

Focus Text

“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. 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. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 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, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 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. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” (Titus 3:1–11, ESV)

I: Be Ready

“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” (Titus 3:1–2, ESV)

As Paul is coming to the close of his letter to Titus, some of the final instructions are to build up God’s people to be Holy in a world that doesn’t understand them.

First, Paul speaks to being submissive to the authorities in the world. There appears to be a contradiction here we must deal with. because throughout the book of Acts, the apostles were getting arrested left and right for preaching the gospel. Paul was arrested several times because of how God used him. The Christian can never be silenced when sharing the gospel, and the authorities can not stop us from sharing the good news of Jesus. However, there was a notion that because of Jesus, we no longer need to listen to earthly authority or to pay taxes, see Luke 20:25. The Christ follower should be respectful even in the face of cruel authority as a symbol of belonging to Jesus.¹

Paul goes on to remind Titus that we are not to quarrel or fight with people needlessly. To be courteous toward all people. The way the Church displays Her Holiness is by

¹ ¹ Cf. Ps 22:28; Prov 8:15–16; Dan 2:20–21, 37; 5:21.

² Cf. Rom 13:1–7. See the excellent treatment of this subject by C. E. B. Cranfield, “The Christian’s Political Responsibility According to the New Testament,” *SJT* 15 (1962): 176–92, also contained in his book *The Bible and Christian Life* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 48–68.

Lea, Thomas D., and Hayne P. Griffin. 1992. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Vol. 34. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

love and kindness. We tell people the truth about Jesus, about their need for a Savior, and about their sin. But if they should respond with anger and needless quarrels, we are to respond with kindness instead. Paul reminds us in Romans to not repay evil for evil. Jesus commands us to turn the other cheek.

"He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" (Luke 20:25, ESV)

"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all." (Romans 12:17, ESV)

"But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matthew 5:39, ESV)

II: God's Forgiving Grace

"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. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 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, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:3-7, ESV)

The conflict of being loving to an unloving person is that our initial reaction is one of fight or flight. We want to either trade punches or run away from those who don't love. Here, Paul reminds the Church that our secret for staying loving even as the world around us enjoys both sin and pain is how God has treated us. Every time I become self-righteous toward someone and believe that I am better than them, Scriptures like this play in my mind from the Holy Spirit. God has been more gracious to us than we will ever truly know. The number of times God has said, "I forgive you." would be shocking if we count them up. However, God did not hesitate to sacrifice Himself on the cross to save us. He delights in people coming to accept His saving Grace. Our motivation for being the Holy and loving people of God is the reminder of His sheer goodness toward us. We were once not a people, as Peter says, but now we are God's people.

John Wesley, in his notes, recounts the way of salvation for the Christ follower.

"5. Not by works—In this important passage the apostle presents us with a delightful view of our redemption. Herein we have, I. The cause of it: not our works or righteousness, but the kindness and love of God our Saviour. II. The effects, which are, 1. Justification, being justified, pardoned, and accepted through the alone merits of Christ, not from any desert in us, but according to his own mercy by his grace, his free, unmerited goodness: 2.

Sanctification: expressed by *the laver of regeneration*, (that is, baptism, the thing signified, as well as the outward sign) and the renewal of the Holy Ghost; which purifies the soul as water cleanses the body, and renews it in the whole image of God. III. The consummation of all, *that we might become heirs of eternal life*, and live now in the joyful hope of it.²

“Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:10, ESV)

III: Prepared for Good Works

“The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” (Titus 3:8–11, ESV)

After Paul reminded us of our inheritance in Jesus Christ, Which is a gift of His Grace, our response, then, is to be prepared to serve Him joyfully.

I have once heard it said we are set free to do good works for Jesus. We are not saved by the works we do; we joyfully do good work out of a grateful heart for what Jesus has done for us. If one decides that they do not need to serve Jesus well, there is an issue of gratitude that must be prayerfully dealt with.

Paul then calls out our humility. Don’t get controversies, dissension, and quarrels about the Hebrew law; they are understandable. The unique one for us is genealogies. In the first century, your family line was an important part of your status and culture. Sometimes, teachers would use their family lineage as a sign of authority. I am from David’s line, so listen to me. The Christ follower now belongs to the family of Jesus, of which there is no higher lineage. But, as Jesus displayed when he washed the feet of his disciples, our family heritage is based on humility in service, not in nobility.

Finally, we see the rule of three applied here. If someone is causing trouble within the Church, there are two warnings then they should be removed from the community because they are refusing to operate out of the grace that has been given to them. Jesus also suggests that in problems of sin, three visits are made. Once by oneself, twice with two witnesses, and if these are not handled, then the matter goes before the church leadership, and even then, if it is not handled, they are removed.

² Wesley, John. 1818. *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*. Fourth American Edition. New York: J. Soule and T. Mason.

The Church is God's Holy people who have been saved by Him and set free in this world to do good works. While salvation is by grace alone, the life of Christ is to be filled with good works to display constant thanks to the Lord for the grace He gives to us.

"When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." **(John 13:12-17, ESV)**

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." **(Matthew 18:15-18, ESV)**

The Application for the morning is the questions.

"What Gifts Has the Lord Given You?"

"How are you using these good gifts to honor the God who loves you, saved you, and has made you His Holy People?"
