

Message #11**Titus 3:1-7**

Many of us grew up in the 60's and 70's and borrowing from Charles Dickens, he described it well.

“It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.
It was the age of wisdom. It was the age of foolishness.
It was the epoch of belief. It was the epoch of incredulity.
It was the season of light. It was the season of darkness.
It was the spring of hope. It was the winter of despair.
We had everything before us, we had nothing before us.”

The 70's were years of stereos, bell bottoms, 25 cent McDonald burgers and 30 cents a gallon for gas. But it was also a time of turmoil. There were protests and marches. Bars were packed. Morals were low. Authority was challenged. That was life in the 70's.

That was pretty much the way daily life was on the island of Crete. Bars were packed and morals were low. This tropical island in the Mediterranean was one of the wildest places in the world.

Paul said Titus, what that island needs are churches in every city that are serious about God and His Word. It needs people of all ages reflecting God's grace. One of the ways that God's people can do that is by being good citizens. Now the question is what makes us good citizens in God's estimation?

Just recently a political leader said God wanted him to oppose everything about the President. He said that was God's will. Apparently, that person hasn't read the Bible. Because when you read the Bible, it clearly says in multiple passages that we demonstrate God's grace by submitting to authority, not protesting it. **In a freewheeling, free-thinking world, God's people can demonstrate God's grace by being the kind of citizen that submits to and obeys all authority. That is clearly the point here:**

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE TO DEMONSTRATE GOD'S GRACE TO A WILD AND UNRULY WORLD BY BEING GOOD CITIZENS WHO SUBMIT TO AND OBEY ALL AUTHORITY.

When Paul wrote this part of this letter, Rome was the dominant power of the world and the Roman Emperor was Nero. When you read the life of Nero, it is not like reading about “Snow White.” He had some serious issues. In fact, Paul, himself, had already served one jail sentence in Rome because of Nero.

Now Crete was a wild island and people hated authority. With 146 villages and cities on an island about 160 miles long, there definitely was independence in the way people thought. Rome had taken over this island about 150 years before Paul wrote this letter and the Cretans still didn't like it. The Cretans hated the authority.

They did not want anyone telling them what to do and instead of them willingly submitting themselves to authority, they lived in a continual protest rebel mindset. They hated political leadership and did not want to submit to anyone.

So Paul says one of the ways to demonstrate God's grace in a wild world in which people do and say whatever they want is by being a good citizen who submits to God-ordained authority.

God is the one who ordains authority. He has His reasons and His purposes and He is the one who puts one into office and takes one out of office. Earlier this week I was reading the book of Ezra and the book opens with God sovereignly intervening in the life of Cyrus and actually causing him to issue a decree. Cyrus was the king of Persia that was known for its heretical religious beliefs. Yet God overruled Cyrus' mind. He ordained his leadership and what he did in his leadership position.

Now Paul says to Titus that your job is to go from city to city and speak and exhort and reprove and remind God's people how they are to think and behave (2:15-3:1). Paul says you give them six reminders:

REMINDER #1 – Remind God's people to be subject and obedient to rulers and authorities.

3:1a

God's people have a responsibility to willingly submit ourselves to and be subject to government officials and laws. That point is stressed in multiple passages (Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13-17).

Knute Larson, in his commentary on Titus, wrote: "Polybius and Plutarch wrote that the Cretans fumed under Roman rule" (*Titus*, p. 380). There was a real anti-government atmosphere that existed on this freewheeling island of Crete.

Paul told Titus to remind the believers that as long as government and civil law does not contradict God's Word, then God's people should submit to it.

Now Paul did not say you make sure that the government is free from corruption before you submit to it. He says you submit to it. Now of course the only exception to this would be if the government asked us to do something that would require we disobey God. In that case, we should not submit. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not bow down to an idol nor would Daniel stop praying to God. Peter was told to stop preaching Christ and he refused to do it. But they did not lead some political revolt; they just quietly went about their business and were willing to take the consequences.

Now this raises an interesting question and that is should Christians ever participate in a revolution to overthrow a duly constituted government? Let's say we lived in Nazi Germany when Hitler was killing innocent Jews. Should the Christians have tried to overthrow Hitler to save the Jews? Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a minister, attempted to do just that and ultimately was hanged for it. That is a tricky one because God loves Israel and He loves those who defend Israel.

What we can say here is that Paul or any other Apostle did not challenge Christians to overthrow Nero, who was killing Christians. He himself would be executed by Nero. He apparently believed the best way for him to demonstrate God's grace was not by rebelling or revolting against government authority, but by submitting to it. In fact, Jesus taught the people to even submit to hypocritical Pharisees (Matt. 23:2-3).

Here is what we who are believers need to realize. The greatest need for all people is to believe on Jesus Christ. The Gospel of God is what can transform a godless life and godless culture. One way we reflect the Gospel of grace is by our submissive and obedient spirit to God-ordained government.

Certainly if the government says we have a right to peaceful protest, then we have a right to decide what it is we will involve ourselves. We must figure out what is the best way to demonstrate God's grace and even if we do decide to protest, it must be done in a spirit that is willing to submit to and obey all authority.

For example, if you believe you can best reflect God's grace by a peaceful protest against an abortion clinic, our government gives us the right. However, even if we decided to do that, we should still pay our taxes, even though, at the present time, some of the money goes to support the clinics being protested.

We need God's wisdom in this and what we can say Biblically is that Jesus, Paul and all the Apostles did not lead a revolt against government authority; they all submitted to it and that is what Paul tells the Christians on Crete to do.

REMINDER #2 – Remind God's people to be ready to do every good work. **3:1b**

Christians have an obligation to do good things in and for the society in which they live. They need to be ready to comply to any good request that can help promote the nation's welfare, the state's welfare or the cities' welfare. Certainly one of the things we have the responsibility to do is pray for the leaders.

A few years ago, we took a phone book and we literally prayed for every person in this area by name and then we sent them a card and told them we did that. It took us over eleven years, but we prayed for every person. That was a good thing to do.

REMINDER #3 – Remind God's people to be careful with their speech. **3:2a**

When Paul tells Titus to remind God's people not to "malign" anyone, what he means is we are never to use our speech to slander, insult or abuse people in an untrue, defamatory way that would elevate us over them.

The actual word "malign" is the word "blaspheme" that means to speak lightly or profanely and impiously not only about another person, but about God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 82).

By using this word, God is basically saying when you speak abusively or slanderously about a person, you are actually blaspheming Me. We have the responsibility to make sure that what we are saying is the truth.

REMINDER #4 – Remind God’s people to demonstrate a peaceable and gentle spirit. **3:2b**

God wants us to be peaceful, gentle, considerate people. He does not want us to be hard and ruthless and callous.

The word “peaceable” is one in Greek that literally means one who “abstains from fighting”; one who is “non-combatant” (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 24).

The word “gentle” is one that means to be fair, moderate and gentle with people. As Smith said, it refers to one who has a “sweet reasonableness” (*Ibid.*, p. 169).

God wants us to be peaceable and thoughtful people. We are to do what we can to get along with people in a very considerate way. When we do that we demonstrate His grace.

Now notice at the end of **verse 2**, that we are to continually show ourselves to be this way to “all men.” The Greek would imply we are to demonstrate this to the character and quality of all kinds of people.

The world needs to see that we are peaceable, gentle, considerate people. When we reflect that, we reflect God’s grace.

REMINDER #5 – Remind God’s people what they formerly were. **3:3**

In the Greek text, Paul uses an emphatic pronoun “we” twice to stress what we were and he includes himself. **We all at times need to be reminded of what we were and where we have come from.**

Now keep in mind that Paul had been a very religious Pharisee who hated Christianity and hated Roman authority. But by power of God’s grace that had transformed his life, he came to see himself as he really was.

He gives seven descriptions of what he was like and what we were like. Let’s not kid ourselves or flatter ourselves. This is the way it really is:

(Description #1) - We were once foolish. **3:3a**

This is quite a word the old scholar Paul uses here. He says we were once, when it comes to God, a fool without any understanding or proper thinking (*Ibid.*, p. 39). We did not know God and we certainly were not interested in carefully understanding every verse in the Word of God.

(Description #2) - We were once disobedient. 3:3b

This is an interesting Greek word. It means there were times we felt like disobeying God's Word and will and did (*Ibid.*, p. 45). We lived for ourselves and, as one commentator said, "we hated the thought of submission or obedience to any authority, including God."

(Description #3) - We were once deceived. 3:3c

At one time we were just wandering in life being deceived and being led astray by various people and things (*Ibid.*, p. 363).

(Description #4) - We were once lust-enslaved. 3:3d

Paul says we were enslaved to all kinds of lusts and pleasures. Admit this. This is the truth. We were enslaved to all kinds of pleasures and passions and lusts.

We just came through an election year and when candidates had moral flaws, some would say we are not electing a Sunday School Teacher or a Pastor, but a President.

Well let me tell you if God were to cross-examine any Sunday School Teacher or Pastor about everything about their lives, the story would not be pretty for any S.S. teacher or Pastor. The story wasn't pretty about an Apostle because Paul says at one time, he himself, along with the rest of us, was driven by lusts.

Paul says I am an apostle and my previous condition was I used to be lust-enslaved. It takes a true man of God to admit that. In fact, what it takes, as you will see, is the Holy Spirit to bring a man to see that.

(Description #5) - We spent our lives in malice. 3:3e

The word means to live life in a bad, depraved and wicked way that in the mind of God is worthless (*Ibid.*, p. 227). Paul says there are times we have said things and done things that were wrong because we wanted something for ourselves. That is the way it is in a "dog-eat-dog" world. That is what you do to survive.

(Description #6) - We spend our lives in envy. 3:3f

The word describes an envy that eats at you (*Ibid.*, p. 469). Sometimes people are driven by an envy of what others have. It can consume a person.

(Description #7) - We spent our lives hateful. 3:3g

Most people don't want to admit this because they want to flatter themselves as if they have been so loving. This refers to a gloomy, hateful person, who spends their lives hating (*Ibid.*, p. 420).

It is interesting that the pronoun “another” means another of the same kind. So Paul says at one point in my life, I not only did not love others properly, I was jealous of them and hated them. Have you ever wished someone would just drop dead? Have you ever thought I hope that person goes to hell? Have you ever thought “I will never speak to them again?” We are all guilty.

Now what is amazing about this description is that when Paul was like this, he was very religious. From all external appearances, this was a top religious leader. But this is what he was really like and he knew it.

By the way, the reason Paul says bring up that list is because God’s people can struggle with things on the list and they need to get rid of that stuff so they can demonstrate the grace of God.

REMINDER #6 – Remind God’s people what God did for us. **3:4-7**

There are two main realities brought out in this text:

(Reality #1) - God in His kindness permitted our Savior to come into this world because He loved us. **3:4**

(Reality #2) - God saved us. **3:5-7**

Paul says at one time we were depraved people. We were enslaved to our depravity, but then God saved us.

There are four critical facts brought out about our salvation:

Fact #1 - We are not saved by our righteous works. **3:5a**

We certainly were not saved because we did a bunch of good works that merited us being saved. Frankly we were gripped by sin and corruption.

Fact #2 - We are saved because of God’s mercy. **3:5b**

God saw us as helpless and hopeless and He saved us.

Fact #3 - We are saved by the work of the Holy Spirit. **3:5c-6**

Paul really emphasizes the fact that the Holy Spirit was used by God to transform us:

Work #1 - The Holy Spirit washed us.

We were made clean by the Holy Spirit.

Work #2 - The Holy Spirit regenerated us.

It was the Holy Spirit that caused us to be born again.

Work #3 - The Holy Spirit renewed us.

This means the Holy Spirit from above made us brand new in the sight of God (*Ibid.*, p. 30).

Work #4 - The Holy Spirit was poured out on us.

At the precise moment we believed on Jesus Christ, we were given the Spirit of God in full measure.

This all happened when we believed on Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Fact #4 - We are justified by God's grace. **3:7**

We are justified by the pure grace of God and it is this that gives us hope of eternal life.

We do not have hope of eternal life by looking at ourselves, but looking at God's grace.

All three members of the Godhead were involved in saving us. Now the way we reflect this grace is by applying what he just wrote to our lives.

Have you experienced God's grace today? Believe on Jesus Christ and you will be saved.