

Titus 3 – Remind Them to be Who They Are

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Introduction

Here we are. Ready to go through the last chapter of the book of Titus. Titus, a trusted friend and brother of Paul's has been left to put what remains in order. We have seen that the churches on Crete are likely new and definitely in need of leadership. Paul has given Titus some guidelines on who he is to put in positions of leaderships and why the church here on Crete and the universal Church of Christ is in need of leaders.

We have seen that the Gospel changes lives. It moves people from relying on their own devices to trusting in sound doctrine. Behavior is a sure indicator of whether or not the Spirit is living in you or not. And that the soon coming return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is what should spur us on to right living. We also know that living out a righteous life by the grace of God is one way we draw people to believe in the Lord Jesus.

And today we will see the last task Paul has for Titus. He will remind them what their reaction to the world ought to be, and why it ought to be that way. He'll remind them where the power to live a righteous life comes from and what they are to move away from and what they are to move toward.

In all of this Clearcreek Chapel, I pray we see the steady and glorious power of a God who would save, a Son who would return, and a Spirit who would be poured out for our good and his glory. May we walk away from the book of Titus shining bright the light of the Gospel, for our world does not look all that different from the world Titus was left to put in order.

Prayer.

God's word says this in Titus, chapter three, verse one.

Titus' Task

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Paul again has a task for Titus. The task of reminding. First, and I believe a theme that carries through verses one and two, is that they are to be "submissive to rulers and authorities". Please remember where Titus is, and the reputation of the people he has been left to serve. These are Cretans. They "...are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Or should we say that some of them were "liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons". These folks have some growing and changing to do. They are in the process of being transformed into the likeness of their Savior. Since that is so, Titus is to remind them how they should act. And we should remember as believers in Christ

that we are living in the same time as those Paul is writing to. We are living between the resurrection and the second coming of Christ. What applies to the readers of Titus, applies to us as well.

They are to submit to rulers and authorities. When called upon to do things you don't like, submit. When asked to follow rules you think are silly, submit. When treated as second class citizens because of your love for Christ, submit.

- • They are to be obedient. When they tell you to pay taxes, obey. It all came from God in the first place, surely he'll supply all you need after taxes. When they post a speed limit sign, obey. When they ask you to turn in all of your guns, obey. God is not giving you a choice here. And who is your ultimate protector anyhow? As long as they are not asking you to sin...obey!
- • They are to be ready for every good work. Is that you? Are you poised to do the work of Christ in this world? Are you ready to be the hands and feet of Christ to a dying world? They are to be ready. We are to be ready.
- • They are to speak evil of no one. Are you able to have a conversation about our rulers and authorities without speaking evil? You can disagree without speaking evil of someone, can't you?
- • They are to avoid quarreling. Seems almost impossible in our day to discuss rulers and authorities without quarrelling doesn't it. We, Christians, should be the ones setting the example of how to do so. Remember, this kingdom is not ours. We belong to another, one who rules and reigns from Heaven. You need not argue things of secondary importance. Be about the things, as Paul says, of first importance. Be about the Gospel. After all, if the political argument goes totally your way, and the person you are talking with dies and goes to Hell...what did you gain? Nothing.
- • They are to be gentle. In our time people have taken it upon themselves to punch the political opponent in the face. It's a bit of a, "if you can't beat 'em, beat 'em" philosophy. This can never be here or in Crete. We are to live differently than the masses. We are to make our Savior known by our gentleness. Again, your political slant should not be the thing you are most knowledgeable of. You should be most knowledgeable about scripture. Be about the Gospel. You must, "**always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.**" (1 Pet. 3)
- • Lastly, Paul spreads the blanket out wider to include, "**all people**". Who they are, "**to show perfect courtesy**". When push comes to shove, don't. We are to be people known for our preference of others. We are to speak softly and leave the big stick at home. But to do so we will have to hold the things of this world in an open hand. Willing to be relieved of them for the better things of Heaven.

As Paul did in the previous chapters of Titus he will do here. He'll give us the reason for the task at hand. God's word says this in verse three.

Paul's Reason

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

There it is! How can you live out all of those behaviors listed above? By remembering the truth about ourselves. We are just like the people we now look at as the adversary. Were we not foolish before we were wise? Were we not disobedient before we obeyed? Were we not led astray before being placed on the righteous path. Were we not slaves to various passions and pleasures before becoming slaves to Christ? Did we not pass our days in malice and envy before we were kind and content? Did we not hate others before we were loving others? Yes, of course we did.

We were all of these things and there is a word for the emotion we should feel when we recognize this. The emotion is compassion. Defined, compassion is simply a, "Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it." Oh that the church of Jesus Christ would have compassion on a lost world headed for an eternity with out Him. For it was not us who turned our lives around and made us who we are, so why are we tempted to be puffed up with pride? Because we have forgotten the answer to the Psalmist question, "From where does my help come"?

Paul hasn't forgotten the answer to the question. God's word says this in verse four through seven.

God's Provision in Christ

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Paul says help came "when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared"! Not by your, interesting choice of words here, "works done...in righteousness". Not even your righteous works were enough to save you. So much for the current thinking that you might be able to squeak by since, surely, your good works out weigh your bad. Paul says it doesn't matter. The only thing that could/did save you is the mercy of God himself. So who are you to hold anything over or against the unsaved?

Paul goes on to explain how God saved you at his appearing and he lists two things. The washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. You were filthy in your sin, so much so that even "all our righteousnesses [were] as filthy rags". Nothing could have made you clean apart from the washing of the Holy Spirit and nothing could bring you to life again but the renewal of the Holy Spirit. The Holy spirit has made you clean and new. Your dead and dirty self is no more so stop acting like you did when your were.

And just how did this happen? It says, the spirit was poured out us richly through Christ. He didn't just give you enough. He poured the Spirit out richly. God does nothing just to get a passing grade. He does it to reflect the riches of himself in you. The next time you think you have what it takes to do the tasks God assigned to you that day, I want you to come back to this passage and review it. What about a richly poured out Holy Spirit by your beloved Savior is not enough for your day?! And if that's not enough look at the reason Paul wrote the verse.

That by this grace that has appeared, that being the Lord Jesus Christ we might become heirs - we might actually be Gods kids due to the hope we have of eternal life. Now don't read this as if your eternal security is up for grabs. It is not. But our inheritance is not yet complete. Our inheritance is as sure as the nose on your face, but it will be inherited in its fullness at the coming of Christ when we are taken out of this world and given our complete, or eternal, inheritance in glory.

Paul continues... God's word says this in verse eight.

To Good Works

The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

What is trustworthy and what does Paul want Titus to insist on? All of the things he has told him to teach the young men, young women, old men and old women. This are the things he is to insist on that they will know what it is they are to do and what they are to devote themselves to. They could, after all, devote themselves to arguing with one another, with endless political debates, with slander and drinking, but Paul says no, no you are to to devote yourselves to good works. Works of righteousness spurned on by the grace poured out in the Holy Spirit by Jesus in the hopes of an eternity with him. Insist on Gospel living Titus. Insist on Gospel living Clearcreek Chapel. Nothing else is excellent. Nothing else is profitable. Nothing else will show the rest of the world that you belong to Christ and no one else!

...and away from foolishness and division

But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

So there are sayings that are trustworthy, and now Paul address things that are "unprofitable and worthless". Not only are then not going reap you any gains, but they have no value whatsoever. Worthless, he call them. What kinds of things are these? They are foolish controversies; Things containing no wisdom at all. We can only imagine the kinds of things Titus was up against with the "circucision party", but after silencing and rebuking them, he is to stay out of foolish controversies. Don't get into the ring, Paul seems to say, the fight isn't even worth having. Geneologies; I'm sure the "circumcision party" liked to through up in Titus' face that he

wasn't a Jew and just look at the family history I have, they might have said. Paul says, don't have the conversation. It's worthless. Dissensions, If they want to argue, don't. Often an argument ends when there is no other side to rile up. Quarrels about the law; I'm sure these were many and often as well. I mean we have these in our own day. People make up laws to suit their weaknesses and then tell you to obey them. Alcohol anyone? tobacco anyone? Find the prohibition of these things in God's word and I'll gladly agree. You can't, so let's not quarrel about them. All of these things are "unprofitable and worthless" especially compared to the sound doctrine Titus has been tasked with teaching! Teach the Gospel and let all else fade into the background where it belongs.

And if they won't let it go when you do. Warn them two times. Two times! That's how serious Paul takes this. If they don't get the point after two times. If they don't see that the Gospel is far more important than their little hobby horse... "have nothing more to do with him". It doesn't say, "keep trying to win him over". It doesn't say, "keep them around because they are headed for hell and we could never kick them out". It says, "have nothing more to do with him". Do not let people destroy the church over petty issues. Get rid of them. You can do so with a clear conscience as they are "warped and sinful", valuing what's important to them over what is important to God, and "self-condemned" in that they are responsible for their condemnation, it having come from their own lips. This is a hard passage, but let it sink in. All of us have been warned here that we are to be about God's work, not ours. Don't let this be any of us Clearcreek.

Paul will close his letter to Titus in the next three verses. He'll address people and practical needs as he usually does in closing, but if you listen close you can hear him reiterate some of his themes from the letter. God's word says this in verses twelve through fifteen.

Closing

When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. 13 Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. 14 And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.

See that Zenas and Apollos lack nothing he says. We are to care for our brothers and sister in abundance, not "just enough to get by", but so well that they lack nothing! Because as the rest of his letter has made clear, you who had nothing, have been given everything, and should do the same for your brothers and sisters.

What will it accomplish, this giving so much that they lack nothing? The people of God will learn to do what Paul has been hinting at all along. Remember, in chapter one the Cretans were unfit for any good work. In chapter two Titus was to be a model of good works and all of the redeemed were to be zealous for good works. And now we see here at the end that they, and we, are to devote ourselves to good works. We've come full circle. From the bad example all the way to here. Where it is now our turn to devote ourselves to good works. This is how we help our brothers and sister in urgent need and it is the fruit of the Spirit in the life of those changed

by the appearing and soon coming of our God and Savior Jesus Christ!

All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith.
Grace be with you all.

Paul signs off with these three little sentences at the end. They seem to be just a last word for closing out what's important, but there is more here. How does Paul think of the family of God in Crete? He has been talking them up with everyone around him. The far off family of God is brought near to this relatively new Church. "All" of them send greetings to a far off family they will likely never meet. Reminding them that they are part of a larger community. Who is part of this community? Those who love us in the faith". We love them, just as they love us. Sounds familiar doesn't it?

"Grace be with you all" says the Apostle through his true child in the faith. This grace has made all the difference in Paul and Titus' life and he is sure that it will in Crete as well. After all it has appeared as the Lord Jesus Christ and that was enough to turn the world upside down and save all those who would believe in his work on the cross. And it will appear again at his second coming when the world will once again be turned upside down as he gathers his people unto himself. In the meantime obey the trustworthy word as taught and devote yourselves to good works. Grace has given you all you need to do so.

Closing of the series

Be the model.

Don't be unfit for any good work.