

ISSUES: Encouragement

Titus 3:5-7 *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

Lesson: Read 2 Corinthians 7

I have really enjoyed reading some of Paul's letters over these last few weeks. God uses Paul to address a number of issues that we face too. We can certainly be encouraged by Paul's letters. We have salvation, an ongoing relationship with God and we are His heirs having hope of eternal life! We are being restored!

➤ What does it mean to be restored?

Restoration is a return of something to a former, original, or unimpaired condition -Restitution of something taken away or lost -Putting something back into a former position. Titus 2:14 says that He gave Himself to redeem us and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own. We were already His and yet He bought us back anyway, redeemed us and continues to purify us. We were all lost. He is putting us back to our original condition before we were impaired by sin. He is returning us to our former position as His children.

➤ Where does encouragement come from?

Titus 2 talks about things that Paul is instructing Titus to teach. If Titus is to teach others - that would imply that they can learn. If they can learn - that would imply that they can get better than they are today. If they can get better than they are today – that would imply that we can too if only we will obey what we have learned. It's encouraging to know that we can move towards a deeper, more intimate relationship with God. Continued, improved relationship with the Creator of the Universe is possible. James 4:8 is a promise! Draw near to God and He *will* draw near to you. He *wants* us to be restored. Try to wrap your head around that. It's easy to understand we want a relationship with God –He's God– but think about the fact that He wants a relationship with us – and He is willing to work and send His only Son to die in order to get our relationship back to the way that He designed it. As we look at the issues of life, it's encouraging when we look at how He loves us!

➤ How can we find encouragement in rebuke and hurt?

God loves us just the way we are, but He also loves us too much to leave us just the way we are. Change is sometimes painful, but in our relationship with Jesus pain it's better than no change. Sometimes in order to change direction, we need someone to show us where we're off track and sometimes it's hard to turn. The Holy Spirit convicts us and sometimes He uses people around us to do so. Not for the pain, but for the benefit that results from that pain. In Titus 1:13 Paul orders a sharp rebuke – but look at the reason! "...so that they will be sound in the faith". God never wastes a hurt and we believe according to Romans 8:28 that all things – even hurt – work together for the good of those that love Him. What could be more to our good than a deeper relationship with Jesus? He is always working in our lives. The washing and rebirth of the Holy Spirit is continual and ongoing. If it's painful but results in repentance and repentance results in a better relationship with Jesus, then the pain is worth it! Take encouragement in pain because God is working!

➤ Do you need encouragement?

Everyone needs encouragement. Maybe this is your moment to allow God to restore your relationship with Him. Don't wait –take this opportunity right now. Find encouragement in Jesus. We have all got Earthly issues. God can encourage you there too if only you will let Him handle those issues. Maybe you just want to grow closer to Jesus. He wants that too and is ready to build the relationship if you will continue to draw near to Him, learn about Him and then *obey* what you've learned. Just the knowledge isn't enough. We've got to act. Take a moment to make the commitment that the Holy Spirit is calling you to and then maybe share it with your small group and ask them to hold you accountable and encourage you to keep that commitment.

Daily Devotional Reading:

- Day #1: Titus 1
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:

- Day #2: Titus 2
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:

- Day #3: Titus 3
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:

- Day #4: Philemon
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:

- Day #5: 2 Corinthians 7
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word: