

Titus 3:1-3 Sermon

Last week we had the privilege of discovering God's deep truths found in one of the most beautiful and important passages in the whole Bible. In that passage Paul began by writing about the "grace" of God. He wrote: *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.* Historically, church leaders have often been reluctant to emphasize the God's grace because it can have a tendency to make people inactive in their faith. Because the thinking is that if I'm saved by God's grace and not by what I "do" then why should I bother to do anything. All I have to do is accept God's grace and then I'm guaranteed a place in heaven when I die and I can go on living my life anyway I want. It's a win/win for me. Paul battled that thinking in his letter to the church in Rome.

Here in Titus, rather than battling that type of logic, he immediately states the power God's grace ought to have in a believers' life to motivate them to live life differently. To live transformed lives. And he writes: *It (God's grace) teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,* (Titus 2:12-13 (NIV)). God's grace, offered to each and every one of us ought to motivate us to live radically different lives out of gratitude not guilt. And that's a huge difference.

So far, in the book of Titus, Paul has been instructing Titus on how to structure the church on the inside, in developing qualified leadership to lead the congregations, in combatting false teachers and setting up mentorship models within the church. But now that he's established that healthy and helpful structure within the church and how he ended with talking about the transformational power of God's grace in our lives, Paul takes us outside of the church walls and begins to talk about what God's transformational grace looks like outside of these walls. And this is a key element of Christianity, taking the transformational gospel message of grace outside of these walls and to a world that desperately needs to come to know and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. And the power of God's message of grace makes the most powerful difference, not through someone preaching about it on a street corner but as a watching and largely skeptical world begins to witness first hand the difference God's grace has made in your life. Because if God's grace doesn't transform the way you live your life, then why should a nonbeliever even bother considering the claims of Christ (at least that's how they often think).

So please follow along as I read Paul's opening statement about the difference God's grace and gospel ought to make in each of our lives.

Titus 3:1-2 (NIV) *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.*

His opening words, "*Remind the people*" is a present tense verb which means that we need to constantly be reminded of this instruction. These are important instructions for every Christian to remember. And then he proceeds to list 7 specific action items that every Christian ought to incorporate into their lives.

1. *Be subject to rulers and authorities*: that certainly wouldn't be a popular instruction in today's society. But keep in mind, when Paul writes this all of Christianity was ruled by individuals who weren't Christians and at times even persecuted Christians, sometimes to the point of death. But notice, there isn't an exception clause here. He doesn't allow us to be subject to rulers and authorities only if they are nice, or if they are someone we voted into office, or be subject to them only if we agree with their policies. And Paul has much more detailed descriptions as to why Christians should be subject to them in Romans 13. And the apostle Peter writes the same instructions in 1 Peter 2 and these Christians were undergoing persecution for their faith. The only time that we're allowed to be disobedient to rulers and authorities is if they command us to do something which would violate our commitment to God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down and worship a statue of the king, Daniel refused to quit praying to God and it landed him in the lions den, and Peter and John flat out refused to quit telling everyone about Jesus. So, just

disagreeing with the laws of the land out of preference does not allow you to violate the laws of the land or disrespect the governing authorities.

2. *"to be obedient"*: which goes along with being subject to the ruler and authorities
3. *to be ready to do whatever is good*,: The idea behind this statement is that Christians are eager, they are sitting on the edge of their seats ready to leap into action when they come across any way in which they can do good to others. This concept of "doing good" is a very important practice for Paul and he emphasizes it many times throughout this short letter. He refers to "doing good" a whopping 8 times in this short letter.
 - In his list of qualifications for **elders** he says that they must be a person who *"loves what is good."* (1:8)
 - Shortly after that he describes the **false teachers** that have crept into the church as *"unfit for doing anything good."* (1:16) Quite a contrast to what he's calling all Christians to be about.
 - When he's describing the **mentorship relationship** that he's setting up within the church older men and women, he instructs the **older women** to *"teach what is good."* (2:3)
 - And with the **younger men** he tells Titus to set an example for them in the way he lives his life by *"doing what is good."* (2:6)
 - And in that great passage about grace that I read earlier, Paul declares that Christ redeemed us from wickedness in order *to create a people who are eager to do what is good."* (2:14)
 - Then in our passage this morning he says to continually remind the people to be *"eager to do what is good."* (3:1)
 - And then a few verses later Paul pretty much repeats this instruction by saying that those who trust in God *should be careful to do what is good."* (3:8)
 - Lastly, as Paul begins to wrap up this letter his very last instruction is about the importance of good deeds and says, *"Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives."* (Titus 3:14 (NIV))

Obviously, doing good both inside and outside of the church is very important. So, what does that look like? I think a good criterion to go by would be to continually ask yourself: *"How can I show God's love in a practical way in this situation?"* If you live in this constant readiness to "do good" then I would suggest living in that readiness and listening carefully to the leading of the Holy Spirit as to what he would like you to do. God is the most creative being and He knows the deepest needs of every person you're going to encounter. So, learn to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit and follow through with what pops into your mind and assume it's a leading from God. It could look like a phone call or a letter or email or text or it could mean a small gift or setting aside time to get together over coffee and listen to what's going on in their lives.

4. *"to slander no one"*: the Greek word is *blasphemo* from which we get the word **blaspheme**. It means to treat someone with contempt. **Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)** *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*
5. *"to be peaceable"*: The Greek literally says "to be a **non-fighter**." The practicality of this would be to not strike back and try to get even when someone hurts you. To strike back and try to get even is how the world behaves. So, not doing that will grab the attention of nonbelievers. A big part of this is obviously being active in forgiveness. This doesn't mean avoiding issues but actively seeking

resolution. **Romans 12:18** similarly insists: *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."*

6. *"be considerate"*: This means putting others needs and feelings above your own and realizing that we live in a fallen society. We live in a society in which everyone wants their rights honored. And to act counter culturally means to not insist on your rights but to put showing Christ's love, grace and forgiveness above the insistence of your rights.
7. *"always be gentle toward everyone"* : This is the word often translated *meekness*. Meekness is not weakness. Meekness means strength under control. It refers to patiently trusting God in every situation.

So, that's what we should be and do outside of the walls of this church. This isn't a theoretical sermon but a very practical sermon calling each of us to make a difference as we walk out these doors and enter into the world.

If you were going to concentrate on just one of these items I would encourage you to focus on being eager to do what is good. Pray that God would create a heart which is eager to do good and a mind and heart that is wide open to hear how God wants you use you to impact other people's lives.

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1. Be subject to rulers and authorities:

Are there any ways that you struggle with being subject to those in authority over you?
Do you pray for your leaders regularly?

2. To be obedient:

3. To be ready to do whatever is good:

What are specific ways you've done this recently?
Who is God calling you to show good to?

4. To slander no one:

Do you treat anyone with contempt? How?
Do you ever spread rumors about someone?

5. To be peaceable:

Would your friends consider you a peacemaker?
Why or why not?

6. To be considerate:

Who's rights matter most to you? Yours or others

7. Always be gentle toward everyone:

Would your friends consider you to be *gentle*?

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