

# ***Zealous for Good Works***

## ***2. A People Rescued***

### ***Titus 2:14***

Session 2 of the Covenant Baptist Church Camp, Rossmoyne, Perth

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## **A People Rescued**

### **Background**

This is the second of three sermons delivered at the 2009 church camp of Covenant Baptist Church, Rossmoyne, Perth.

### **Preliminary**

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### **Reading before the sermon**

Titus 2:1-15.

### **Introduction**

In his letter to Titus, Paul emphasises good works. Paul was concerned that the Christians in Crete were not what they should have been. There was an ugly gap between their behaviour and the New Testament standard of holiness.

We are considering three pieces of strategic information in Paul's letter. In our first session we considered the situation when good works are impossible. I don't know about you, but I found the material in our first study somewhat depressing. I thought about the battles that sometimes have to be fought, the misunderstandings that arise, the accusations that Titus would face, and the unpleasantness he would have to endure. I tried to balance our last session with hymns that would remind us that there are some very positive notes in the Christian life which remedy the kind of problems described in Titus chapter 1. In this study and the next we will encounter this tremendously encouraging material, the triumph of grace over lost humanity.

Let's look at our second strategic passage, which in fact contains the words of our camp theme, *Zealous for good works*. We read the whole of Chapter 2 earlier. Let's focus now on Titus 2:14:

*<sup>14</sup>who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*

This is speaking of course about the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to save a people. He gave Himself for us, to redeem us. *Redeem* means *to buy back, to release for the payment of a price*. The price that the Lord Jesus paid was His own life: He shed His blood on the cross for us.

The salvation of the Lord Jesus is rich and multifaceted. His death solved many problems for us. Certainly it is true that He redeemed us from the wrath of God which He took in our place. But in our passage, the focus is different. In this passage, we are told that He gave Himself in order to redeem us from *every lawless deed*. And just in case you think it means that the Lord Jesus came to release us from the consequence of our past deeds of lawlessness, Paul clarifies it to show us that he means from lawlessness in our ongoing behaviour. It was to purify for *Himself His own special people, a people who are zealous for good works*. His redemption included releasing us from the control of future lawlessness.

Paul is addressing the problem of bad behaviour among the Christians on Crete. He gives Titus our next piece of strategic information. Paul is considering Christian behaviour. From that perspective he describes the saving work of the Lord Jesus. Paul makes it very obvious that the redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus makes a profound difference in the behaviour of His people.

In our previous session, we looked at a people who were incapable of good works. In this session we will look at a people who have been rescued. It is our Lord's work, and only our Lord's work, that makes good works possible. We must be rescued before we can be capable of good works, and before we can be zealous for good works.

The title of this sermon is *A People Rescued*. In our previous session, we thought about the Cargo Cult people, as we tried to image a people who were incapable of good works. But what picture should we have in our minds for a people who are rescued from inability, who are liberated from a state of being incapable? Do you remember the account in the Bible of Naaman the Syrian? You can read it in detail in 2 Kings 5. I'll just summarise the events.

Naaman was a famous Syrian military commander. He was honoured in the eyes of that society. But he had a dreadful problem. He had the wasting disease of leprosy. There was nothing he could do about it. This one disease

made it impossible for him to be happy; it undid everything else that should have cheered him up. He was willing to try almost anything to remove the problem. We see this because at the suggestion of a captured slave-girl (hardly an emblem of a dominant society) he went to find a prophet in a land he considered despicable. After a bit of diplomatic confusion, he arrived in an irritable mood at the door of the prophet Elisha.

Elisha sent instructions to go and wash seven times in the Jordan. This was too much for Naaman. Elisha hadn't dignified him with a personal ceremony, but had used a messenger to send him on yet another errand to a river far inferior to the ones back home in Syria. Naaman left in a rage (2 King 5:12). And it was with considerable difficulty that Naaman's servants persuaded him to go on that final errand, for the healing that the prophet had promised. And Naaman humbled himself, and went, and was healed. He was a person rescued. His rescue made a profound difference in his outlook. We read this in 2 Kings 5:15-17:

*<sup>15</sup>And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, "Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant." <sup>16</sup>But he said, "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing." And he urged him to take it, but he refused. <sup>17</sup>So Naaman said, "Then, if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth; for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD.*

Naaman was a person rescued; he was a person changed by that rescue. In the same way, those who are rescued by the Lord Jesus, who are redeemed from every lawless deed, are changed: we are a special people, purified by Him, zealous for good works.

In this session, our strategic study is about when good works are possible and indeed inevitable because of the rescue by the Lord Jesus.

### ***When good works are both possible and inevitable***

Here is our second piece of vital strategic information for the well-being and fruitfulness of the church. The redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ makes good works possible for a people who were previously incapable. And nothing else can enable good works.

But it's not just that He makes good works possible; He makes them inevitable. When He rescues people from lawless deeds, He always produces a purified community, zealous for good works. Just like where He rescues from leprosy, he always produces a healthy skin, free of the disease. Otherwise it wouldn't be rescue, would it?

Let's start off by looking at the rescuing Saviour.

#### **What is the rescuing Saviour like?**

What a question! It cannot be answered adequately this side of eternity. Yet it can be answered accurately: the Scriptures were written to teach about Him.

What is the rescuing Saviour like? He is the Eternal Son of God, the beloved of the Father, who has existed from eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is God, the creator and upholder of all things.

And He came into this world, though He was before it, and though He created it. A young maiden in Palestine, over 2,000 years ago, was miraculously with child by the Holy Spirit. A baby boy was born who was fully human. But His humanity has never existed apart from a vital and permanent union with the Second Person of the Godhead. The man Jesus Christ existed only because the Eternal Word was in the world on a mission, sent by His Father.

There are many ways we can describe the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. We could talk about the benefits to the people who are saved. We could talk about how being a Christian improves relations in the home and in society. And we'd be right. And then we could become a bit more spiritual in our discussion and speak about how being a Christian rescues us from worthless lives and from eternal suffering in hell. And we'd be right about that too. The benefits to us from the work of the Lord Jesus are enormous.

But if we started here, by considering the benefits that people receive, and if we made this the main issue, we'd be missing the most important thing. The most important thing about the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ is God's glory. He came to vindicate the glory of God. He came to display the glory of God in His mercy and in His justice. He came to demonstrate the glory of God in His love and in His holiness. Saved people are part of a bigger picture. We have been rescued from a race that hates God, and brought into a community centred in Christ that glorifies God

through good works. The reason we benefit so much from Christ's work is that God has chosen a people, and forever joined together His glory and the good of His people.

And mankind can glorify God only because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. Without Him, mankind would never have been able to glorify God. Unless He had glorified God in our place with perfect obedience and perfect suffering for sin, God could never have been glorified in His holiness and justice when He forgave us. God could never have been glorified in His mercy at the expense of His righteousness. All these things are bound up in Christ. Without Him we could never have been rescued from sin and lawlessness; we could never have become a purified people, capable of and indeed zealous for good works.

Now consider the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled His mission. It was by total and supreme obedience to the will of His Father, right up to the point of death – even death on the cross. He was intent on doing all that the Father required of Him. He was intent on doing it willingly and lovingly. He was intent on doing with all His heart. He was intent on sacrificing Himself because it was the Father's will.

His obedience included the Law of Moses in the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus was a Jew, a member of the covenant people: the entire Mosaic Law was His duty. He obeyed it in all its detail, in all its heart requirements. He told us something of what this meant in the Sermon on the Mount, when He was showing how badly the Pharisees fell short of God's requirements.

But His obedience was not limited to the Law of Moses, which was the duty of every Jew. His obedience extended beyond it to God's requirements for the Messiah, which included the humiliating death of the cross.

As a man who lived in constant spiritual communion with His heavenly Father, He read passages like this:

*He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. <sup>8</sup>He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. <sup>9</sup>And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth (Is 53:7-9).*

He understood that these passages spoke about His mission. Jonathan Edwards gave a special name to this aspect of our Lord's obedience: he said that the Lord Jesus was under Mediatorial Law.<sup>1</sup>

*Christ was subject to the mediatorial law; or that which related purely to his mediatorial office. Such were the commands which the Father gave him to teach such doctrines, to preach the gospel, to work such miracles, to call such disciples, to appoint such ordinances, and finally to lay down his life: for he did all these things in obedience to the commands he had received of the Father, as he often tells us, (John 10:18; 14:31.) These commands he was not subject to merely as man; for they did not belong to other men: nor yet was he subject to them as a Jew; for they were no part of the Mosaic law: but they were commands he had received of the Father, that purely respected his mediatorial office.*

Jonathan Edwards brought out an important point: there are indeed a set of requirements in Scripture that apply only to the Messiah, and the Lord Jesus was perfectly obedient to these as well as to the Mosaic Law.

Of course, not everyone approved of the Lord Jesus. The Jewish leadership were in opposition. Toward the end they were continuously accusing Him of blasphemy. Sometimes they tried to stone Him; eventually they insisted on His crucifixion. Very rarely did men approve of Him. When they did approve, it was mainly because they misunderstood His mission. They liked His miracles: the multiplied food, the healings, and so forth.

But there was one set of eyes that always approved of what the Lord Jesus did: those of God the Father. So we hear at the Lord Jesus' baptism the words of the Father: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt 3:17)*. From the perspective of the Father – the only perspective that finally matters – the Lord maintained a set of absolutely good works. It was only here that a set of perfectly good works has ever been performed – good as defined by God and done to His glory.

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards's *Works Vol. 1*, Banner of Truth, 1987, p575 (in *History of Redemption*).

Now let's change our perspective. Was the Lord Jesus reluctant as He did these good works, or was He energetic? What I am really asking is this: was He *zealous for good works*? And the answer is that He was supremely zealous for good works.

Here are just a few Scriptures to demonstrate His commitment and zeal:

1. John 2:17: *Zeal for Your house has eaten me up.*
2. John 4:34: *My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.*
3. Luke 12:50: *I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished.*

He was totally committed. He made choices for His Father's will, against His own comfort, against His own safety, and against His own survival. You will remember Him in the garden, crying out, *Not My will, but Yours, be done* (Luke 22:42).

He was totally obedient to Mosaic Law and to Mediatorial Law. He was enthusiastic in His obedience, even until the death of the cross. As a man He delivered a set of good works, on behalf of mankind, into the accounting books of His Father. This deposit of immeasurable merit is the basis of the perfect legal acceptance of all His people. Look at Rom 5:19:

*<sup>19</sup>For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*

The phrase *zealous for good works* applies supremely to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what the rescuing Saviour was like: perfectly committed to good works, perfectly zealous for good works. When we understand that properly, it becomes easier to answer our next question: what are His rescued people like?

### **What are His rescued people like?**

Let me answer this question at two levels. First I'll give you an easy summary. Then I'll give you a more detailed explanation.

Here is the easy summary: His rescued people are like Him. We get this straight from Tit 2:14: *that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works* (Tit 2:14).

Now before we get into the nuances of a detailed answer, let's pause for a moment. If we are the Lord's people, it must be true of us that we have been redeemed from every lawless deed, that we are His specially purified people, and that we are zealous for good works. That summary must be true of us if we belong to Him.

Now, let's get into the detail. Sometimes a government pays for a study on a complicated issue. For example, perhaps a company wants to open a new mine. And the government asks a team of experts to recommend whether it should go ahead or not. So they pay these experts to do a study and to write a report. Especially when the issues are complex and controversial, the report has a lot of substantiating detail, and appendices full of information. The writers know that every recommendation they makes might be challenged aggressively. So they are careful to prove each point comprehensively, to base it on credible evidence, and to present the evidence clearly.

If they have done the job properly, as you read the report you will find that the detail does indeed lead to the conclusions, and that the conclusions do indeed support the recommendations.

What you often find in the detail is that the expert has weighed certain factors against each other, and brought evidence to prove why the one should win out over the other. So the report might recommend that the mine should go ahead because of the increased jobs and economic benefits, even though there will be an impact on the nesting habits of birds. I'm sure you know the sort of thing I am talking about. These reports can look like telephone directories, they can get so thick. And the detail can cover several very technical areas, like mathematical modelling, macro-economics, nuclear physics, environmental science, and climatology.

The problem with these reports is that not everyone has the time or the technical expertise to examine all the detail. So these reports often have what is called an Executive Summary. It is meant for executives who are pressed for time, and who are not experts in the technical fields involved in the report. The idea is that they can read the Executive Summary in 5 or 10 minutes to get the conclusions and the recommendations. Of course, it is vital that the Executive Summary must be an accurate summary of the report: even though it omits the detail, it must contain the overall message of the report. It would create all sorts of confusion if the Executive Summary approved the mine while the detailed body of report condemned it.

Now that's what Titus 2:14 gives us here: an Executive Summary, written by the Holy Spirit through Paul, about what the people of God are like. If we are a people who have been rescued, we must be like the Lord who has rescued us: zealous for good works. This is the overall message about what the people of God are like.

Now, let's drill down into some of the detail. Let's get into the body of report, and look at some of the competing factors present, and which ones win out. And there are indeed some competing concerns: after all, Paul was worried about the shortfall in the behaviour of the Christians on Crete; they were not holy and as fruitful as they should have been.

You see, if it were totally automatic that every saved person immediately attained full fruitfulness and maturity, much of the New Testament would never have been written. Paul wouldn't have had to ask Titus to correct things in Crete, to stop some things that were happening, and to ensure that other things happened. Christian maturity and fruitfulness are things that can be delayed and obstructed. The external environment can affect us; our internal environment can too. Let's look at this now. Why is there a shortfall in Christian behaviour?

We have been rescued from something. Before we were *a people rescued for good works*, we were *a people incapable of good works*. There are remains in us of what we were. We come from the place where good works are impossible. And we have been brought into the place where good works are possible and inevitable.

In Byzantium, up until about the 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD, writing was done with ink on papyrus. Then they started using parchment, which lasts a lot longer. Parchment is made from goat or sheepskin. It was expensive, so sometimes old parchments were re-used. There is a special name for these recycled parchments: they are called palimpsests.<sup>2</sup> Palimpsests are of considerable historical interest. One of these parchments started life as a famous work by Archimedes: *On Floating Bodies*.<sup>3</sup> In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Eastern Orthodox monks scraped the parchment clean and copied the contents of a prayer book onto it.

What they copied onto the parchment was probably not very sound. But it gives us an interesting picture, doesn't it? Here was this pre-Christian work by Archimedes, devoted to secular science, crafted under pagan influence. And suddenly (at least in the eyes of the monks) it began a second life, devoted to sacred use. If you looked at it, your abiding impression would be that it was a prayer book from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. But the scraping by the monks didn't remove every trace of the old writing; perhaps to do that would have destroyed the parchment. What was once there so prominently was still there afterwards, ever so faintly, in the background, and modern techniques allow scholars to read this residual writing. That's why palimpsests are so interesting to historians: lost works have been recovered in this way.

We are palimpsests. Our stories were once pre-Christian and unchristian and secular. The writing of the world was all over us. And then we were rescued, and written over with God's handwriting. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said this:

<sup>3</sup>*clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart (2 Cor 3:3).*

And yet, as we look carefully, there are definite evidences that the letters are written on recycled material, on rescued material. Just two passage for you:

<sup>17</sup>*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish (Gal 5:17).*

<sup>19</sup>*For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.* <sup>20</sup>*Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.* <sup>21</sup>*I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.* <sup>22</sup>*For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.* <sup>23</sup>*But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members (Rom 7:19-23).*

We are palimpsests. We are rescued parchments, pulled out of the fire, written with new stories. There will indeed come a time when every trace of the old writing is forever removed. But it won't happen in this life. If you look at

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<sup>2</sup> See the discussion in Rhodes's *How to Write*, Harper, 1993, p20.

<sup>3</sup> Herrin's *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, Penguin, 2007, p125.

us quickly, you will see that our stories are written for God. But look at us more closely, and you will see evidences of very different stories.

Tit 2:14 started us at the Executive Summary. We saw that we are like the Lord Jesus. Then we had a look at the detail in the body of the report, and we saw that the Executive Summary was indeed accurate, but that there were competing concerns in the detailed section. Our story truly is that we are zealous for good works, but that story is written over a faint original: that we were once a people incapable of good works, disobedient, abominable, disqualified for every good work.

The new story will always win out. If someone is genuinely rescued, at the centre of his being he will be are battling the old nature, and lamenting his imperfections. His setting might be confused, and he himself might be confused, and that might stunt the expression of zeal, or it might misdirect the zeal. But that zeal for good works will be there.

We are dealing with Paul's second piece of strategic information to Titus about good works. There are a people capable of good works, because they are a people rescued. Now our next question is *how do we use this strategic information?*

### **How do we use this strategic information?**

The people who are rescued will be zealous for good works. They will respond to the truth. So Titus must sound a different note in the churches from what they have been accustomed to hearing. It's not just that the useless and destructive discussions and teachings about the Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth must stop. The aim isn't simply that a serene silence must pervade the churches. The bad doctrines must be replaced with sound teaching. Titus must present a different set of claims in the churches.

Paul's first direction in using this strategic information is that Titus must provide a clear, contrasting alternative. So we read in Tit 2:1 that Titus, in contrast to the false teachers and those influenced by them, must speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine. The rest of Tit 2:1-10 shows what this means for the different groups and roles in the church: older men, older women, younger men, younger women, and servants.

And Paul tells Titus how he should go about doing this, in such a way that people cannot dismiss what he is saying because of inappropriate behaviour on his part. Titus must show integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned (Tit 2:7-8). Remember we looked at how Titus would be unpopular in our previous session? Some people would be waiting to pounce on any mistake that Titus made to try to dismiss him.

We must never forget this. We must never presume that the enemies of the church will display a Christian maturity. We must never hope that they will say something like, 'Well, everyone has failings, so let's leave his behaviour as a side issue and just focus on whether what he is saying is true.' The enemies of the church and the enemies of sound doctrine don't reason like that. They latch onto any inconsistency they can find, and use it to dismiss everything we are saying. They magnify every failing into a terminal case of hypocrisy.

It is especially those who are appointed to speak right doctrine, and to sound a different note from the world, who must behave appropriately. It strikes me as somehow inconsistent for an Elder to have embarrassing public lapses of maturity, and then to vilify unbelievers for lacking the maturity to 'see it in context.' For example, if people encounter us, and get the impression that we treat the Bible as a joke, then it shouldn't come as a complete surprise to us if they don't take it seriously when we speak to them about life and death issues from Scripture.

Now the reason that Titus must sound this different note, of course, is because of who the people of God actually are. They are *a people rescued*. Let's read Titus 2:11-15 again, which includes our strategic passage:

*<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <sup>12</sup>teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup>looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup>who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. <sup>15</sup>Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.*

People who say they are Christians are either right or wrong. If they are right, they are a people rescued. They are zealous for good works. That zeal is to emerge in proper behaviour. And that zeal is channelled into proper behaviour by having suitably qualified teachers who remind them of essential doctrines – about their rescue and their Rescuer. Titus is to do it. And when he leaves, Paul will send others (Tit 3:12). And by the time those others have left, this function of godly and evangelical teaching must be woven into the permanent fabric of the church by having a perpetual institution, the Elders, who are charged with maintaining it until our Lord returns.



And the different note that Titus must sound must be clear. The church should not be a comfortable place for those who are deceived about their profession of faith. Of course, it is not that we like to make people uncomfortable just for the sake of it. But look at what is at stake. Think of Matt 7:21-23 where the Lord tells people that He never knew them, after they believed that they had been serving Him with all sorts of good works. And He says to them, 'Depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness.' They thought they were doing good works; and He says that they were incapable of good works: all they did was lawlessness.

Do you think it's possible to be so diplomatic in churches that unsaved people in membership can never realise that they are unsaved? Do you think it's possible that in some cases they got the idea that they were doing work for the Lord because their churches or so-called churches assured them that their works were accepted by Him. Ann and I know an older woman in a bigger mainstream denomination in South Africa who doesn't want to discuss salvation, but assures us that the church secretary knows who she is! Paul could say this to the Ephesian Elders:

*<sup>26</sup>“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. <sup>27</sup>“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27).*

Why did Paul say he was free of the blood of all men? Was he insisting that he hadn't killed anyone during his ministry? No: he was saying that he could not be held responsible for people who were unsaved, because he had told them everything in the counsel of God. He told them how they would be judged. He told them how to be saved. He told them how they must behave if they were saved. He gave them the information they needed to undeceive them if they were mistaken. If necessary, as a final resort, he confronted them or excommunicated them. If they did go to hell, it was not because he had watched them and done nothing about it, or because he had kept them amused with irrelevancies while he should have been dealing in life and death issues.

How else do we use this strategic piece of information? We preach the gospel. The church is an institution saturated with grace. We need to hear the gospel after we are Christians. We need to be rescued by it when we are unsaved, and we need to be fed by it after we are saved. The gospel and its ongoing implications are what the church is all about. The gospel creates the church and it cleanses the church.

During the Evangelical Awakening, while George Whitefield was preaching, there was a group of foolish young men known as the Hell-fire Club. The name of one of them was Mr Thorpe of Bristol. Let's hear from Spurgeon about Mr Thorpe's experience.

*There was one who went to hear Mr. Whitefield – a member of the “Hell-fire Club,” a desperate fellow. He stood up at the next meeting of his abominable associates, and he delivered Mr. Whitefield's sermon with wonderful accuracy, imitating his very tone and manner. In the middle of his exhortation he converted himself, and came to a sudden pause, sat down broken-hearted, and confessed the power of the gospel. That club was dissolved. That remarkable convert was Mr. Thorpe, of Bristol, whom God so greatly used afterwards in the salvation of others.<sup>4</sup>*

Christians are *a people rescued*. We are not people worthy; we are a people rescued. We are rescued by the gospel. We are fed by the gospel. We are motivated by gospel demands, which we receive in a gospel context. And God's instruments to achieve this are suitably qualified ministers who don't undermine this process through glaring flaws. And if anyone does sit among us for an extended period of time, and goes on to a lost eternity, we should be able to say without a shadow of self-doubt that it is not our fault.

## **Conclusion**

We have been looking at the second piece of strategic information given by Paul when he was concerned about the shortfall in holiness in the churches in Crete. We have been considering a people rescued. We thought about Naaman the Syrian. He had a problem that he could do nothing about, and he did what God said, and he came out rescued. From that point on he lived differently, and he thought differently about God.

As we considered what Paul said about a people rescued, it made us think about when good works are both possible and inevitable.

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<sup>4</sup> Spurgeon's *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Vol. 34*, Sermon 2010, *The Word a Sword*, Digital Ages Library 2005. See also Billingsley's *Life of George Whitefield*, Alden, 1889, p271n (available for download on [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)).

So we asked first what the rescuing Saviour was like. We considered the Lord Jesus' mission, and how supremely willing His obedience was. We saw that He rendered perfect, loving, heart obedience to His Father, both under the requirements of the Law of Moses, and under the specific requirements for the Messiah. And we agreed that the phrase *zealous for good works* applies perfectly and absolutely to Him.

And then we asked what His rescued people are like. Our verse in Titus gives us an Executive Summary: we are like Him. Then we considered a detailed, technical report. We are palimpsests: we have His new work written in us, but we started off as a people incapable. That old story has been scraped off and done away with. When you look at us you see the new story clearly; but if you look at us more closely, you can see that there was an earlier contradictory story.

And then we looked at how to apply this strategic information in our churches. The stakes are high. People's eternal destinies are involved. If we have low standards in our churches we won't be properly fruitful, and if some among us are unsaved they will be more easily misled. We must preach the gospel in our churches, and we must draw out fruitfulness from God's rescued people by presenting them with gospel demands in a climate of gospel appreciation. It's the gospel that rescues, it's the gospel that feeds, and it's the gospel that motivates. Remember, the gospel has demands for us both before and after conversion.

If we have the same desires for the church that Paul had, we will take this seriously. Paul's desire for the church is the Holy Spirit's desire for the church, and it is Christ's desire for the church. We are dealing with vital issues here: of glorifying God.

Now, let me ask this. Have you been rescued? Young people, have you been rescued? Don't think that you have endless time. When I was about 12 years old, I was fishing at a friend's farm. My fishing rod fell into a dam. The water was so dirty, it was totally black. I thought it was deep, but as I found out, it wasn't even up to my knees. I dived in and hit my head on the concrete bottom. I could have broken my neck and drowned. Don't think you have endless time. If you haven't already, come to the Lord Jesus Christ and ask Him to save you. What about us older people? Have we all been rescued? As you get older it becomes easier to learn the right things to say to stay out of trouble. Are you reading your Bibles all the time, are you making the most of the preaching you hear, to make sure that you are not mistaken and that you are indeed saved? Are you making your calling and election sure?

I ended our last session by saying that it was the story of Adam. It was the problem of what sinners wanted to turn the church into. Well our story in this session is the story of the Second Adam. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Second Adam. This story has been about what He has made the church, and what He desires it to be. It has been about Him as head of His body, the church.