kindness and love of humankind that God revealed to us.**

More than just a subjective realization, however, the Greek word communicates that **the kindness and philanthropy of our Savior God was tangibly present, ...it showed up! It was visibly and materially expressed in the person of Jesus!** The apostle John, in 1 John 1:1,2, made a strong case for this. He said, “what we have *heard*, what we have *seen* with our eyes, what we *beheld* and our *hands handled*, concerning the Word of life – and the life was manifested (made visibly, materially, tangibly present), and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the life of the age to come, ...which *was being* with the Father, and *now has been manifested* (made visibly, materially, tangibly present) to us.” **Jesus was the actual, physical, visible embodiment of God's kindness and love for humanity. He came here to address our greatest need, ...our need to be saved and rescued from hopeless lostness, deception, bondage, emotional disruption and degradation.**

He saved us, not because of anything we have done in righteousness, but simply out of His great mercy-that-acts. The *motivation* was *all His*. The *solution* and *outworking of salvation* was *all His*. It had nothing to do with any good works we had done. *Nothing!* Human effort is totally bankrupt, ...unable to even *begin* to touch our deep brokenness and the ravages of sin upon our lives. A good deed we might do today cannot undo the sin we committed yesterday. A positive act cannot undo or repair the damage of an injurious choice we made in the past. There is *nothing* we could *ever* do that could undo the damage of our past sins.

What did God do, that we could not do for ourselves? Let's go back to the text, ...it plainly says, “**He saved us**”. **He did it! HE did it!** This is a *done deal!* He did a past-completed-thing that brought salvation to lost, broken and hopeless people. **This is a past completed action, accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross, and applied to us personally by the Holy Spirit.**

How did He do it? How did God save us? ***How is it made applicable to us?***

By a washing of rebirth and renewal from the Holy Spirit, whom God poured out upon us richly, abundantly, in full measure, lavishly. These are very loaded terms.

Washing. He saved us *through or by means of a washing, a bath, a cleansing.* We might not think of ourselves as “unclean”, but in addition to the damage caused by sin, and the inner disease and degradation it causes to

our own souls, there is a spiritual and moral “uncleanness” that accumulates in our lives. This is offensive and distasteful to God, and, if nothing else, tarnishes our lives with the “crud” of sin. **In God’s salvation plan, He washes us clean and pure, removing any stain or “crud” that would be offensive or distasteful to God, or to others, or even to our own selves! Washing is an external word picture, ...typically cleansing the outside..., but this cleansing goes much deeper! This is referring to a cleansing on the inside!**

Rebirth. It is a cleansing of “re-birth”, ...actually, the word is “again-birth” or “anew-birth” (*palin + gennaō*). But this is *not* just a rebirth, ...like starting over again as a sinful person. **This is a radically different birth, ...a birth of a new life not characterized by sin.** This same word is used in Matthew 19:28 for the “regeneration” of the entire world, that will take place “when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory”. There will be a radical transformation that will take place *at that time*, that will affect the whole creation. The use of this same word here in Titus 3:5 is meant to help us grasp the extent of the radical change that happens *now*, ...that takes place *within us*, ...*at the moment we identify with Christ and become His!* **To those who take Him, Jesus said, to them He gives the authority and power to become (at that moment in time) children of God** (Jn. 1:12). Jesus also said that when we hear His word, and trust in the One who sent Him, we *have* or *possess right now* the life of the age to come (Jn. 5:24). **This “rebirth” Paul describes in Titus 3 is a regenerative, re-creative birth, ...a birth of a complete change of being and essence, ...a total and radical change of mind and heart for the better.** It is not *just* a returning back to an original state before sin entered the world, but **this new birth is looking ahead to the re-creation of the age to come, ...brought into the present, ...now!**

Interestingly, **this is not the same word picture used by Jesus in John 3:3,7.** There Jesus used a phrase (from *gennaō + anōthen*) that meant “born (or ‘generated’) *from above*”. It was Nicodemus who misunderstood what Jesus was saying, and thought He meant “born again”. In His further clarification in verse 6, Jesus said, “that which is born out from the flesh *is* flesh, and that which is born out from the Spirit *is* spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘It is necessary for you to be born from above.’” **There is, ...and must be..., a powerful, deep, thorough and dramatic change introduced into our lives at the washing of “regeneration” caused by the Holy Spirit. It is the power and nature of heaven birthed into us in some way, ...the transforming, re-creating life of God’s Spirit introduced into the core of our being, ...so that we are “reborn”, “generated anew” of the very stuff of the age to come, yet somehow this incredible life is inserted into our present, broken, weak, dying human flesh.**

The apostle Peter uses a different, but related word (*ana + gennaō*), in a context very similar to what Paul writes here in Titus 3. Peter wrote, **“According to His great mercy-that-acts He birthed-anew us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”** (1 Pet. 1:3), ...and “...having-been-born-anew *not out from perishable seed* but *imperishable*, through the living and abiding word of God” (1:23). Note common themes “mercy” and “through Jesus”

Then, James, the brother of Jesus, referred to it this way, **“Desiring/willing, He brought-us-forth-in-birth (*apo + kueō* – lit., ‘from the womb’) in order that we might be a certain first-fruits of His created-things”** (1:18). Note that *the initiative was God’s*, and **He has done something in us now that is a precursor of the rebirth of an entire new creation!**

Renewal. But Paul’s description does not stop there! **This is not only a washing of rebirth, or “regeneration”. It is also a “washing of renewal”.** The word for “renewal” (*ana + kainōsis*) here **refers to something being made new and different, ...of an unprecedented or ‘unheard-of quality’, ...and of a superior nature.** It refers to a thorough renovation, ...a complete and radical change for the better. There are two basic Greek words for “new”. One means “fresh, tender, recently-born or young” (*neos*). **The word root used in “renewal”** however is from another word (*kainos*), which **refers to an entirely new kind of thing, something novel, unknown before.** It is the word used for the *new* heavens and the *new* earth (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1,2) and the fact that God will make all things *new* (Rev. 21:5). God has made a *new*, unprecedented covenant by the life-producing Spirit upon our hearts (2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8-10). **If anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new, unknown, radically-different creation, ...new, unprecedented things have come into being** (2 Cor. 5:17), ...and **it is this new creation that matters** (Gal. 6:15), not religious customs or practices. In Jesus, God abolished the enmity between Jew and Greek, so that He might make both groups into one *new*, unheard-of, superior humanity (Eph. 2:15). **And, it is the new, radically-different creation we are to “put on” and learn to function in, ...this new-creature that has already been created in holiness, righteousness and truth** (Eph. 4:24). We are to put off the old, former person we were, ...and learn to put on this newly-created being that *is available to us to live by, now.*

Learning how to operate that way requires a renewal of our perceptions of life (Rom. 12:2). **There is much to discover that we do not yet know.** No wonder the apostle John wrote, “Behold, how great a love the Father has given us, that we should be called God’s children. And we *are!* The reason the world does not know us is that it didn’t know Him, either. They are unperceptive. Dear friends, **we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed.** We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is” (1 Jn. 3:1,2).

God has poured out this washing of the Spirit upon us *richly!* *Abundantly!* **DISCOVER your inheritance!**