

“Our Former Condition”  
Titus 3:3-7  
(Preached at Trinity, May 21, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 3** opens with Paul's charge to Titus to remind the churches to obey their authorities. This is still in the context of **Chapter 2:1 Titus 2:1 NAU** - "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." Sound doctrine teaches us how to live in this world, how to be good citizens and good neighbors.
2. In **Verse 1** closes "be ready for every good deed" that serves as a transition to **Verse 2** and our duty to our neighbor:  
**Titus 3:2 NAU** - "to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men."
3. This takes great patience and forbearance. The lost can be unreasonable, blinded to the ways of God. Paul states the nature of many of the Cretans – men void of God's grace.  
**Titus 1:10-13 NAU** - "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, <sup>11</sup> who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain. <sup>12</sup> One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." <sup>13</sup> This testimony is true."
4. John MacArthur describes the tension Christians face as we live in the midst of the lost: "As we grow in the things of the Lord, it is difficult not to be enraged at the unbelievably rapid growth and acceptance of such things as homosexuality, pornography, gratuitous sex, New Age philosophy, abortion on demand, and school sex education that promotes almost everything but chastity. Those and many other such beliefs and practices are unquestionably evil, corrupt, destructive, and ungodly. They ravage individual lives and society as a whole and they dishonor our holy God."<sup>1</sup>
5. We have multiple motivations that direct how we interact with the people of this world. We should always be ready for every good deed. Our chief motive is our desire to reflect Christ before others. We demonstrate the power of the Gospel in our own lives. We must never forget from whence we came. Apart from God's grace we too would be without understanding.  
**Titus 3:3 NAU** - "For we also once were foolish ourselves"  
**Ephesians 2:3-5 NAU** - "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. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),"

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Titus*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 146.

6. In other words, instead of bitterness, hostility, and animosity we should look upon the lost with pity, patience, and prayer because before God poured His grace out upon our lives we were exactly like them. People of grace should be gracious people.
  7. In **Verse 3** Paul describes us as we were. Paul gives another list of sins that typify unbelievers; of those dead in their sins, who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. **Titus 3:3 NAU** - "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."
  8. Sin has had an effect upon every faculty of the human being.
- I. Sin has affected our mind – how we think.  
 “we also once were foolish, disobedient and deceived”
- A. The unbeliever cannot think clearly
    1. We aren’t talking about natural knowledge
      - a. The lost have developed marvelous inventions
      - b. Lost people can be skillful surgeons. They can become teachers, able to impart earthly knowledge.
    2. They are completely unable to comprehend spiritual truth.  
**2 Timothy 3:7 NAU** - " always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."
    3. They are unable to rightly comprehend God. They do not possess spiritual discernment.
      - a. Paul adds that they are deceived. They are deluded.
      - b. Foolishness and deception imply wrong thinking. The lost are convinced their course is the right way and anyone who disagrees must be silenced.
      - c. We should take pity upon their delusion.
    4. This spiritual condition is often referred to as spiritual darkness  
**Ephesians 4:18 NAU** - "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;"
    5. In our fallen condition we despise all authority. Paul describes it with the word “disobedient.”
      - a. Our children disobey because they have bad hearts. They hate authority.
      - b. We sin because we hate God’s authority. We hate his rule. We hate His Law. We find keeping the Law of God as a great burden.
      - c. Our hatred of authority is why statements like we read in **Verse 1** are necessary.
  - B. Only the new birth can enable a person to think rightly.
    1. In Chapter 10 of the *1689 Confession* the work of the Holy Spirit upon believers is described as "enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh" (10:1).
    2. Jesus said that without the new birth a man shall not see the Kingdom  
**John 3:3 NAU** - "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."  
 The word ὁράω can carry the meaning of “perceive” or “comprehend”

3. Apart from regeneration spiritual truth is beyond our comprehension. This is why they come to some of their unbelievable conclusions. Like biological gender and perceived gender can be different. Or that there can be marriage between two men.

II. We were enslaved by sin.

**Titus 3:3 NAU** - "enslaved to various lusts and pleasures"

A. The lost man is not able not to sin.

1. Augustine used the formula non posse non peccare.
2. Our entire nature is predisposed to sin.
3. John says we love darkness

**John 3:19 NAU** - "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil."

4. Paul describes it as being in bondage to our lusts and pleasures. "Lusts and pleasures" are an all-encompassing description of our sin be it power or money or sex. It describes our life filled with a desire for self-gratification. It describes our wills bound by sin. We cannot help but sin.
5. Luther described it in his book published in 1525: "The Bondage of the Will."

Luther: "For if man has lost his freedom, and is forced to serve sin, and cannot will good, what conclusion can more justly be drawn concerning him, than that he sins and wills evil necessarily?"<sup>2</sup>

B. God has delivered the Christian from his servitude to sin.

**Romans 6:6 NAU** - "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;"

**Romans 6:12 NAU** - "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,"

1. We are no longer in Adam – we are no longer bound by sin. We are no longer controlled by our corrupt nature. We are now "able not to sin." Posse non peccare

2. Our old self is dead. We have died with Christ.

**Romans 6:3-4 NAU** - "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1957), 149.

- III. Sin turns our hearts to stone – We are filled with enmity and hate.  
 "spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."
- A. Sin has brought a terrible hatred and enmity into the world.  
 This life offers no peace
1. A distinguishing mark of our fallen condition is we are quick to enter into dispute.
  2. It is characteristic of the works of the flesh - Gal. 5:19-21  
**Galatians 5:19-21 NAU** - "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."
  3. Sin has left us with an enmity within. We are in conflict with God and with our fellow man.
  4. This condition of heart towards one another often boils over into passions of rage. Look at the attitudes of people driving their cars, shopping, working. Look at the way our politicians behave, always in conflict with one another. Look at the racial strife. Look at what's going on the world stage.
- B. The word for malice is (κακία). It refers to wickedness or evil.
1. It refers to something harmful and damaging
  2. Malice leads to malicious acts—thinking of ways to harm others or simply rejoicing at their misfortune.
  3. It leads to a constant animosity. It can tear a church apart.
- C. Envy.
1. Envy is dissatisfaction with our blessings in comparison with the blessings of others.
  2. Envy is more than just wanting what we do not have. It hates others because they have it.
  3. It flows from the desire of the natural man to have the most, to be the greatest – to have the most wealth, talent, prestige, power, intelligence, etc
  4. It flows forth from a heart of hatred and bitterness and ill will – it creates a desire for misfortune in the lives of others instead of rejoicing in God's blessings in them.
  5. Ultimately envy is a hatred of God's decree. It is an angry complaint against God's rich provision in your life. To envy God's provision in the lives of others is an act of rebellion against Him. It is a desire to dethrone God and reorder your life.
- D. Hateful, hating one another
1. In other words, we hated others and others hated us.
  2. Hate is an expression of the heart.  
 The lost man hates anyone he perceives as a threat to his pursuit of happiness. He hates anyone who interferes with his ambitions.  
 He hates anyone who isn't like him—this is the heart of racism.  
 Only Christ can bring reconciliation with God and our fellow man.
  3. We should be clear, however, exposing sin is not hate. We must speak the truth in love.

**Conclusion:**

1. Paul's point isn't to stir us to consider all the ways human beings demonstrate their corruption. Paul's point is to remind us from what we have been delivered. We are to be ready for every good deed, being gentle and peaceable to all men because we were once just like them – but God has blessed us by His grace and mercy.
2. Those have experienced God's grace should be quick to show grace, to be gracious towards others, even when they are behaving in uncomely ways.  
Graceless people are demonstrating that they know nothing of grace.  
People who refuse to forgive others demonstrate they know nothing of forgiveness.