

Title: The Foundational Principle
Date: October 31, 2021
Subject: Thanksgiving Travels – the foundation is what Jesus Christ has done for us
Scripture: Titus 1:1 – 3, 2:11 – 13, 3:3 - 8

Thanksgiving Travels is the sermon series beginning today and ending the Sunday before Thanksgiving. We're using the book of Titus and approaching it thematically instead of section by section. The reason is similar ideas are mentioned, then later expanded and expanded some more as we progress through the book.

Titus is the fifth shortest book in the New Testament. It takes 7 minutes to read. I encourage you to do so each week, maybe every day, as we endeavor to see what the Lord says about Christ's saving work and how it's to be lived out through our lives. It will enhance our time together...and see if we come up with the same themes.

Titus was a young man who placed his trust in Jesus Christ as the one who could deliver him from his sins. He became one of Paul's co-workers and was sent to churches to assist them in spreading the good news and build them up spiritually. Though the book is written to Titus, who served as a pastor, the insights and teaching of the book are useful for all.

We begin by looking at the foundational principle of what God has done.

Read 1:1 - 3.

The Amplified Version is helpful as it gives expanded treatment of some words to help the reader gain a better understanding. Here's verses one and two from The Amplified: "Paul, a bond servant of God and an apostle (a special messenger) of Jesus Christ (the Messiah) to stimulate and promote the faith of God's chosen ones and to lead them on to accurate discernment and recognition of and acquaintance with the Truth which belongs to and harmonizes with and tends to godliness, [Resting] in the hope of eternal life, [life] which the ever truthful God Who cannot deceive promised before the world or the ages of time began."

God has promised eternal life. 1:2

The promise is based on God's character. He doesn't lie. The people of Crete were infamous for being liars. Greek literature used "to Cretanize" as a colorful way to say "to lie." 1:12 shows how one of Crete's poets/prophets felt about his people: "Cretans are always liars..." This statement has been viewed as the "liar's paradox." If it's true Cretans always lie, then what he says is a lie. But if it's a lie about them always lying, then they don't always lie. Paul seems to have his tongue firmly stuck in his cheek as he makes the point of contrasting people with God.

What kind of God would he be if he lied? Why would anyone put any confidence in what he said? God made a promise and he doesn't make promises to get people off his back. What he says...he'll fulfill.

The promise was made before the beginning of time. Other Scriptures speak of what happened before the beginning of time. The Son of God was chosen before the beginning of time, the creation of the world and

people to be the vehicle through which God's grace would be demonstrated to people (2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:20). Since the plan was made prior to the creation of the world and God doesn't lie, the plan was as if it had already been completed prior to the creation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

That's a long time to keep a promise. People have a hard time keeping their promises when the going gets tough. Sometimes they hope others will forget.

The presentation of the plan. 1:3.

Jesus Christ came at the appointed time. He's called the Word of God and the Light of the world (John 1:1 – 9). Though he created the world, the Word entered into humanity to give light so people could find their way to God. The proclamation of the good news enables people to hear about God's amazing plan.

Therefore, we have hope of eternal life. Our faith and knowledge rest on that hope. Faith and knowledge lead to godliness which is living in a way that pleases God. More to come on that in future weeks.

We progress to the next passage -- 2:11 – 13.

Read 2:11 – 13.

God is the provider of salvation. It was displayed by the grace of God when Jesus Christ came to earth. Grace is the undeserved favor God chooses to show to people who don't deserve a smidgen of it. Grace has been referred to as God's Riches at Christ's Expense. Grace is free to those who receive it but that doesn't mean it came without a cost. The cost was paid by Jesus. Another Scripture specifically says the cost of God's grace to us was "the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:19).

Jesus was a real person, a unique person. He was fully human and fully God. Therefore, He was the only acceptable sacrifice because humans are sinners and God won't accept an imperfect sacrifice. Jesus was perfect. He gave his blood as the removal of sin can only be done through that kind of sacrifice.

In the words of 2:14 -- he "gave himself for us to redeem us." He was the substitute so we wouldn't be liable for the debt we owed to God. He paid a debt he didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay. He purchased us out of the slave market of sin. He paid the price for our freedom.

By giving himself on the cross, salvation appeared to all men. Jesus said when he was lifted up, he'd draw all men to himself (John 12:32). His crucifixion is the pivotal event of history which all humanity needs to face. They can either come and accept what Jesus Christ has done for them and receive eternal life as well as forgiveness of sins or they can come and reject what He has done. They can try to use their own means to pay God for their souls or they can totally ignore Christ's sacrifice. Rejection leads to eternal punishment.

Promise of the future -- 2:13

We again encounter *hope* that was in 1:2. Here it's called a blessed hope meaning it's full of the good things of divine and supreme favor.

The arrow attached to the blessed hope points to the future, the place where we'll be able to totally enjoy eternal life. It will take place when Jesus Christ comes to earth to get his people to usher them into their

heavenly home. It will be a place of total perfection. We'll finally be saved from the presence of sin, death and the devil. They won't bother us any more. There'll be none of their foul odor.

The passage again links what Jesus Christ has done with how people are to live. V. 12 talks about how we're to relate to ungodliness and to live uprightly. V. 14 talks about how we're to be eager to do what is good. Again, more on those in future messages.

We move to a third passage -- 3:3 - 8

Read 3:3 – 8

The pathway to heaven includes our past (3:3). Before we placed our trust and confidence in Jesus Christ as Savior, we were foolish. We thought we were wise, but lacked an understanding of spiritual things. We were disobedient. We weren't as good as we thought as all of us have committed moral crimes against God. We were deceived into following the wrong path. We thought we could make it to heaven by our good deeds or God will allow everyone in. We were enslaved to evil and a harsh master who pays accordingly: "the wages of sin is death," separation from God (Romans 6:23). The enslavement is evidenced by all kinds of passions and pleasures of the world system opposed to God, living in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. This is a brutal summation of what it's like to be without God.

People aren't a bunch of good old folks but people who are evil and wicked because they aren't rightly connected with God. Another Scripture asks questions: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were...But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9 - 11).

We were in a world of hurt. We were "dead in our transgressions and sins...We were by nature objects of wrath" (Ephesians 2:1 - 3). Some of us may have had the sins we committed before knowing Jesus Christ pop into our minds or they readily come to mind. That's who we were. We've been washed. For others who came to know Jesus as their Savior when fairly young, we can be grateful for the sins God kept us from being involved in. We've been washed by the blood of Jesus.

People who continue to live those kinds of lifestyles without a real desire to turn to God and turn from their sin remain in a world of hurt. But thanks be to God, because of Jesus Christ we've been changed on the inside and are continuing to be changed from what we were to what God wants us to be.

God's power is evident. 3:4 - 6

The one who makes the difference is God. We again have the word *appeared* that was in 2:11. This time God's actions are described as his kindness and love which he expressed so he could save us. God didn't give us what we deserved but acted in his mercy. He gave us what we didn't deserve.

A woman approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. He twice had committed an offense which required the death penalty. The mother explained, "I don't ask for justice. I plead for mercy." Napoleon

replied her son didn't deserve mercy. "Sir it wouldn't be mercy if he deserved it." Napoleon spared the young soldier.

God spared us. We did nothing to achieve being delivered from sin to be saved from the consequences of hell. There's nothing good in us that demanded God to give us salvation. We couldn't show up at the gates of heaven and demand he let us in based on our goodness. All we had to offer was our sin.

Lots of Christmas catalogs have been in the mail. I was thumbing through one to see its unique products when I saw something called *Jesus Soap*. It's a bar of soap with an imprint of Jesus in a pose like the statue of Jesus the Redeemer. The box promotes *Jesus Soap*: "You can be as bad as you want all day, then at night...simply wash away your sins! Cleanse your soul, as well as your hands! This sweet smelling soap will wash away your sins and dirt at the same time." I didn't know it was that easy.

Obviously, it wasn't easy as Jesus gave his life for us. He internally washed us when we placed our trust in him to experience the new birth, the spiritual birth.

Regeneration, spiritual transformation, leads to renewal by the Holy Spirit, a renovation which keeps going till we get to heaven.

Video – I Will Change Your Name.

There's a little more. Promise. 3:7, 8.

Those who have undergone a rebirth have been justified – declared "not guilty" by the Judge of the universe. The past record has been wiped away.

In the days before The Chunnel under the English Channel connected England and France, a man wanted to tour continental Europe in his Rolls-Royce. The car had to go by boat. While enjoying his vacation, something happened to the motor. He contacted the company back in England and asked what he should do. To his surprise, the company flew a mechanic over to repair the vehicle. The man continued his trip but wondered what it was going to cost him. There'd be charges for the mechanic and flights. When he returned to England, he contacted the company to ask about his bill. In a few days he received the anticipated letter: "Dear sir: there is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with a Rolls-Royce."

That's a picture of being justified. There's no record kept by God of our sins.

Being regenerated and justified puts us in the position of heirs – joint heirs with Jesus Christ – who are in line to inherit the kingdom. We won't be on the same level as Jesus, but we'll be able to enjoy all the benefits, advantages and privileges of being an heir. Heaven? Yes. Eternal peace? Yes. Everlasting joy? You betcha. It's the hope (again) of eternal life.

Another Scripture speaks of something else that took place "from the creation of the world" (Revelation 17:8). It comes in Revelation during a description of some of the horrors that will take place on the earth during the seven years when God's wrath is poured out upon people who reject him. There'll be a

mysterious beast with incredible power who helps orchestrate the rebellion against God. At that time “the inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast.”

If there are people “whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world,” there are also people whose names **have been** written in the book of life from the creation of the world. God knew about who would be his since the beginning. He knew we would be his.

3:8 says, “This is a trustworthy saying.” It’s interesting wording since all of the Bible is trustworthy. It’s one of the mechanisms God had Paul use as the human author to make sure we’re paying attention, taking notice. What is written is fully dependable. We can and do stake our lives on it.

These truths are to be stressed so those who’ve trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what it good. More on that to come as we dig into some of the ramifications for our lives.

We’ve gone from sinners to saints because of Jesus Christ. Everything we have flows from what he has done. It's the foundational principle.

Jean and I were at a District retreat Sunday afternoon through Wednesday. The speaker talked about being a warrior/shepherd. I found what he said to be applicable personally but also how some was going to fit into what I was going to preach on for the next 4 weeks.

Part of his focus was remembering how God views us. He did it by contrasting with what Satan thinks of us. “The devil knows your name but calls you by your sin. Jesus knows your sin but calls you by your name... God keeps his eyes on us because he can't take them off us because he loves us. God loves us and there's nothing we can do about it. God says we’re lovable and valuable which is an economic term expressing what he was willing to pay. We’re forgivable and changeable.” He then highlighted what we need to do in return to keep ourselves close to God: “Love Jesus more and more. Bask, reflect on, soak in God's love.”

Take a moment to silently think about God’s love for you.