

Justified By His Grace

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Primary Scriptures from Titus 3:1-11

I. Introduction

- a. The apostles were sent by Jesus to establish His church in the world after His ascension to heaven.
 - i. So the apostles were in the first generation sent by Jesus.
- b. The apostles were not going to live forever on the earth, so they needed to make sure the church was firmly established before their deaths.
 - i. And they needed to pass on the truth, delivered to them by the Lord, to the next generation after them.
 - ii. This passing on of the truth and the faith is what needs to happen in every generation, including all of us here.
- c. The New Testament, as we know it, was being written by the apostles, and those authorized by them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, during this time period in the first century A.D.
- d. The 'book' of Titus in the New Testament is a letter, written by the apostle Paul to Titus around 65 A.D.
 - i. Titus was one of Paul's faithful servants. He was part of that next generation that was helping forward the growth of the church in the world.
- e. In Titus 1:5, Paul writes to Titus, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you."
 - i. The implication is that there were some groups of believers there, but they did not appear to have complete structured churches there.
 - ii. We read in the book of Acts, chapter 2, that there were Cretans present at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured

out upon the people. Likely these spread the faith, such as they understood it at the time, back to the island of Crete.

- iii. Paul, by his apostolic authority, now has given authority to Titus to establish fully constituted churches in every city of Crete by appointing elders in each city.
- iv. One of the qualifications for elder given in Titus 1:9 is that the elder is “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

- 1. We are seeing in our day many denominations, most recently the United Methodists, that have appointed elders that do not hold fast the faithful word, and as a result they are departing quickly from the truth delivered by the Lord.

- v. Nevertheless, it is that faithful word that has been passed down to many faithful churches in our day, through many generations, that we must also faithfully pass on to the generations that follow us.

- 1. We shall be looking at some of that faithful word today.

- vi. We are also told in Titus that Cretans generally had a widespread reputation for being “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” (1:12)

- 1. So the cultural context of Titus was difficult and upside down as is our own current cultural context, and yet he was commissioned by Paul to establish churches throughout the island.

- f. In the chapter leading up to our passage in chapter 3 of Titus, Paul is giving instructions to Titus, to give to people in various strata of life, for how they as Christians ought to live.

- i. Such living is in great contrast to the patterns set forth in the surrounding culture.

- g. When we get to chapter 3, in the first eleven verses, we see the following sections:

- i. What are some behaviors that should characterize all Christians?
- ii. What were people like before becoming Christians?
- iii. What did God do to change such a wretched people into a glorious people?
- iv. What are some dangers that can get us off track?

II. How Christians Ought To Be (Titus 3:1-2)

- a. Paul begins by instructing Titus to “Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient...”
 - i. Years earlier Paul had written to the Romans explaining why this obedience is important. In Romans 13:1-2 we read, “Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God.”
 - ii. So our submission to rulers and authorities is a testimony of our submission to God and to our belief that God ordains and orders all things.
 - 1. Rulers and authorities can refer to anything from the top political person, to a parent, to a sports coach, to a camp counselor.
 - iii. And yet not only do rulers and authorities at times make foolish decisions, but sometimes even oppose God as in Acts 4:19
 - 1. So we as Christians are to submit to and obey the ruling authorities except when they conflict with the commands, directives, or principles of God.
 - iv. A readiness, willingness, and practice of obedience to authorities prepares our heart to be ready and willing to obey God.
 - v. But a consistent practice of disobeying authorities and rebelling against them makes our natural reaction to any

authority, including God, to be one of skepticism, doubt, and rebellion.

- vi. Here too we see the importance for children, even in their youngest years, to learn and practice obedience to their parents for it will foster an obedience to God.
- b. Paul also writes here that they are “to be ready for every good deed.”
- i. If our disposition is rebellion, then our posture toward anything presented to us from outside ourselves is resistance.
 - ii. Rather, we should be anticipating opportunities for good deeds because we know they will arise and God is glorified by them.
 - iii. Ephesians 2:10 states, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
 - iv. So, we were made for good works; God prepares them for us to do; so then we should be ready to do them.
 - v. Too often I am surprised at such an opportunity when it arises, because I was looking for a different sort of opportunity.
 - 1. Rather than being surprised, we should be, as in Titus, ready for every good deed.
- c. Continuing on in verse 2, we read that they and we are to malign no one.
- i. We are not to speak evil of others or slanderous untruths about them.
 - ii. We are not to tear others down whether in front of them or behind their backs.
 - iii. We are to speak truthfully to and about others, yet without spreading gossip or undermining others.
 - iv. There may well be cases where we must truthfully warn others about someone who is behaving wickedly, but we must do so without malice or spite, and perhaps with sadness.
- d. Paul also writes that Christians are to be uncontentious

- i. Contentiousness is a combative spirit whereby we are trying to forward our own fleshly goals by way of confrontation, argumentation, or oppositional behavior.
 - ii. Paul writes in Romans 12:18, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”
 - iii. So we are not to be looking for ways to contend with others, especially as the primary or even secondary means of forwarding our interests.
 - iv. We are children of the Prince of Peace, so contentiousness is unbecoming of us.
- e. Next, we are to be gentle.
 - i. Our disposition and demeanor should not be harsh or rough.
 - ii. We are to be wise in our dealings with each other, not pushing people unnecessarily, but relying on the Spirit to move them.
 - iii. Gentleness is using only the amount of force needed to accomplish the good end in mind
 - 1. When you pick up an egg, you apply just enough pressure to hold it, but not so much as to break it.
- f. Summing up the attitude behind these things, Paul writes that the Christian should be “showing every consideration for all men.”
 - i. As such, we are to be other-focused rather than self-focused.
 - ii. We are not to be driven by others, but led by the Spirit, we are to consider how we may be a blessing to others in such a way as to adorn the gospel of Christ.
 - iii. The “all” here references people in all strata of life as Paul has just been writing about in the previous chapter.
 - iv. So as much consideration is to be given to bondslaves as to older men, or even rulers and authorities.

III. How People Once Were Before Becoming Christians (Titus3:3)

- a. Having written about what should characterize the Christian, Paul now instructs Titus to remind them, as we also ought to remember, that they and we once exhibited the characteristics of unbelievers.
- b. Firstly, “we also once were foolish ourselves.”

- i. That is, we pursued those things which ultimately are vanities; they are unwise, unprofitable in God's economy, and destructive both to ourselves and others around us.
- c. Next, we were disobedient – to God first, but also to parents, to teachers, to various authorities – thinking we know better and are not bound by any constraints, effectively making ourselves out to be God.
- d. Further, we were deceived.
 - i. Namely, we thought we knew what was right, what was good for us and others, but we believed the old lies of the evil one who said, “Indeed, has God said...?” and who consistently offers a shortcut to satisfy our fleshly desires.
 - ii. So he tells us that neglecting our children, even murdering them in utero, is needed for us to have a successful, liberated life.
 - iii. Put that way it sounds preposterous, but that is exactly what is happening today, which indicates the depth and power of deception in which we once walked.
- e. Beyond these, the Cretans and we were “enslaved to various lusts and pleasures.”
 - i. So true when we were living for ourselves, in bondage to sin, we pursued lusts (unbridled, passionate, self-focused, driving desires), and pleasures were the goal, so that we would feel good, thinking that to be ultimate fulfillment and even purpose in life.
 - ii. It is a near-term, shallow, base, even animalistic focus.
 - iii. There was no greater governing purpose.
 - iv. These pursuits are the opposite of the type of living Paul earlier described for the Christian.
 - v. Even as believers we are tempted by such things, and at times succumb, but we have been freed such that we do not have to do such things.

- vi. Previous to our salvation, and as is the case with all unbelievers, we were, and they are slaves to such passions and cannot help but pursue them.
- vii. That does not mean that every unbeliever pursues every passion, but it means they have no higher purpose beyond the earthly and are enslaved to serve such purposes.
- f. Paul then indicates we were “spending our li(ves) in malice and envy.”
 - i. As unbelievers our lives were self-focused, so if anyone was hindering us from pursuing what we desired, we at times had malice toward them, seeing them as mere obstacles in our pursuit of earthly goals.
 - ii. Further, if we saw others being more effective at obtaining what we desired, we would envy them, not wanting their good, but wanting their goods, or being satisfied at their loss of goods.
- g. Paul goes on to write that we were “hateful, hating one another.”
 - i. Whether someone obstructed our pursuit of pleasure, or did not give us what we wanted, or did not serve us how we wanted, or expressed disagreement with our thoughts, we took offense and easily moved to hating that person as an enemy.
 - ii. This attitude is rampant in America today as in an affluent society with a focus on earthly pleasures and constant encouragement to put the self above all, people are being driven to such hatred of one another.
 - 1. Hatred is multiplied if the other person is not in person, but on the phone, or social media, or email; and somehow it feels just being hateful in those cases.
- h. Now this reminder of how we were and unbelievers are, is not so we may look down on unbelievers, but rather so we may, with understanding, introduce them to the One who changed us, and

continues to change us, in the deepest recesses of our being, so that they too might know and enjoy Him.

IV. The Gospel (Titus 3:4-8)

- a. In such a condition as described in verse 3, we had no hope in and of ourselves for we did only evil, so we needed a Savior to rescue us.
- b. So in verse 4 Paul writes, “But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us.”
 - i. Such was our hopeless predicament that no mere human could save us, only God Himself.
 - ii. How did His kindness and love appear?
 - iii. It appeared in the incarnation, in Jesus, the Son of God who came at that time, born as a man, not to condemn the world, but save it.
 - iv. Salvation was by His kindness because in no way was it earned or deserved.
 - v. Man had marred the image of God in himself, so God sent the perfect image of Himself in the form of perfect man to trade places with us on the cross.
 1. That exchange is succinctly stated in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
- c. Next, we are told in Titus 3:5 that “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy.”
 - i. It was clear from our former condition that we needed a savior.
 - ii. However, fallen humanity exhibits a broad range of degrees of fallenness.
 - iii. Accordingly, when we ask ourselves why God would save this person and not that person, we naturally think there was something good, something worthwhile in the person saved that did not reside in the one who is not.

- iv. But this reasoning is based ultimately on salvation by merit, that somehow we deserved to be saved, or at the very least, it would be beneficial to God to save us.
- v. Verse 5 clearly disabuses us of that notion.
 - 1. First, the reason for God saving us is clearly stated to be not because of any deeds we have done in righteousness.
 - 2. Second, Paul writes that it is “according to His mercy.”
 - a. God in His mercy has not given His saved ones what they deserve, namely eternal punishment for their sins against an infinitely holy God.
 - b. Rather He has given us salvation, which we do not deserve.
- d. Then, in showing us mercy, we are told it is “by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”
 - i. So God sovereignly acts on us, not based on what we have done, and He cleanses us from our sin by regenerating our hearts, i.e. taking away our heart of stone and giving us a heart of flesh.
 - ii. And then He renews us by His Holy Spirit, meaning we are transformed day by day by the work of the Spirit in the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2) to be conformed to the image of His Son to which conformation we were predestined (Romans 8:29).
- e. Yet God could not simply ignore our filthiness, our sins, and pour out His Holy Spirit upon a defiled people.
 - i. There is a need not only for washing, but also for atonement.
 - ii. We are told in verse 6 that God poured out His Spirit “upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”
 - iii. It was Christ, in His propitiatory act upon the cross who saved us.
 - iv. So it was through that act that God then could pour out His Spirit upon us to dwell in us.

- v. Further to note, the Spirit comes not only because of Jesus Christ, but through Him.
 - vi. The Trinity works in concert.
- f. Thus we understand, as stated plainly in verse 7, we are justified by His grace.
- i. Grace is being given something good that we do not deserve.
 - ii. God gave us salvation, which we in no way deserve.
 - iii. It is entirely by His grace.
 - iv. From the foolishness described in verse 3, right through verses 4, 5, 6, and 7 we read of an undeserved salvation being accomplished by God alone without respect to our own works or even our making a decision for Christ.
 - v. Salvation is a monergistic act of God.
 - 1. Mono means one, and erg means work, so it is just one doing the work.
 - vi. The evidence of our regeneration, salvation, and renewal is our choice to follow God and put our trust in Jesus Christ.
 - 1. If we do not do so, we are not saved, not speaking causally, but evidentially.
 - vii. Then Paul gives a telos, an end, for which we are saved, namely that, “we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”
 - viii. It is not that we are heirs by ourselves or for our own sake but as stated in Romans 8:17 we are “fellow heirs with Christ.”
 - ix. That is, we will enjoy the inheritance of Christ, which is all good things and all redeemed people, together with Christ.
 - x. There will be such tremendous joy with Christ and all the saints in the presence of God the Father in fellowship with the Spirit.
 - xi. This is the hope of eternal life of which Paul writes, not simply that we live forever, but with whom and in what state we live forever.

- xii. And it bears repeating that hope here means a sure expectation of future events that will undoubtedly come to pass in due time.
- g. This section is one of the places where we are given a glorious understanding of the love of God reaching down to us to save us from a hopeless state, and do a work in us to prepare us for an eternal blissful state.
- h. Then, in verse 8, Paul is somehow compelled to state, “This is a trustworthy statement,” likely because of the culture of lying in Crete to promote other ends.
 - i. There are times when people tell each other false statements to calm each other, e.g. ‘Everything will be OK.’
 - ii. Such comforting lies are, in the end, not comforting at all, but now in addition to the trauma at hand, we have to deal with being lied to by someone who claims to care for us.
 - iii. Paul is making clear his statement about salvation by the grace of Jesus Christ and the hope of eternal life with Him are steadfastly true and trustworthy.
 - iv. You can bet not only your life, but your eternal soul on them.
 - v. Paul is not one to waste his time with soothing but meaningless words.
 - vi. He would not expend his life for lies about eternal realities and consequences.
- i. Now, because these statements of Paul are both true and eternally significant, Paul instructs Titus to speak confidently about them.
 - i. If he is tenuous, unsure, or waffling about them, and he is giving people a message that affects all of life, how would they ever give themselves wholeheartedly, without any reservation, to the kingdom of God and His Christ?
 - ii. So too for us, if we speak tenuously or ashamedly to unbelievers, why would they risk changing their lives and trust in an uncertain eternity?

- iii. Or if we speak such to fellow believers, will they not be tempted to form a backup plan apart from God in case these things are not so, which we give hint to with our uncertainties?
 - j. Rather, Paul writes, a confident communication of the eternal significance of the gospel to believers will spur them on to “engage in good deeds” consistently on an ongoing basis.
 - i. This business is not about controlling the masses, but rather is about helping the people focus their lives on what is most significant both now and for eternity.
 - ii. Paul thus states, “These things are good and profitable for men.”
 - iii. So a good leader, such as Paul is training Titus to be, seeks to do that which is most beneficial for those under his charge as well as for himself, all in light of the greatest truths.

V. Warnings (Titus 3:9-11)

- a. Having given Titus concise instruction of the nature of God’s salvation of His people, Paul then must warn Titus of some things that will work to sidetrack him and others if they are not careful.
- b. In continuing his pattern of showing opposites, having given instruction for what is good and profitable, Paul now instructs Titus in verse 9 on avoiding that which is harmful and unprofitable.
 - i. Regarding such things he writes of them only that they are “unprofitable and worthless,” but dwelling on such things leads to atrophy, not least because doing so takes away time and energy that could be spent on those things which are profitable.
 - ii. First, he tells Titus to “shun foolish controversies.”
 - 1. Foolish controversies are those which are disputes about matters of little or no consequence either to theological soundness or everyday living, or controversies about matters completely irrelevant to anything substantial.
 - 2. One such question is, Do Jewish and Gentile Christians have the same standing in the kingdom of God?

- a. First, the Scripture plainly tells us in Galatians 3:28 regarding the status of various believers, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
 - b. Second, even if the Scripture was not clear, you cannot change whether you are biologically Jew or Gentile.
 - 3. Much time can be wasted arguing about matters either inconsequential or addressed plainly in Scripture.
 - 4. That all said, the early church as well as the modern church has had some very serious and substantial controversies it has had to resolve.
 - a. Is Jesus divine?
 - b. What is the nature of God, especially with respect to the Trinity?
 - c. Did Jesus really come in the flesh?
 - d. Is homosexuality a sin?
 - e. Paul is not referring to controversies over significant matters.
- iii. Paul also writes to shun genealogies.
 - 1. Genealogies were critically important from Adam to Jesus because God was showing the development of nations, and most importantly His redemptive plan to bring a Savior through a promised line, through even the multiple failings of mankind.
 - 2. However, once that Savior, Jesus, came, then as I referenced in Galatians earlier, all believers are one in Christ Jesus.
 - 3. And for those who would press the genealogical point, Paul continues in Galatians 3:29, “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

4. Though your status in any given culture may depend on your genealogical background, your status in the kingdom of God, that kingdom over all kingdoms, does not at all depend on your genealogy.
- iv. Paul then adds that they should shun strife.
 1. Strife is tension erupting in conflicts often without reconciliation such that there is a simmering undercurrent ready to erupt again.
 2. This situation indicates a lack of grace operating in the people and is a precursor to the breakdown of the community.
 - v. Finally, Titus is to shun “disputes about the Law.”
 1. The Pharisees and rabbis would have endless debates about the meaning, extent, and extensions of the Law.
 2. We catch a glimpse of such debates as we hear their interactions with Jesus on some occasions.
 3. One occasion we see in Matthew 19:3, “And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?’”
 4. Here in this debate they were not looking for wisdom from God, but rather first to trap Jesus in order to accuse Him of wrong, and second, to justify their behavior of divorcing their wives whenever they were displeased with them.
 5. So disputes about the Law were not ultimately a seeking after God, but rather a source of pride and a source of self-justification for sin.
 6. Such disputes often give rise to intellectual debate without any final consequence and do not help in obeying the Law.

7. To the contrary, Jesus brought them back to first principles in Genesis where Eve was created for Adam and the two became one flesh.
 8. Rather than spend their time disputing the Law with regard to divorce, they should spend their time seeking to honor God by loving their wives.
 9. So Titus is not to get mired down in such disputes for he would have no time left to do anything good and worthwhile.
- vi. Thus Paul writes of these various negatives that “they are unprofitable and worthless.”
1. None of them provide any advantage or benefit whatsoever.
 2. If mired in the middle of them, the flesh feels like such efforts are profitable and worthwhile.
 3. Therefore, Paul is stating directly that they are not, so that Titus, and we, may not be tempted to such negatives; or, if we find ourselves in them, we may make a hasty and unapologetic exit.
- c. Someone who continually practices such negatives is a factious man, of whom Paul warns Titus in verse 10.
- i. A factious man is always bringing up controversies and is serving only to divide the body, which is the work of the devil.
 - ii. Paul says to reject such a one after a first and second warning.
 - iii. So implied here is that recognizing such behavior, Titus is to clearly warn such a man regarding what he is doing, what damage it is causing, and what will be the consequence to him if he does not repent.
 - iv. Out of grace, if because of weakness, he is found again doing the same, he is to be warned a last time, and it needs to be clear and direct.

- v. If, however, that man continues in his factious behaviors a third time, he is to be rejected, that is, turned out of the congregation; in a word, excommunicated.
 - vi. If such a man is not addressed and is allowed to stay, he stirs up discontent among the people, and they will not grow as they ought, and some or many will leave.
 - vii. So, knowing that either one or several will leave when there is a factious man, the undershepherd and elders should simply make sure the one leaves, without prolonging the issue.
- d. In verse 11 Paul sheds light on the heart of a persistently factious man.
- i. He “is perverted and sinning, being self-condemned.”
 - ii. A perversion of something is the taking of something good and twisting the use of it into something unintended in the nature of the thing and thus contrary to God’s order.
 - iii. It is good for a man to point out doctrinal error, or even just ways we can improve what we do.
 - iv. A perversion of that is to be nit-picking and finding fault no matter what is done, and setting one group against another group.
 - v. Perverted activity is, by definition above, sinful because it is contrary to godly order.
 - vi. So a factious man is sinning, and an unrepentant factious man is self-condemned because he is always finding fault and truthfully should thus find fault with himself and repent.

VI. Conclusion

- a. So here in this short passage in Titus 3, we see:
 - i. What should characterize Christians in their behavior,
 - ii. What we once were, and what lost people are,
 - iii. The grace of God in Jesus Christ who came to save us,
 - iv. And warnings not to get sidetracked.
- b. May we live out these glorious truths and teach them to the next generation.