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# CALLING FOR A TRANSFORMED LIFE

The true church calls for a life that reflects the truths that it teaches.

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## Introduction

We will be wrapping up the book of Titus this evening. Next week, Pastor Dale will pull out important principals from the book. Let's begin.

Paul has been giving Titus instruction on healthy church structure and protection. There are essentially two parts to this structure. Order within and protection without. The internal structure consists of qualified elders and a teaching order. At the same time, Paul warns against external attacks. Usually the disease of division comes from outside sources, i.e. false teachers. Although false teachers may arise from within, teaching sound doctrine can provide protection from such threats. Therefore, to preserve a healthy church body, it must do two things. One, function well internally and two, protect itself externally. And the fuel for such protection and provision, is the grace of God. The more we comprehend the love of Christ in the gospel, the more we will understand His grace. That grace fuels our affections and desires to inspire us to submit completely to Christ and His Word. As a result, this will have an outward effect in how we live. This power-enabling grace was Pastor Tim's message last week.

In chapter three, Paul moves from protection and provision, to proper conduct in the world. Paul does not write to the people of God exhorting them to hunker down in their bunkers. Rather quite the opposite. But how? How are we to conduct ourselves as transformed people in a fallen and depraved world?

It is easy to look out at the world and become discouraged isn't it? There appears to be a rapid escalation of immorality and ungodliness. Ideas and practices condemned a few generations ago are now fully accepted and defended. We fear for our children and even more for our grandchildren.

The PC culture drives the decisions of our governmental authorities. Every group has a label and each label demands representation whether it is warranted or not. They demand equality and they call for tolerance of all beliefs. Unless you are Christian. We are labeled bigots, intolerant, and self-serving.

Our leaders are driven by personal political power and financial gain. And, we appear to be absolutely powerless to do anything about it. As one author put it, "There is a growing spirit of antagonism toward government; a growing pessimism toward institutions; a growing attitude of isolation among believers, abandoning the culture entirely and basically heading for the hills, saying, "This City of Man is going to hell, so I'll just give my attention and time and money and energy to the City of God."<sup>1</sup>

When we look with eyes that sees only the disease, it becomes easy to be cynical and saddened. If we allow ourselves to sit in the muck and mire of this depraved world, we can become fearful and isolated. Or worse, if we are not careful, it will make us angry and hostile toward the world. As a result, we desire to retreat to our castles only to build walls of protection from the outside world. Shooting fiery darts from our pedestal aiming for change. And, after assessing the culture, who would blame you to have such an attitude.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Davey, Titus: Expository Commentary on the New Testament (Cary, NC: Charity House, 2020), Kindle Book, 6003

But is this gospel? Did Jesus say, “Repent and believe then go make yourselves fortresses. Keep your distance from the Sodom’s and Gomorrah’s of our day? Are we to remove ourselves from society? Let me remind you of Jesus final instructions to His disciples:

*<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”*

But He didn’t stop there, He finished with,

*“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

You see the world is not our enemy, it is our mission field. Until we see the world for what it is, a diseased body of which only we have its cure, we will only allow it to defeat us. This is where we pick up this evening with Paul’s final instructions in this letter. They include how we are to live as lights in a world that is hostile toward our great God and King. Turn with me to Titus chapter 3. But before we begin, let’s pray.

## Reminding the People (3:1-2)

Follow along with me as I read Titus chapter 3, verses 1-2:

*<sup>1</sup>Remind them to be submissive to ruler and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup>to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*

Paul begins with a series of reminders and not with new instructions. He says, “remind them.” We should read these reminders as something that is to be done continually. In other words, read it as say, “keep on reminding the believers of these things.”<sup>2</sup> It’s not a one and done. Rather recall these things over and over again.

Isn’t this needed among us? We have short memories. We can be so easily distracted and thrown off the path. For me, it only takes a news report, a social media post, or even overhearing a conversation. I’m quickly emotionally drawn into the world.

And I am cascading down the mountain of sinful anger and disgust. My thoughts run with these messages and before long I am ready to post my opinion or speak my mind. I’ll be spewing some sort of verbal tirade against any leadership or public opinion. These moments reveal how much I still need to be reminded of the gospel.

## Responding to Rulers (v.1)

The island of Crete had a reputation of always being on the verge of revolt. They hated Roman rulers and were always plotting some sort of conflict.<sup>3</sup> There was political unrest. Remember, they were “liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.” But according to Paul, that was no excuse for rebellion or disobedience for the church in Crete. But what about us? We don’t live under oppressive rulers and authorities. We may feel like it sometimes, but we are far from living in such conditions. We live in a country where individualism and freedom reign. We may legally

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid 6013

<sup>3</sup> James Burton Coffman, James Burton Coffman Series of New Testament Commentaries: Vol. 9 (Abilene Christian University Press, 1986), 325

participate in protests and civil disobedience. According to Paul, it doesn't matter. We are to be submissive and obedient to whomever is ruling over us. That includes supervisors, teachers, elders, and parents.

### Instances of Sin

But aren't there exceptions? What about instances of sin? Does Paul mean we are we to blindly obey our authorities when we are asked or even commanded to sin? Of course not. We are not to violate the Word of God.<sup>4</sup> The question is, "How do you respond in these situations?" Do you respond with aggression and anger? Or with a quiet resolve?

### Instances of Character

What about the leaders we submit to? Does the character of the leader have impact on my obedience? No. Our obedience is not contingent on the character of the ruler or the authority. Respect does not determine our obedience. We obey regardless of the character or the wisdom of the leader. They don't have to earn our respect. Nor do we to qualify our obedience. We give it regardless.

### Ready to Serve

But it doesn't stop there. We are to be ready for every good work. This means to have a posture ready to act. Poised to respond to the needs of others. This text encourages us to be involved with the people with whom live and work. We are to be a light in the darkness. Are you poised to serve unbelievers who are hostile toward God? Are you ready to serve them in word and deed? Jesus gave us a pretty clear parable on this in the good Samaritan.

### Relating to Others

Paul continues this list of reminders next addressing our speech. Paul sets the bar high with the "speak evil of no one" phrase. That is a high calling. The weight of this reminder here should press down upon us heavily. Gossip runs amok in society and unfortunately in churches too. It has become accepted practice to complain about leadership and authority. In our country, we dress it up as our right to free speech. Paul does not give us that excuse. The reminder is clear. We are to speak evil of no one that means anyone inside the church or even outside the church.

And if we carefully watch our words, we will avoid his next reminder, quarreling. Arguments and quarrels were signs of false teachers. God's people avoid quarrels. We are to work hard to be at peace with everyone. But in our culture we prize those who can win the verbal clashes.

Some Christians search for arguments and quarrels in order to claim their spot in the land. They are ready to dig their heels in stir up dissension in the name of Christ. As if intellectual acumen is king. Let me remind you, Jesus was a lamb led to the slaughter, and not a word of defiance proceeded from his mouth. Is that you? Is that your character? Now I am not saying we not to defend the truth. But Peter says it like this,

*"<sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 5:29

<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter 3:15-16

It's not a matter of **IF** we defend the truth but rather **HOW** defend the truth. Is your defense out of love or personal pride? Do you view those who question your faith as lost souls or personal enemies?

Hence, we are to be gentle. The word here means patiently steadfast amid injustice. Our culture prides itself on aggressive in-your-face sound bites. As one author put it, "Our interchanges are confrontational, divisive, and dismissive. Balance and fairness are casualties on evening show as two, three, and sometimes four voices contend simultaneously for dominance. Volume and stubbornness are the new civic virtues." [7] With the ease of live feeds and recordings, we all have a voice. Therefore, speak it! This is not our conduct. If you are facing injustice, and you will, then we are to respond with patience and gentleness. We are not to attack nor seek retaliation.

Finally, Paul wraps up this list with, "show perfect courtesy toward all people". The NLT says it like this, "show true humility to everyone." This is not doormat Christianity. It takes greater spiritual strength to love when being persecuted or mistreated. It takes greater spiritual strength to humbly serve those who are your enemies. Only those who have faith in the sovereign Lord will respond to an evil world in this way. Our flesh desires to respond as Peter did in the garden of Gethsemane. That was not the way of our Savior. He commanded to sword be put away and healed the soldier's ear.

As you author put it, "The world well understands infighting and backbiting, but what wins the gospel a hearing from unbelievers is a very different pattern in the church. Those in the church are to model peaceableness and consideration, especially with each other. How? The answer lies in a willingness "to show true humility toward all men." And where does this humility come from? It remembers the gospel as Paul will tell us. Let's continue in chapter 3 verses 3-7.

### Remembering the Gospel (v.3-8)

*<sup>3</sup>For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.*

### Recalling our Past (3)

Let's stop there. Paul began this chapter with, remind them. Now he shifts this reminder to include himself and Titus. "For **WE** ourselves"... Even the most dedicated God-loving Christ-exalting believer remembers who he was. This is the pathway to humility and obedience. There is an old saying for those who achieve a high degree of success, never forget where you came from. This is exactly what Paul is saying here. We all were once deprived in our reasoning, in our desires, and in our relationships.

Remember this:

- When you are asked to give a reason for the hope that is in you and the world look at you as though you are a fool, remember that was once you.
- When you see and encounter unbelievers who love their sin even it causes pain and suffering, remember, that was once you.
- When you see relationships torn apart by pride and selfish gain, remember, that was once you.

And if this isn't enough, may we not be blind to our own current sinfulness because we are not yet fully transformed. We have no excuse. We know the truth. Never forget this. The sheer fact we judge unbelievers and condemn them exposes our forgetfulness. Do you shake your heads in disgust at the sin and foolishness in

the world? Do you wonder why people won't choose Christ? If so, you have forgotten. Every single day we need to remember what we once were. Never forget where you came from.

Lest we become discouraged recalling what we once were Paul thankfully is not finished. He continues with the rest of the gospel.

## Recalling our Savior (4-8)

*<sup>4</sup>But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup>he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup>so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. <sup>8</sup>The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.*

What a beautiful conjunction, “**but**”. Despite being guilty of every single thing listed in verse 3, God still came looking for us. We are not what we once were because God is good, kind, and merciful.

When we were depraved in our thoughts, our desires, and our relationships, He came after us. When He appeared, He came to His and they rejected Him. He came to our sewer; He moved into our slave quarters; He inhabited our slums. We weren't [even] looking for Him – He came looking for us.”<sup>6</sup> We were destined for death. As little Lemmings following one another over the edge of the cliff, He came and saved us. He plucked us out of the line and gave us new life. That is the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior.

Paul includes the phrase, “not because of works done by us in righteousness”. Paul understands the human heart. It so desperately wants credit for earning some part of our salvation. But he is making it perfectly clear, we contributed nothing to our salvation. In the words of Jonathan Edwards, the only contribution we made to our salvation was our sin. And that sin was removed by the blood of Christ.

He continues to go to great lengths to ensure us we understand that we had no part in securing our salvation. Our justification was completed secured by His grace through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration takes place in a moment while renewal is a lifetime process. None of which we could do ourselves. As a result of the Holy Spirit's work, we are now justified before a holy and righteous God. This means every single sinful thought and deed is completely purged from our record, making it as spotless as the righteousness of Christ.<sup>7</sup> And as if that was not enough, He gives us a place in His kingdom for eternity. In fact, it is ours at this very moment. No sin will take that away from us.

These truths must remain on minds lest we forget our great salvation and defame the name of Christ by our conduct. Hence Paul's command “to insist on these things” in verse 8. He even affirms their trustworthiness. When we read this final push at the end of this letter, we should hear it as one passionately encouraging us to trust in these words. As a coach screams encouragement to his athlete as they approach the finish line. This passionate plea to continually preach the gospel is not reserved for

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Davey, Titus: Expository Commentary on the New Testament (Cary, NC: Charity House, 2020), Kindle Book, 6587

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 6782

elders alone. We all should be encouraging one another in the gospel. He have short memories. Our conduct will only sincerely change when we truly understand all that Christ has done for us. Then we will devote ourselves to good works, thus proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior. These exhortations “are excellent and profitable for people.” But not only do we need to remember what to affirm, we need to remember what to avoid.

## Remember to Stay the Course (9-11)

*<sup>9</sup> But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. <sup>10</sup> As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, <sup>11</sup> knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

Distractions over unprofitable discussions will cause division and destroy the pattern of church stability. Let's not major in the minors and allow for division to spring up over foolish controversies. If God has not revealed something in scripture for us to know, leave it alone. There is nothing explicit stated in the Word on how we to school our children or whether or not dating is an acceptable practice. Foolish controversies are those Paul described the false teachers in this chapter one as those who were “devoted to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.” The point is not to avoid relevant issues confronting the church.

We should be addressing new challenges that face the church. But are we as a people, so inwardly focused, that we seek to pick apart everything someone says or does? Look, let's major on the majors. Or in other words, keep the main thing the main thing, and that is the gospel. The world is full of division. The church must live counterculturally by living in unity.

Paul gives clear instruction on how to handle those who cause division over worthless ideas. Two warnings then have nothing to do with them. He holds nothing back in describing them. He calls them warped, sinful, and self-condemned. Those are strong words. He doesn't even indicate we are to attempt to work with them or show them much grace. No, warn them twice and have nothing more to do with them. Paul wraps up this letter remembering the people.

## Remembering to Fulfill the Gospel (12-15)

*<sup>12</sup> When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. <sup>13</sup> Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. <sup>14</sup> And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. <sup>15</sup> All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.*

Paul has exemplified what he instructed Titus in church structure. He continues to prepare others to do the work of the gospel. Even though he will settle in a location for a time, he is still continually sending and training others. His work is not done. If this letter was written near the end of his life, then we see how he continues to teach and train others for the work of the ministry. The work of the ministry has not ended for him and it should never end for us. We are to continually teach and train men for the ministry.

By the grace of God, Clearcreek Chapel will be here for years to come because we have fulfilled the ministry of the church, by putting it in order, establishing qualified leadership, and instructing the people in sound doctrine. What flows from this structure is a transformed people.

Three times in this chapter Paul alludes to good works. In verse 1, he says, be ready for every good work, in verse 8, those who believe in God are to be careful to devote themselves to good works, and finally here, again, learn to devote themselves to good works. We are to be a people, a church, that is devoted to live out what we know, and what we believe. Understanding the gospel will result in a transformed life. A transformed life will do what it says it believes and this is be devoted to good works.

## Reflect and Respond

- Do exemplify a life transformed by the gospel? Are you living a life submissive to rulers and authorities, ready for every good work, and loving others?
- Do you fully understand the gospel in such a way you are gripped by the mercy of God? Or do you look upon the world with disdain and disgust from all the sin you see? Then you have forgotten where you came from.
- Do you get caught up in biblical debates that prove unprofitable? Or do you seek unity for the sake of the gospel?