

Titus 24-08-07b

Let's pick up our study now. We have come once again in sort of an overview summary of the book of Titus to chapter three. And Paul tells Titus to remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities.

There is often this celebration of anti-authority, follow your dream, color outside the lines, don't be limited by the past or tradition or expectation. And you don't find that message in scripture over and over again, be quiet, work with your hands to the extent that it's up to you, live peaceably with all. There is a great emphasis in progressive Christian circles today, which is kind of the trendy thing to be, to rock the boat, to upset the apple cart.

I'm gonna be like Jesus turning over the tables of the money changers, and I'm going to agitate and advocate and raise a rabble about social justice, about wrongs that I think are being committed, about politicians that shouldn't be in office and trying to use the tools and influences of the world instead of becoming salt and becoming light. Light doesn't have a mind of its own. Salt doesn't have a mind of its own.

Salt isn't a living thing. Light is not a living thing. Light goes where it goes based on the emission at the source.

Think about your flashlight at night, you turn it on and wherever you shine the light, that's where it's gonna go. And it always goes. Your flashlight beam doesn't bend and twist and go off into space.

You're trying to see if there's a raccoon scratching at the chicken house. You don't want your light getting a mind of its own and running off and, well, I thought I saw something in a tree in here. You get this crazy spiraling beam of light.

Light goes exactly where you direct it to go. Salt exists in a dish to the exact extent that you measure it and put it in there. It doesn't multiply itself.

It doesn't lose its savor. Salt has a quality and it does its job according to the wishes of the people that put it where it needs to go. We are to be salt and we are to be light and we don't have to take the bit in our teeth.

We don't have to go off and say, well, this is a way that seems right to me, so I'm gonna pursue it. This is why over and over and over again, you find these exhortations. Be subject to rulers and authorities.

Who were the rulers and authorities in Crete? Christians? No, Crete was ruled by the Romans and under the Romans were the Cretans. You got an island ruled by Cretans and over them are the Romans. And Paul doesn't say, what did he say in chapter one? Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons and they're running the island.

And what is the requirement? What is the command? Be subject to your Cretan rulers and your Cretan authorities, obey, obey. If they set confiscatory tax rates, pay them. If they set silly speed limits, obey them.

If they set requirements for certifications or for inspections or for levies or taxes or fees, whatever it may be, be subject, obey and be ready for every good work. You say, this is evil, it's bad, they're taking my money and using it to prosecute wars and kill, Romans are taking my taxes and they're funding their wars and they're sending their legions and their centuries and their armies out to oppress and attack, invade and subjugate other nations. I don't agree with that, I don't want my money going to that.

Sorry, the Bible doesn't say, make sure that the money that is levied on you from government is used the way you think it should be or don't pay it. It says, obey, be subject. Look at the rulers and authorities, whatever they say, do that.

The only time that is not true is when God's law explicitly forbids you. If they have a policy where you have to do something that is morally wrong and is a sin and is part of a pattern of evil that you are personally going to have to perpetrate, if they tell you, if you know of any Christians, come to the authorities and rat them out. We're trying to get rid of Christians, we're the rulers and authorities, obey us, tell us where the Christians are so we can hunt them down, arrest them and punish them.

Now we have a conflict of priorities and we each have to decide where those conflicts exist and how to resolve them by God's grace, prayerfully, thoughtfully, not emotionally, thoughtfully, policy-wise. Speak evil of no one. This would lower the tone of political debate substantially if everyone who is a believer would read this verse and obey it.

Don't sit around slinging fertilizer at politicians you think are the worst thing to ever come along. The entire internet has got enough of that without God-fearing, Bible-believing Christians throwing additional fuel on those fires. We should be the opposite.

We should be moderating, temperature-lowering people who don't inflame, who don't insult, who don't degrade and deride and denigrate others, regardless of how much we think they actually deserve it. Leave that to other people. If they wanna make up mocking nicknames and point out various negative qualities or negative behaviors or negative history, that should not be us.

Speak evil of no one. Remember in Jude, even the devil, Michael was disputing with the devil over the body of Moses. He didn't raise a railing accusation.

If you're not going to use railing language against the devil himself in a legitimate argument about the devil not running off with Moses' body, does Michael have a righteous cause there? And is he talking to the worst and most evil creature ever? He did not raise a railing accusation. He said, the Lord rebuke you. He didn't get into specifics.

He just said, it's not my place to rebuke you. It's not my place to bad mouth you or insult you or give you a mocking nickname. The Lord can handle you.

Be peaceable, gentle, showing humility to all men. Remember now, Titus is a Greek. His name derives from the same root as the Titans.

You know, it's kind of like being named Athena as a woman. This is not Miriam or Rebecca or a Hebrew woman's name or a Hebrew man's name. He's not Mishael or any other Hebrew name.

This is a Greek name. He's a Greek. He's an uncircumcised Greek, as you will recall.

And Paul refuses to circumcise him just to make traditionalists happy. He's a Greek. This is a Greekified culture with a veneer of Roman government on top of it.

And the people with whom they are dealing, most of these believers, it's not like there's a Jewish synagogue and he's talking to Jewish people about how to be Jews in Crete. These are Cretans living in Crete. Be like an American living in America.

Speak evil of no one. Be peaceable, gentle, show humility to all men. Could you imagine the kind of discourse we could have publicly about policies and priorities as a nation and as communities if everyone followed this guidance? If they didn't get up and spend all of their time vilifying one another and cutting one another down and exaggerating and making stuff up and impugning the morals and the motives and the character and the stature and the physical makeup of their opponents.

How much progress do you think we could actually make on issues if everyone would do this? Well, believers ought to be setting the example. So we ourselves were also once foolish disobedient and deceived. We are only what we are because of the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the power of God's word.

We would be as bad as anybody we feel like throwing rocks at if it wasn't for God's grace. And Paul says, keep that in your mind when you're tempted to sink to other people's level. We ourselves, we were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy.

Isn't it hard sometimes to even turn on the news because there's just this toxic waste that gets sluiced into your living room, what people say and what they do. Many cases, especially in an election year, it's just exponentially worse. But hateful and hating one another.

That verse three, Titus 3.3, that's what you get up and enter every morning, either via the internet, your TV, or your actual workplace. We go out into a hostile, corrosive, degraded, debased culture and society in so many ways. Those of us who don't, who live in sort of a bubble of blessing are grateful because all of us have been there in the past.

If we're not currently doing it, we have lived it and been there and done it in the past. And we have to remember greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. And don't get deceived into using the tools and techniques and vocabulary and tactics of the world.

It only has the world's power and it yields worldly results that perish in the using. The issue that you fight to the death over for a piece of legislation or a law or a politician getting elected or getting fired. Think back, those of you, the older you are, the more examples you have in the past, all of the kerfuffle in previous days.

Think back to previous elections, previous opponents to your favorite candidate and their peccadilloes and their personal failings and their policies and what they hoped to do and what they said and how grating and alarming it all was. Where is it now? We're on to fresh battles. We have different trenches.

We're shooting different bullets for different reasons. And who cares what happened back then? Think about the presidential politics of the 90s or the 80s or the 70s or God forbid the 60s. And into the aughts and into the, across the 2008 to 2016 timeframe and then 2016 and everything that's happened in the last eight years.

And there are just huge upheavals and great buckets of slop being thrown in one direction or another. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, is it gonna be a political quiz? Well, where did you stand on this proposition or that law or this issue or this candidate or what these words said or what they meant or whether somebody got taken to trial? No, this is what is going to count. These are the standards.

You and I aren't getting a history quiz, not getting a social issues quiz, not even getting a doctrine quiz. Isn't that something? I would sort of relish getting the chance to take a doctrinal quiz at the judgment because I think, you know, we together have learned a lot of things across the years. And if it was just a doctrinal quiz, if I could just talk about Leviticus 14 and the significance of the cleansing of the leper, or we could talk about the parables of the Lord Jesus or the miracles and what they meant and what we've learned from scripture, it'd be a wonderful thing.

Guess what? None of that's coming up at the judgment. As wonderful as it is, as gratifying and as helpful and as meaningful, and we will take the content of that knowledge with us forward, but that's not coming up at the judgment. At the bema, at the judgment seat of Christ, as with the great white throne, we will be judged according to our works.

Our works include our thoughts, our words, and our deeds. That's the three parts of works. Thoughts, words, and deeds.

Not a quiz, not a multiple choice, not a fill in the blank. Here is the record of what you

did. It's not a test.

It's not a question and answer. It's a review. Have you ever had a performance review in your job? Have you ever had an academic review when you were a student and you get an evaluation from your professor? Everything in the review is historical.

There's nothing you can do at the point that they sit down and talk to you about it. You can't go back and change anything. You can't give a good answer and get a better grade.

The judgment seat of Christ is a review of what we did today and what we are going to do tomorrow. That's what the judgment seat is. So if I want to have a well done, thou good and faithful servant moment at the judgment, now is the appointed time and now is the day of deliverance.

And what I'm thinking and saying and doing right now, I need to say to myself, you know, this is being written down. This is going into the record. There is a record of every thought, every word and every deed.

It's a very sobering thought. If I could remember that when words are about to come out of my mouth and I'm going to be chasing them with words, come back, or I'm going to do a thing and say, why did I do that? Too late. It's in the record book.

The only real opportunity we have is to change from right now forward. And hopefully we've done this in the past. We've said, you know what? This stuff all counts on 20.

As we say in the military, if you're looking at a 20 year service and then retirement, I need to think about what I'm doing because I am writing a record that is permanent. People wish they could go back and delete or erase. And sometimes they do.

Their emails or their, you know, their past correspondence of videos of speeches that politicians gave, they wish they could find and destroy every copy. Well, I can't do anything about the past. Hopefully in the past, I had this same idea and thought, by God's grace, I need to clean up and do better.

Hopefully we have all made improvements and made progress on the upward way. But looking at what's in Titus and these standards and requirements for people who represent Jesus Christ on this earth at this moment, this is us, this is now, and these are the standards that we are supposed to be meeting. So starting now and going forward, I want to constantly think about these qualities and these characteristics, these goals and values and objectives, these priorities.

I want to be sure that this describes me and I fulfill this. I can't do it by wanting to. You don't lose weight by looking in the mirror and saying pounds disappear.

Muscles bulge, skin stops sagging, hair go dark. It doesn't work that way. Wishful thinking is a waste of time and a deception.

And a lot of Christianity today is deceiving itself. This is true and this is doable. Everything on these pages, leadership in our soul, responsiveness and compassion and empathy in our soul, that's the man and the woman.

You've got leadership and policy and thinking. You've got compassion and empathy and sensitivity. These are all positive.

There's nothing negative about the woman's side. There's nothing negative about the man's side. It's all good when it conforms to these standards.

It is God's power that makes it happen. Okay, this is getting simpler. All I've got to figure out now is how does the power of God come into my life as a believer? And you know the answer to this, right? How does the power of God come into the life of a believer? How is God's power to make me into what these pages describe? How is it going to happen? When I wake up tomorrow, how am I gonna be this person described by these qualities? It is the spirit of God and the word of God.

I'm going to remember these standards, these qualities, these characteristics, and I'm going to measure my ongoing thinking and speaking and acting by these standards. And when I notice a deviation, I'm gonna immediately stop the presses and use my divine resources, my privilege of prayer, my resort to the comfort and encouragement of the Holy Spirit, my memory and the Holy Spirit bringing to my mind these truths. I am going to ensure that I have a pure heart, a good functioning conscience, and a sincere faith.

You saw that in Timothy, right? It's doable because God will do it. I have to know where the levers are. Getting me from here to the East Coast or the West Coast in a car is not about my individual power.

It's about my ability to operate the power of a car. At all, it's effortless. I know how to turn a key.

I know how to move a shift lever. I know how to depress an accelerator. I know how to get out from time to time and refuel with some gas.

Those are trivially minuscule efforts compared to the horsepower it takes to transport my 190-pound body from here to California or here to Maryland, right? I don't have to have the intrinsic ability to move myself. I have to know how to take advantage of the power that will move me. That's what this is.

We have the Holy Spirit for a reason. It is the power of the Holy Spirit God used to create the world. If God uses that power, I would say it's a pretty important thing to know how to access it.

So in chapter three, remind them to be subject. And these are being. I said before, this is the to-bes.

You think about this. Number one, if you just go down and you can do this. You can do this in Timothy.

You can do it in Titus and you can do it for yourself. I'm not gonna give you the whole list. I'm just gonna give you an example of what to do.

If you really wanna do this, if you wanna take it seriously and become what God wants us to be now and in the days that remain to us in this life, here's a good starting step. Look at the commands. What does it say in verse one here in chapter three? Remind them, okay? I wanna be reminded.

Reminded of what? Be subject to rulers and authorities, okay? In my Bible, I've got a number one next to that just for chapter three. This could be number 49 out of the pastoral epistles. But in this chapter, it's number one.

Be subject to rulers and authorities. Let me just stop right there. Who are my rulers and authorities? Well, I've got a boss in one place.

I am an undershepherd for the Lord Jesus and he's an authority in that realm. I have authorities in government. I have authorities in various places.

So am I being subject? I'll just do a quick check. Am I being diligent? Am I being careful? Am I paying attention to what I'm supposed to be doing and fulfilling it? I wanna be able to check off number one, be subject. It says it here.

How do I measure up? What's the next one? Be ready for every good work. Be ready. Am I so stewing in my own juice and steaming in my own sauce that I'm not ready for good works? If there's something good that comes along, I don't have the right attitude.

I don't have the right resources. I'm not in the right place in my own spiritual life. I can't do good work because I haven't become anything yet.

So I need to pay attention to that. Am I ready for every good work? I can stop right now and think in my environment with the people I know and the situations I'm aware of, the circumstance I sit in right this minute in this chair, let me just do a quick recon. Is there a good work that I can do? And am I ready, willing, and able to do it? I can think of some things.

I've got some things done. I've got more to do, but I can build a mental list here of eight or 10 things that are good works I can do as soon as we finish doing the good work of this time of fellowship. There are things I can do.

One of them is post this Bible class so that if somebody wants to review it or see it in the

future, it will be there and be easy to get to. It's part of my job. It's part of my submission to authority part of my responsibility is to, you know, sling the hash on the mess decks and be sure that there's chow available when the troops need it.

So I am both subject to authority and it's a good work I can do. And if I'm lazy or deleterious or I wait too long, and that's not good. That's not a good work.

I'm giving you these as examples. All of us can do this. If you want this to happen, if you want to be ready for the judgment seat, you have to do this.

You can't say, oh, that sounds good. I'll think about it later. Make it happen.

Make it happen. So be ready. That's number two.

Number three, speak evil of no one to be peaceable. These kind of go together, don't they? It's a lot easier to be peaceable if you're not speaking evil of anyone. How easy is it to be peaceable with someone if you're speaking evil to their face or speaking evil about them to someone else? That doesn't yield peace.

Soft answer turns away wrath. Grievous words stir up anger. So be peaceable.

Number four, be gentle. Peaceable and gentle, not harsh, not obstreperous, not abrasive, not corrosive, not intransigent and immovable. I flex.

I've got compassion. I've got empathy. I've got sympathy.

I'm inflexible about non-essentials, but if somebody needs to give, I'll do some giving. God came way more than halfway to approach us and rescue us from a hopeless situation. We can do the same.

Show all humility to all men. Is there somebody that I'm just not willing to be humble? I'm not gonna admit that I was wrong. I'm not going to have the humility to listen to someone, share their idea or express their concern.

To be a good listener, humility is indispensable. You can't be a good listener if you're not humble and consider others better than yourself. Remembering, this is part of the word of God that provides power to do this.

I say, you know, I'm just too impatient. I'm just, I just can't, I can't do this. Yes, you can, by remembering.

Remembering looks back, hope looks ahead, right? Remembering that we ourselves were once foolish and disobedient, there but for the grace of God go I. There was a time when I would have been like this person. It's only God's grace that has delivered me from my flaws to the extent that I'm delivered, from my shortcomings to the extent that I've overcome them by God's grace. We're all trying to make progress.

We're all on the same team. We ought to have a team attitude. You don't win by, you know, attacking your own team.

Although I've seen it happen in competitive volleyball. You'd be surprised, volleyball, it sounds like, oh, people bunching, you know, bumping a softball around on the beach. Competitive volleyball is fierce.

I saw some of it in the Olympics. And you watch those volleyball games. You can get hurt with a spike.

But I've seen, especially team volleyball where there's six on a side and somebody was supposed to pick up a ball coming your way and they just stood and looked at it. Those guys will come over and punch them. It's just like, what are you, you know, they're just in the moment, they're angry and they can't believe the guy missed his job and you just, you know, lost the set.

You see it in team sports, guys get mad at each other. You're not going to win the game when the team is fighting itself. So we need to remember that we were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various passions or lusts and pleasures.

Notice serving them. It doesn't mean that you can't enjoy something that you find interesting, satisfying, gratifying. We have hobbies, we have things that we do.

It's serving them. You cross a line from enjoying a thing to being enslaved by it. I've got to binge watch this series and I don't care if it keeps me up all night and I'm going to sleep through my job tomorrow and I'm an airline pilot.

I've just got to see this next, it's a cliffhanger. That's serving. When you sacrifice important priorities like doing your job well, being able to communicate with other human beings and not being in a fog and a haze and dulled and slowed by fatigue, stop watching the thing and turn the TV off, right? I'm using this as an example of any number of things.

It's one thing to enjoy, it is something else to serve it. Take a little wine for your stomach's sake, be not drunk with wine wherein is excess. It doesn't say touch not wine wherein is sin.

There's no sin in wine. The sin is in the excess, in the drunkenness. So serving various, there's all different areas and kinds of passions and lusts.

Living in malice and envy. If you spend your time perseverating about the faults and shortcomings of others, that's a problem. Malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

Notice instead of love one another, this is hating one another. And this is hate not only

as an emotion, but hate as a policy. Shortchanging one another, not looking out for the needs of one another, not forgiving one another, not burying old bones and leaving them buried, keeping no record of wrongs.

Go back and read the love chapter. First Corinthians 13, love keeps no record of wrongs. If you're ever in a animated discussion, shall we say, with your spouse or with anybody else in your family or in your periphery, if you bring up something from the past, you just forfeited the match.

You just stepped on the outside the boundary line. It's a foul, you're done. You're automatically wrong.

Never, never, ever, ever bring up the past. Love keeps no records of wrongs, no record. It's not like, well, a record of the really important ones are the ones that really aggravated me or the ones that will really be good as a weapon the next time we argue.

No record of wrongs. The past is dead, gone, buried. God has separated as far as the East is from the West for believers who confess their sins.

He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from all unrighteousness. Now, Patty and I had a rent home one time and some people had little kids and they spilled a Juicy Juice box on this Berber carpet, brand new, beautiful, beige, mistake, Berber carpet. And so we went and cleaned the carpet and it was gone.

But this red berry juice started coming back through. It looked good and then it didn't. And cleaned it again and it came back up through.

Cleaned it, came back up through. It had gotten down into the pad. And every time that got a little bit damp, it just came back up.

And if God cleans a carpet, you think that's ever gonna happen? If God cleanses something, is the spot ever gonna return? Is it gonna somehow mysteriously reappear? No. With the exception of the unforgiving servant. If you unforgive others, your spot will return.

Your red spot will surface back up in the Berber if you are unforgiving of others. If you decide to keep a record of wrongs, guess what God's gonna do? God will start keeping a record of wrongs, even those you have confessed. Heaven sakes, why risk that? Keep no record of wrongs.

I don't want my past sins coming back up to haunt me. When I remember this, I can't forgive fast enough. No problem.

I forgive, I forget, I bear no grudge. I don't even remember what it was. And you'll never hear it come up in my speech.

I'm never gonna drag up something you did or said or whatever. Can't afford it. You drag up somebody else's, God's gonna drag up yours.

It's a fact. It's a doctrine. It's a teaching.

So don't do it. Notice, do not be like those that are still in the past, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. When the kindness and the love of God, our savior toward man appeared.

Remember verse 11? Grace of God, the saving grace of God that brings salvation, brings deliverance, has appeared, epiphanied. Same word here. The kindness and the love of God, our savior toward man epiphanied, appeared.

What a wonderful appearance it was. Not by works of righteousness, which we have done. Works are a result of being.

They are not a means of becoming. You don't become a good Christian by doing good works. You become a good Christian and then you naturally perform good works.

It is the kindness and the love and the saving grace of God that appears. It is from God. It shines down on us.

Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us. His mercy, washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our savior. Notice, God, our savior in verse four, Jesus Christ, our savior in verse six.

We'll touch next time on the debate about whether Jesus is Lord or not. You see so many passages that seem conclusive, but there are people that take it a different way. I don't think we need to agonize over that.

We know that the Lord Jesus is the second person of the Trinity. We don't need a bunch of Greek study to figure that out, but you've got a Granville Sharp rule that is in effect here. And you can see God, our savior back in chapter two, verse 10, Jesus Christ, our savior.

It never says we have two saviors. There's just one. And it is God incorporated.

And at times it is specifically Jesus Christ. But what is the point? And this is where we'll close. Having been justified by his grace, having been vindicated, having been judged, no longer guilty, no longer punishable, no longer condemned, no longer separated, no longer enslaved to sin.

Having been justified by his grace, verse 11 grace, saving grace. We're justified. We should do what? We should perform acts of righteousness.

We should become, become, become an inheritor, become an heir according to the hope of eternal life. Hope is a big part of the subject here and is something we'll look at this coming Sunday when we continue our study in Titus, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for your saving grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for our justification. We thank you for our deliverance. We thank you for the provision of your spirit.

We thank you for our hope. We thank you for the opportunity to avail ourselves of your power, to be transformed, to be renewed, to be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that will be the case for each one of us so that we can live a life that pleases you and glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask it in his name, amen.