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C1211 – March 28, 2012 – Titus 3:1-2
Intro To All Concerning Government & Non-Believers

To get us up to speed for Chapter 3, let's briefly summarize the previous 2 chapters. Here is our outline of Titus:

Salutation (1:1-4)

Selection of Elders (1:5-9)

Silencing False Teachers (1:10-16)

Instruction To Specific Groups (2:1-15)

Instruction To All Concerning Government and Non-Believers (3:1-16)

Final Instructions (3:12-15)

In the Salutation, I pointed out a few basic points. First, that the Salutation is about Authority – the authority of Paul, the authority of the message (the gospel), and the authority of Titus. Also, the Salutation addresses the mission to be accomplished - three things - the faith of “those chosen of God” - believers - the believer’s knowledge of the truth, and the godliness of the believer that results from the knowledge of the truth.

Next, in Titus 1:5-9, we talked about the Selection of Elders. In Titus 1:6, we learned that Paul left Titus behind in Crete to put things in order and appoint elders in the Cretan churches. The Cretan churches needed leadership, particularly in light of the false teachers who were damaging the church. Paul identified several qualities that a man must have in order to qualify to be an elder.

Next, in our lesson on Titus 1:10-16, we discussed the false teachers in Crete – that they were upsetting whole families teaching things they should not teach for sordid gain, and needed to be silenced. Titus was instructed to rebuke them severely so that they would be sound in the faith. Paul described

them as men who profess to know God, but deny it by their works, being detestable, disobedient and worthless for any good deed. This was the state of these false teachers and those who follow them.

Next, in our lesson on Titus 2:1-10, in contrast to the false teachers, Paul instructed Titus to teach the things that fit with sound doctrine, and he then went on to give specific qualities that certain groups within the church – older men, older women, young women, young men, Titus himself, and slaves - should exhibit.

Last week we talked about the doctrinal foundation for the godly behavior Titus was to exhort these churches to follow. We learned several things – that God's grace appeared in Christ when He came. That this grace appeared for the purpose of instructing us so that we would reject ungodliness and worldly desires and live godly lives. That we are to live looking forward to the time Christ returns for us, with the implication that we will be accountable to Him for our behavior. That Christ sacrificed Himself for us so that we would be set free from the power of sin and He could purify for Himself a people (the Church), His costly possession, who are zealots for good deeds. The emphasis is on what God, through Christ, has done for us – Through Christ's life, He showed us how to live. Through Christ's sacrifice, He freed us from sin and gave us the ability to live godly lives and serve Him. Christ made godliness possible and has given us the tools to live it.

Now, we are going to move forward to Titus 3:1-8, which is very similar in format to Chapter 2. First, Paul instructs Titus regarding certain behavior Titus needs to remind the Cretans churches about. This is in verses 1-2. Then, in verses 3-7, he gives the doctrinal basis for this behavior. Then, in verse 8, he again commands Titus to teach these things. This is pretty much the same format as Chapter 2. In Titus 2:1, Paul commanded Titus to preach the things that fit with sound doctrine. Then, in Titus 2:2-10, he instructed Titus regarding certain behavior of the specific groups – the older men, older women, young women, young men, Titus, and slaves – that conforms to sound doctrine. In Titus 2:11-14, Paul gave the doctrinal foundation for this behavior. And in Titus 2:15, Paul commanded Titus “¹⁵ These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”

If you look at a chart comparing the two passages, it looks like this:

	<u>Titus 2:1-15</u>	<u>Titus 3:1-8</u>
Exhortation to Teach	Titus 2:1	----
Description of Behavior	Titus 2:2-10	Titus 3:1-2
Doctrinal Basis For the Described Behavior	Titus 2:11-14	Titus 3:3-7
Exhortation to Teach “These Things”	Titus 2:15	Titus 3:8

Ok, let’s read the whole passage – Chapter 3:1-8. Titus 3:1–8 – **“¹ Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, ² to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. ³ For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.”**

Tonight, we are going to cover the behavior Titus is to remind the Cretans of – this is in verses 1-2, and then we are going to cover verse 3, which begins the discussion of the doctrinal basis for the behavior and describes the condition of unbelievers. Next week we will finish up with the doctrinal basis.

First, what are the differences between the behavior described in Titus 3:1-2 and the behavior described in Titus 2:2-10? Why didn’t Paul just lump all these together? First, the qualities and behavior described in Chapter 2 are directed at certain groups within the church, and the qualities and behavior described in Titus 3:1-2 are directed to everyone. If you remember, when we covered Titus 2, I said that I don’t know exactly why Paul specified these

specific qualities for these specific groups; however, he did and he didn't really say why. Maybe the qualities of the older men and older women are things that are more expected of someone of their age, experience and maturity. They are to set the examples for the younger members of the church – they are looked up to – respected and revered - they should behave in a manner worthy of this position. Not only does a bad example give an opponent the opportunity to attack, but it also leads others astray. These older men and women need to be good examples. This is particularly clear for the older women – who will be encouraging the younger women. Another possibility is that some of these things may have been intended to address common problems of these groups in the Cretan culture – things that these groups were particularly susceptible to.

On the other hand, the qualities and behavior described in Titus 3:1-2 are directed at everyone – not at any particular group within the church. Everyone should behave this way. Everyone should have these qualities.

Another difference is the focus of the behavior. The qualities in Titus 3 seem to be focused on the church's relationship with the world – with non-believers. Now, the qualities in Titus 2 also manifest themselves in our interaction with the world; however, the Titus 3 qualities are more focused on this aspect than Chapter 2. For example, Titus 3:1 deals with the relationship with “rulers” and “authorities”. We will talk about who these are, but they are not necessarily believers. Titus 3:2 says “malign no one” and “show every consideration for all men”. Titus 3:3 describes the ways of the unbelieving world and Paul says that we – himself included – were once this way. All these clues indicate to me that Titus 3:1-2 is focused on our interaction with the world. So – this is a great passage to remember when you are considering how you are to relate to the world. We all need to take this to heart.

So, let's get into the passage. Let's read Titus 3:1-2 again - **¹ Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, ² to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.** Look at the first two words – “remind them” – This is an imperative – a command. It's also in the present tense – which commands a repeated action – do it repeatedly. Paul is commanding Titus to “repeatedly remind” them of these things. “Remind” implies that this

has been taught to them before. Maybe by Paul, maybe by Titus, maybe by someone else. But they have heard it before. And now Paul wants them to hear it again. So – this must be pretty important. Maybe Paul has received a report that they haven't been following his instructions in these areas. Maybe these things are so difficult that they need to be reminded over and over. Whatever, the reason, it has been taught before and it is important for them to hear these instructions again.

What are they to be reminded of? Well, verses 1 and 2 are all one sentence. So – I think Paul wants them to be reminded of everything in verses 1 and 2 at the very least – and I bet that, if Paul taught them this before, he gave them the doctrinal basis for verses 1 and 2, so they are also to be reminded of the doctrine in verses 3 – 7.

Let's go through the specific things in verses 1 and 2 Titus is to remind them of.

First, they are to be subject to rulers and to authorities. Because of the way the grammar works in the Greek, I also think that they are also to be obedient to rulers and authorities, and they are to be ready for “every good deed” with respect to these rulers and authorities. In other words, I think that all of verse 1 describes the way Christians are to relate to rulers and authorities. So – in our relationship with rulers and authorities we are to be subject to them, obedient to them, and ready for every good deed.

What does it mean to be “subject to” rulers and authorities? The word “subject to” means “submission involving recognition of an ordered structure”. Also, the terms “rulers and authorities” imply some sort of ordered structure – some sort of hierarchy. This makes me think that, in order to subject ourselves to the rulers and authorities, and obey them, there are a few things we need to figure out first. First, we need to figure out what and who the “rulers” and “authorities” are. In some contexts, the terms describe angelic hierarchies. In other contexts, the terms describe human government. In the context of our passage, the terms are describing human government - the civil authorities.

Is there a difference between a ruler and an authority? Why does Paul use both those words? Both terms seem to be describing the same kind of thing,

and it's hard to distinguish between the two. The Greek word translated "rulers" has shade about it that may emphasize rank or position aspect of authority – so I think that "rulers" may emphasize rank or position – and the term translated "authority" may emphasize more of the power aspect of authority - the authority – or power - that is held by the rulers. By using these words, Paul may be making the point that we are not only to be subject to the institution – the State, for example, that holds the power - but also to the person who wields that authority for the State. For example, the State has the authority to enforce the laws. So, we are to be subject to the State – the institution. But the State can only act through people – the County Sheriff for example. So, we are to be subject to the County Sheriff – the person who acts with the authority of the State to enforce the laws. The Sheriff may be a scoundrel, we may not think he is qualified, but when he acts for the State as County Sheriff, we must be subject to him. We may not like his decisions or the way he does his job, but as long as he is doing it within his scope of authority, we must be subject to him. This may not make much of a difference, and I don't know for sure if this is what Paul is getting at when he uses the term "rulers and authorities", but that's the best explanation I have run across so far.

Also, to be able to submit to the civil authorities, you must understand the structure of the civil authority – the positions, powers and responsibilities of the rulers and authorities. Not only that, but you also have to recognize your place – your status or position - within that structure. And you have to understand the rights and responsibilities that go with that status or position. For example, as a US citizen, you have a status – citizenship – in which you have certain rights – freedom of religion, freedom of speech, etc.. – and you also have certain responsibilities – obey the laws. If you know your status, you know your rights and responsibilities. This helps you understand how to submit to the authority of the US government. If you don't understand these things, you will not be able to properly submit. You may think you have more rights than you do. You may have more rights than you think you do. You may think you don't have as many responsibilities as you do, or you may think you have more than you do. You may think you have to submit to a particular person, when you really don't because he doesn't have jurisdiction over you. You need to know and understand the structure of your government in order to know how to subject yourself to it.

Here's an example from Paul's life. Remember what happened after Paul was arrested in Jerusalem when the Jews accused him of defiling the Temple? The Roman commander was about to examine Paul by scourging to find out why the Jews wanted him executed. The Roman soldier's centurion stretched Paul out, tied him up, and were about to start whipping him when Paul asked the centurion – "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?". That stopped everything, because it wasn't lawful and everybody knew it. Paul knew the Roman system. He knew his status – a citizen. He knew his rights under that system. And he lawfully exercised his rights. Under that system, he did not have to submit to that beating. Under a different system, he would have had to submit.

So, we are supposed to submit to our civil government. We are also to be "obedient. In the Greek, the clause merely says "to obey" and doesn't say who they were to obey. In context, I think this clause is still talking about the relationship to the civil government. So, I think that Paul is telling them to be obedient to civil government. "Obedient" is self explanatory and is one way you demonstrate submission to the government. We are to obey the commands – the laws – that are issued by the civil government.

So, according to this verse, we are to be obedient to the civil government. Is this absolute obedience no matter what? No. First, I don't think we are required to obey when the ruler does not have the authority to give the command. I think this is inherent in the definition of "rulers" and "authorities". When a ruler acts outside his authority, we are not required to obey. If a policeman shows up at your house without a warrant and demands that you let him in, you don't have to obey. He is acting outside his authority. Under our laws, he cannot enter your house without a warrant. This is where you need to know what your rights and responsibilities are under a particular civil authority. In the US, police can't enter your home without a warrant. So – in the US you are not disobeying God by disobeying a command of a policeman who wants to enter your house without a warrant. In some other country, a policeman may be able to enter your house without a warrant. He may have the authority to do that. So, if you are in that country, you would be disobeying God by disobeying a command of a policeman who demands to enter your house without a warrant. So, whatever civil authority God has put you under, you are to obey its laws. We are so blessed by God to be living in the US.

Also, we cannot obey civil authority when its laws prohibit us from obeying God. This also comes from an understanding of the authority structure. Who has authority over the government, over the nations? The UN? No. God does. God is at the top of the org chart. He is the ultimate authority. In fact, He is the source of all authority. Remember what Christ told Pilate – look at **John 19:10–11 - ¹⁰ So Pilate said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” ¹¹ Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has *the* greater sin.”** Did Christ tell Pilate that Pilate didn’t have authority? No, Christ recognized Pilate’s authority. Why? Because He knew Pilate’s authority over Him came from God. Look at **Romans 13:1 - ¹ Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.** So – the source of all authority is God. No one – no ruler, no authority, no government – creates its own authority. In their arrogance, they think they do. But they are deluded. God has all authority. For our good, He established civil government as a divine institution and has given certain responsibilities to them along with the authority to carry out those responsibilities. He has appointed the nations, the forms of their government, and the rulers over the people under that government. That is why we should obey the civil authority.

But that is also why we cannot obey when the laws of a civil authority prohibit us from obeying God. God is the ultimate authority. The highest authority. We owe our loyalty and allegiance to Him over the civil authority. Here is what Peter said when the Sanhedrin confronted him about disobeying their orders – look at **Acts 5:28–29 - ²⁸ [the high priest questioned them saying], “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.** They were commanded by the Sanhedrin not to teach in Jesus name. But look at **Matthew 28:18–20 - ¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them**

to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Christ commanded them to go, make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all He had commanded them. The Sanhedrin had prohibited them from doing this. So – they were in a position where they could not obey both God and the Sanhedrin. So - in that situation, their responsibility is to obey God. As Peter said, “we must obey God rather than men.”

This leads us to another aspect of obedience and submission to civil authority. When the civil authorities put us in a position where we must disobey them to obey God, submission to the civil authorities also means that we must submit to the consequences of our disobedience. We obey God, disobey the civil authorities, and submit to the consequences from the civil authorities. This doesn't mean that you don't exercise your rights within the laws to avoid the consequences, or even to change the laws. But it does mean that everything you do must be within the law, except when you cannot obey both God and men.

An example of acceptance of the consequences is in Daniel 3 where King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold and, at the dedication of the image, issued a command that, when the people heard the signal, they were to fall down and worship the image. Anyone who didn't do this would be thrown into the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to worship the image, knowing that the penalty was death in the fire. They obeyed God and accepted the consequence. I love what they said when the king tried to persuade them to worship the image – let's turn there, because I like it so much - **Daniel 3:16–18 - ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷ “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ “But *even* if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”** That's a great example of loyalty to God. They disobeyed the king and placed their faith in God to handle the consequences. In that case, God delivered them. In other cases, God may have other plans – He may want to accomplish something through our suffering – and allow us to bear the consequences. So, we are supposed to obey Him and be willing to accept the consequences, knowing that He is in

control and will be glorified whether He chooses to deliver us from the consequences or not. There are a lot of Christian martyrs today who obey God, instead of men, and suffer the ultimate sacrifice because of it.

So, we are to submit to and obey the civil authorities who have authority over us. This means we need to understand the authority structure, our position in the structure, and our rights and responsibilities in that structure. We are to obey the authorities when obedience does not conflict with our obedience to God. But, we are not to obey if obedience would cause us to disobey God. And when we do disobey the civil authority, we obey God by submitting to the consequences of our disobedience.

Finally, we are supposed to be ready for every good deed. “Ready” means be prepared, and may even include the idea of ability – being ready, willing and able for every good deed. Now, it is not clear whether this clause applies in the abstract – meaning we are to be ready for every good deed in all contexts and all circumstances, which I’m sure we are – or whether, in this context, it is talking about good deeds in our relationship with civil authority. Because of the context, I think it is talking about being ready for good deeds with respect to the civil authorities. I think this is talking about being of service to the civil authorities. Helping them carry out their responsibilities when the opportunity arises. Doing good for them. This could include civil service in the community – fireman, policeman, etc. This could include assisting the civil servants in certain ways. Supporting them. Helping them do their job. Whatever it may be, we need to be ready, willing and able to be of service to them.

Let’s move on to verse 2. It says that they are to be reminded ² **to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.** With verse 2, I think Paul shifts his focus from our relationship to civil government to our interaction with the world in general. The reason why I think that is because of the first and last clauses – “no one” in the first clause is unqualified and seems to be a break from the “rulers” and “authorities” described in verse 1. Also, the reference to “all men” in the last clause seems to be expanded beyond the group of rulers and authorities. So – I think that verse 2 is describing how we are to interact with “all men” without distinction between believers and unbelievers. Which I think places the focus of this verse on our interaction with the pagan world.

First, Paul tells Titus to remind the Cretans that they are to “malign no one”. The word translated “malign” means “to demean in speech”, “to speak in a disrespectful way that demeans, denigrates, maligns”. To slander, revile, defame. The basic elements seem to be speaking with “ill will” – speaking in a way that is meant to hurt or harm someone. Obviously, speaking falsely of someone – slandering or defaming them – is included. But I also think that the idea is broader than that. One commentator describes “malign” as – “to speak ill or evil of,” and he says, “Paul is not saying by this admonition that Christians must be naive and never correctly evaluate and speak about the evil that they see in anyone, since this is what he himself does in 1:10–16. Rather, he is urging Christians to restrain their natural inclination to say the worst about people.”¹ We are all pretty good at using our words with the intent to harm and we are very creative about how we go about doing this without actually slandering someone. We use innuendo, we twist the facts, omit the facts, fail to tell the whole story, even use our tone of voice or style of writing – all kinds of ways. Knowing how the Cretans were, I bet they were really good at it. We are pretty good at it, too, and we need to be very careful not to do this.

Next, the Cretans are to be reminded to be “peaceable” and “gentle”. “Peaceable” means we are not to be contentious or quarrelsome. “Gentle” means gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant, yielding, not insisting on every right or letter of law or custom. It is not being weak, it is being kind in strength – not hammering someone even though you are able to. So – in our interaction with the world, we are to be peaceable - not contentious - and we are supposed to be gentle, kind and courteous.

Finally, the Cretans are to be reminded to show “every consideration for all men.” This pretty much sums up all of verse 2. It’s also pretty broad. Notice the words “every consideration” and “all men”. Paul is using this kind of language for emphasis. There is not much wiggle room there. What does this mean? It means that, in all respects, in all of our dealings with all people – believers and unbelievers – we are to be considerate. The word translated

¹ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 333.

“consideration” means “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of self importance – [it is] gentleness, humility, courtesy, considerateness, meekness”. It is a “mild and gentle friendliness.” Once again, like the word “gentle”, it is not being weak; it is being humble, courteous, considerate, gentle and meek, even though you have the power or strength to do otherwise.

So, applying verses 1 and 2 to ourselves, as if we are the Cretan church, – verse 1 is dealing with our interaction as believers with the governing authorities – our local, state and federal authorities. We are to be subject to and obedient to these governing authorities and be ready, willing and able to take advantage of every opportunity to be of service to them – to do good works. Verse 2 broadens the scope to include instructions regarding our interaction with everyone – believers and unbelievers – with the focus on our interaction with the unbelieving world. We should not malign anyone – we should not speak maliciously - in a way that is meant to hurt or harm someone. We should be peaceable - not contentious or quarrelsome – gentle towards others, not severe – and we should demonstrate every consideration for all men – meaning, in all respects, in all dealings with all people – believers and unbelievers – we are to be considerate. I’m sure the Cretans had problems with all this – this kind of behavior was apparently not conducive to their culture. It’s not really conducive to ours, either. I’m not saying our culture doesn’t value these things, I think it still does, but I think things are changing.

But that is one of the reasons why we need to be this way. Let’s think about it – much of this behavior must have been diametrically opposed to the Cretan way of life. As we know from **Titus 1:12** - “**Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.**” Their way of life promoted lies, beastly behavior, laziness, pleasure seeking, sordid love of gain and lust for wealth. According to Cicero - their “*Moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans ... consider highway robbery honorable.*” How much would the Cretan believers stand out in that kind of culture if they behaved the way Paul describes in Titus 3:1-2? What would that do for the church? For the name of Christ? They would be a bright light in the darkness, the gospel would be honored and the name of Christ would be honored. Our behavior matters and how we show ourselves to the world matters.

We talked about this a little bit when we discussed the qualities of the older men, older women, and other groups in the church in Chapter 2. Look back at Titus 2. If you recall, Titus 2:4-5 instructed the young women to learn to love their husbands and children, be sensible, morally pure, workers at home, kind, willingly submitting to the authority of their husbands. If they didn't learn this, what did Titus 2:5 say would happen – the word of God would be dishonored. It would give the opposition – the unbelieving world - reason to slander the gospel. Our bad behavior is observed by the world and gives the world the opportunity to slander the gospel.

What did Titus 2:8 say would happen if Titus didn't show himself as an example of good deeds, sound in his doctrine, dignified, healthy and above reproach in his speech? That those opposed to the church – the world – would have legitimate reason to attack the church – all of us. Once again, our bad behavior is observed by the world and gives the world the opportunity to slander the gospel.

What did Titus 2:10 tell us would happen if believing slaves rebelled against the authority of their masters, or were not interested in pleasing them, or were argumentative or contradictory, or stole from their masters, or were unfaithful? They would harm the gospel. Our bad behavior is observed by the world and damages the gospel.

This is why our behavior is so important – it affects our witness, our ministry, our ability to serve. It gives the world ammunition to attack us. It damages the gospel. And it damages God's reputation. Godly behavior works the other way – if we behave the way we are supposed to, if we behave like Paul instructs the Cretans in Titus 3:1-2, we will stick out like a sore thumb – in a good way – our behavior will enhance, not hinder, our ability to serve God. The world will not have a legitimate reason to attack us. The gospel and God's reputation will be honored.

Now, we are going to move on to the doctrinal basis for the behavior described in Titus 3:1-2. We are just going to start this part this week. We will finish it up next week.

Look at **Titus 3:3** – it says - **³ For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures,**

spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. I think I said this last week – notice that this verse begins with the word “for”. When you see “for” at the beginning of a verse, many times it indicates that what follows it is the reasoning or rationale for what came before that verse. So, in Titus 3:1-2, Paul describes how the Cretans are to interact with the pagan world and Titus 3:3 begins the doctrinal reason for this behavior.

So – in Titus 3:3, the first thing that Paul points out is this – “we also once were foolish ourselves” – meaning, in our former life, prior to becoming believers, we were like them. This is said with emphasis on the “we” – we ourselves were like them. We were no better then, than they are now. They are no worse now, than we were then. From God’s perspective, this is the condition all of us were in before Christ saved us. The rest of the verse then goes on to describe that condition – and it is bad.

Before we move into this description, we need to keep something in mind - the things being described – like “foolish” or “disobedient” – are true evaluations – they are reality. What I mean by that is there are basically two perspectives you can use to evaluate someone or something – God’s perspective and man’s perspective. The only true evaluation – the only evaluation that reflects reality - is the evaluation from God’s perspective. Evaluations from man’s perspective using man’s standards are not true – they aren’t reality. Men, using their own standards, will call evil good and good evil. To the world, using man’s standards, a foolish man may be seen as wise, and an evil man, may be seen as good. So, the qualities described in Titus 3 are true evaluations – they are evaluations from God’s perspective. God, through His inspired word, is telling us His evaluation of unbelievers. We might have appeared to ourselves as pretty good, but God’s evaluation is something completely different. We were in a very bad state.

First, we were “foolish”. This means “unintelligent, foolish, dull-witted.” We were stupid. Without understanding. Particularly regarding spiritual matters, but in context, it doesn’t seem like the term is limited to foolishness in just spiritual things. Because of the fall, man’s reasoning, his understanding has been corrupted. Man can’t think right. And it plays out in all areas of life, not just the spiritual areas. Men may sometimes get some of the facts right, but we can take those things we get right and really mess them up. Some people who appear to be very intelligent are foolish. For

example, the world considers scientists to be highly intelligent – they have discovered many things about the world – yet these scientists reject the reality of creation and twist and misconstrue these discoveries to construct their own reality based on the false idea of evolution. This is foolishness.

Next, we were “disobedient”. Who were we disobedient to? God. By his nature, an unbeliever is disobedient to God. He rejects God’s authority and follows his own rules. This is disobedience. You should also consider that disobedience to God’s agents, like the prophets and apostles, His Word (the Bible), and His appointed authorities, like parents and governmental authorities, is also disobedience to God.

Next, we were “deceived”. This means “led astray, be misled, be deluded, be deceived.” What were we deceived about? Everything. Unbelievers are deceived about who God is, who they are, morals, ethics, values, good, evil, meaning, purpose, everything. They reject God, construct a Godless reality, and define these things themselves. Then they base their lives on their false reality. That is the ultimate deception. This goes hand in hand with “foolish”.

Next, we were “enslaved to various lusts and pleasures”. We were slaves to lusts and pleasures of all kinds. Lots of them, of various kinds. “Lust” is an intense desire for something – other words to describe it include longing or craving. Our own cravings for pleasure enslaved us. Lust and pleasure are related. We crave what will give us pleasure. So, when we were unbelievers, we would do anything to get what we craved, to experience the pleasure it would give us. When you crave something, getting it consumes you. It becomes the focus of your life. You will use all your resources, use any tactic, to get it. When you are that wrapped up with something – you don’t control it, it controls you - that is slavery - and this is what we were like.

Next, we spent our life in wickedness and envy. Wickedness means “baseness, depravity, wickedness, vice. It can include a vicious attitude, malice, ill will. “Envy” is jealousy. *“It is the grudging spirit that cannot bear to contemplate someone else’s prosperity” or their success (Bruce, Galatians,*

249, at 5:21).² Notice it says we were “spending our life” this way. Our life was lived in depravity and envy. Wickedness and envy characterized the way we lived.

Next, we were “hated”. Another translation of this word is “loathsome, despicable”. Probably the best way to view this word is that we were hateful, loathsome, despicable. Hateful is deserving or arousing hate. Loathsome is disgusting. Despicable is so worthless or obnoxious as to rouse moral indignation.³

Finally, we hated one another. The word translated “hated” here is a different word than the word we just discussed. This word means “to have a strong aversion to, detest”. We detested each other – this describes mutual hatred – everybody hated – detested - each other.

To sum up the characteristics of a non-believer – the way we were before we were saved – we were stupid, dull and without understanding; disobedient to God; led astray, deceived, deluded; slaves to all kinds of cravings and pleasures; living our lives in depravity and envy of others; hateful, loathsome, despicable, detesting each other. Another passage that describes the conditions of unbelievers is **Ephesians 2:1-3** – turn there – talking to the Ephesian believers, Paul says - ¹ **And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,** ² **in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.** ³ **Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.** Unbelievers are spiritually dead, by their nature are children of wrath, and they walk like it. Titus 3:3 tells us what that walk looks like. So does Romans 1:18 – 32. We won't read that passage - You can look at it later, if you want. And there are others. Regarding unbelievers, Warren Weirsbe said “All lost sinners are dead, and the only difference

² George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 337.

³ Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.*, Eleventh ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the unsaved society leader, but both are dead in sin—and one corpse cannot be more dead than another! This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live.⁴” And we need to remember, before we were saved, we were just like them.

As I said above, Titus 3:3 is the beginning of Paul’s doctrinal rationale for the way the Cretans are to behave described in verses 1 and 2 before. The first point Paul makes is to remind the Cretans (and us) that all of us were formerly unbelievers and lived like they do. Paul says we were all like this. But something happened. And we will talk about that next week, and then sum up his rationale.

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⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), Eph 2:1.