

Gospel Lives: Titus 3

Pray

Opening Illustration: Have you ever had something happen to you that changed your life in a radical way? That shaped your future? If only had not been texting that one second? If only I told her I love you? Or if only I hadn't? Grandfather and Korea? Partially for me getting cut 9th grade?

Transition to the Text: Paul is detailing here something that happens in the life of the believer that radically alters the future... Regeneration/New Birth.

Main Idea: *Regeneration (Rebirth) radically changes us, inside and out, so that now we reflect that gospel-change to one another and the watching world!*

Imagine the scene: Titus receives a letter from his mentor... He is in Crete to put things in order... in a context that was likely hostile politically... persecution is going on... it has spread the church...**and Paul instructs now in how we are to interact with this culture!**

- And in case you are thinking, well there's wasn't as bad as our, you are right **it was much worse**
- And in the midst of a hostile culture, **Paul is clear that we are not be cultural warriors, but humble servants who are the best citizens** (meaning we are involved and vote)!
- *We are to put the gospel on display, because ultimately legislating morality will not change anyone, but life and doctrine will! We must live lives that show our hope is Calvary's Hill and not Capitol Hill!*
- **He will unpack how we are to live between the two appearings** – a life that he tells us is radically changed by our Regeneration so that our lives explode with good works: both for a watching world and then he will once again return to our interactions in the church
 - o **Though he is careful to remind us that these good works are not what saves us, but are the result of the redeemed life**

Question: How are we supposed to live in a place where we are sojourners moving towards another King and country?

I. **(v. 1-2) The Gospel creates the best citizens – why our citizenship in another Kingdom makes us the best citizens now!**

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

Paul has said, Christ “*gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works*” So based on this, the distinct life of a Christian should demonstrate a few things as citizens:

- 1) **Obedient**– The continual act of our lives (present tense) is to be obedient to our authorities. Not just obedience to those we agree with, remember he is writing this in a context worse than ours (and even in a context like this we are to pray for our leaders).

Gospel Issue: Because it demonstrates whether we are **submitting to Christ as Lord in every area of our life** – are we seeing Christ as Lord and the Scriptures as our authority?

- **For Example: In Ephesians 6, a child's disobedience is pictured as ultimately being their disobedience to God! And the same is true with our authorities.** *Our defiant spirit is a picture of our old self, that thrashed against the leadership and leading of God!*

So the natural question is who are our authorities or leaders? The wording here carries the idea of every level of authority, not just the top: The government (Obama), Children your Parents, Congregation your pastors, Wives your husbands, Your boss, The police, God and Scripture

Objection – I know your thinking, is there ever a time that I am to be disobedient? The only exception would be if your authority asks us to do something contrary to the Word and commands of God. And, even then, **our disobedience is passive not active (we don't bomb clinics)**, and we willingly accept the consequences of our actions.

Acts Records Such an Event: (Acts 5) *“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men... [40] and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. [41] Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*

Warning: And if we are disobedient, we must be willing, like the Apostles to accept the consequences of our Civil Disobedience! And the gospel/New Birth should be so powerful in our lives that we are willing, because neither death, nor life, nor suffering can separate us from our King!

- 2) **Ready for Every Good Work** – We are a people zealous for this, this is challenging. One pastor says we are ready to “*serve eagerly*” our society. We are to be prepared to be excellent citizens.

Gospel Issue: Because we are to reflect the power of the gospel changed life by being light in darkness. This is how we are to interact in a hostile society. **We should stand out for our behavior, marked not by hostility back, but good works.**

Illustration – Healthcare: We must be careful how we engage the public arena, doing so with humility and not outbursts and anger. Does our Twitter account show our true love?

- 3) **Avoid Quarreling and Maligning** – We are not to be marked by insulting or abusive language! What if that could be said of us? *This is not to say we can never disagree, but it means when we do, we do so differently! Instead of tearing down, we build up!*

Gospel Issue: The Scriptures say ***blessed are the peacemakers*** that should be us we are to be peaceable and to not slander. *We are friendly and gentle because we know that we should be enemies of God, and yet He has brought peace and reconciliation for us*

Don't Slander Bush/Obama – just consider how we slander different groups sometimes: We must especially be careful not to slander/malign those that we disagree with (they are not our enemies) – instead we are longing for their repentance, not to win an argument!

- 4) **Gentle and Courteous to all** – This one devastates me. I know I am not always like this. **I seek to be served and not to serve!** *This is not a command to do this for those we like, but to all, probably especially those you don't in your natural heart feel inclined to be like this towards.* We are called to manifest a gentleness of spirit, meekness, a humility, a Christlikeness toward all people, all the time and in all places

Phillipians 2 – have this mind: “3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

- **We are called to have this attitude of putting others and their interests first**, just like our King did, even those that would spit in His face. Are we like this for those that might even be hostile to us? (**When He was reviled...**)

Illustration: Email from the guy at the grocery store: *I wanted to share my recent Easter experience. I am currently employed at Harris Teeter in Raleigh and had to work on Easter. This was bothersome to me but I was determined to share the Gospel with at least one person. I first spoke with a co-worker who is Muslim. When I asked him why he rejects Christianity he shared that I was about to see in a couple hours. I continued sharing with another person who rejects all religions and I asked the same of her and she said about 10:00 you will see how your Christians act. At 10:00 am I listened on the head set that management is required to wear and the store director announced get ready the Christians should be released from their churches. Sure enough the experienced made my eyes water. The worst, most obnoxious, and horribly rude customers were those who were dressed for church. One customer jumped ahead of the line and demanded service because they were in a hurry and just got out of church...Others demanded that we work faster because they were in a hurry for church. There was also the select few that demanded to get a gift certificate for their rotisserie chicken since I policy guarantees rotisseries hot and available from 10 - 7pm or they are free...It was even harder to share the gospel in the break room since most perceive Christians as stuck up, rude, and inconsiderate.*

Questions to Ponder: Are we being courteous to all in stores, restaurants, etc? Are We *only* courteous to those we can gain from? Men are you gentlemen?

- **Are our actions causing us to lose a hearing with those who need the gospel?** In a minute Paul will detail what can produce this in us, **a reflection on what we once were and on the Grace/Kindness that has been shown us and so now we show it to others!**

Illustration – see here is the recipe for cultural engagement and life in our culture not “Merry Christmas and Darwin Fish”

- *The answer for the world, is not a political party, or morals, but the gospel brought to it by people who themselves have experienced its grace and now adorn it by the way they live!*

II. (3-7) Paul Grounds this call on our lives in the gospel - We show kindness because Kindness has been shown to us!

(v. 3) “*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.*”

Explanation: Paul now appeals to the gospel as the reason we live the lives mentioned in 1-2 by detailing what we once were DEAD... giving us a picture of the old self that continually wages war with us and by detailing what has happened to us in the Gospel

What we once were like:

- 1) **Foolish-** We were foolish - it is clear sin makes us foolish. *Our idols make us foolish*

Illustration – sports caskets – Sin dominates us and keeps us in a life of foolishness, but the Gospel change that we will cover in the upcoming verses frees us from that bondage

- 2) **Disobedient –** As opposed to verse 1, sin (our pride, etc) keep us from obeying. We are naturally bent this way. **Children don’t need to be told to disobey.**

Illustration – mom can I have some goldfish? No.. No... you ask again I am coming back there to spank you, great if you do can you bring some goldfish with you – **we think disobedience is cute!**

- But in this disobedience we should see our own – TEMPER TANTRUM IN WALMART

3) **Led Astray or Deceived** – Our very nature is corrupted and so we don't think straight. Satan in the garden, and this is what he wants for you... to lead you astray even further. *I often joke that I would punch Adam... but the truth is, I am easily deceived as well*

4) **Slaves to our passions** – Our lusts (and I don't need a long list) have a way of enslaving us (pornography). *The great irony, our culture says these things are liberating (Gaga), and in reality they are so enslaving!* And if we are really honest with our lusts, we recognize that they are enslaving – we are driven by our selfishness and passions and not the glory of God.

5) **Malicious/Slanderers** – Vivid picture, we pass our days with malice (*a desire to injure*) and envy, we have evil intentions. *We seek to hurt, we will slander to bring someone down, connected because we are an envious and jealous people, understanding nothing about grace, but only wanting.*

6) **Envious** – One who has an unquenchable desire, always craving more – We want what others have (looks, etc)

7) **Hateful and Hated** – We were “hateful” and were hated. This is the natural outflow of the life mentioned because we are an envious and malicious people, and no wonder that makes others hate us!

Question: *Do you have bitterness and hatred towards another? If so, is the Spirit living in you? BITTERNESS IS ALL TO COMMON, IT COULD INDICATE SPRIT IS NOT IN US*

Some are still in verse 3 – only the gospel can deliver you – pay attention to v. 4-7 (GREAT NEWS)

- **And believer, be humbled and amazed at what we have been delivered from** – and long for others to be delivered from their malice, envy, and lusts by a man who bore those sins in His own body for their redemption

(4-7) A Glimpse at this gospel that makes verses 1 and 2 possible and delivers us from v. 3

We truly stand on holy Ground here (like Ephesians 2): What changed us from our death in trespasses? The Grace of God... His goodness, His love, His kindness.

- **Paul moves from our past condition to our present and grounds his demands on our new life** in the gospel of grace, making it clear that these works don't save us, but we are saved to be zealous for good works

Several things to note about this gospel that changes us to new living:

1) **The Gospel displays God's Love and Kindness and mercy** – God loves us – He does not leave us in our rebellion (turned us over, let the one who is filthy...), but instead came for us in the person of His Son. **Notice the personification of Love and Mercy and Kindness. Jesus is Love!**

This is part of the appeal for verses 1-2, He has lavished on us incredible love and kindness, how can we now not be those who demonstrate the same?

NT Wright says: *“The reason we are summoned to avoid speaking evil... is that we are ourselves the creatures of God's generous love, and if we aren't showing that same generous, kindly, forgiving love we have obviously*

forgotten the path by which we've come... we owe him our very lives, is it to much to ask that we respond gratefully by behaving in a way which brings him honor?"

The purpose of his incarnation – to save a people for His glory, glory pictured in lives of slavery now turned into lives of heirs to a kingdom!

- **We do not deserve what is given here**, salvation, new hearts, justification, sanctification, and ultimately glorification (heirs), it is all done out of His love!

2) The Gospel displays that God has saved us and not our works – “He Saved us” – He delivered us from our path to destruction. Our works are filthy before Him, he saved us... *just like you cant make yourself be born, you cant make yourself be born-again*

Uniqueness of Christianity: This is opposite of every other religion and the natural inclination of man – probably even as you sit here knowing the gospel, your tendency is to trust in your works.

- **If we understand this grace, we are like the publican and not the Pharisee** – recognizing we don't deserve this
- **And though Paul is clear this results in good works, he is crystal clear that good works don't save us** – You cannot clean yourself up to come to God – You obey because you have been accepted

Question: So what does that mean – *It means when we help the old lady across the street* we must check our heart motives? Are we doing this to be seen? Or even so God will be glad we are on His team? Or are we doing it out of love for a King that changed us? *Are you seeking by your works to earn or to love?*

- *You are given a new heart so you wont live as a slave, but as a son and so that Christ will receive the reward He is due through your changed life*

3) The Gospel produces Regeneration or New Birth - v. 5 is a very important verse for understanding the doctrine of regeneration, the new birth. Paul depicts what Jesus discussed with Nicodemus, that our entire nature is changed when we believe the Gospel. **ITS NOT A PILL! OUR NATURE CHANGES!**

The Word used here for “Regeneration” (**paliggenesia** – **re-gensis!**) is only used twice in the NT (here) and in Matt. 19:28 – where Jesus uses it to refer to “the new world”

- **Jesus is saying the whole cosmos will go through a re-birth, a new Genesis, in a place that will be more glorious than Eden** – demonstrating that when I am on the throne the cosmos will blossom and the World will be as it should be
- **And now Paul uses this term to explain what takes place in our life** – This is why it is true to say of the gospel, it is not about making bad men good, or good men better, but it is about bringing dead men to life!
- **Here in Regeneration we have a foretaste of the kingdom** – we have a down payment of God's future reign where there will be no more evil, pain, tears, only the royal presence of our King... and we have a foretaste of that now as the Spirit is poured out in our life! **This is not just about inner peace, or forgiveness, it is about a foreshadowing of the future as our lives began to be healed and shaped into the way they are supposed to be – this is good news**

Clint's Bball Player (Scroggins – cycle)– really only that can change us – Don't underestimate the power of this gospel to change you, no matter what you have done – Clint's Bball Player!

- **Baptism is important because it pictures this** – death to old way (immersed) and resurrection to new life in Christ, a life zealous to live as Christ lived!

4) Gospel change is brought about by the Trinity – **MOVE QUICKLY**

Regeneration is “By The Renewing of the Holy Spirit” The Holy Spirit, working through the Word, Empowers our New Life in Christ. He is the ACTIVE agent that brings about a new life.

Regeneration occurs “Through Jesus Christ” This rebirth is only possible through the substitutionary work of Christ – different than every other religion **(A Substitute, not works)**

Mahaney Quote: God accomplished the humanly impossible by sending His only son to be our substitute and sacrifice himself on the Cross for our sins, see when this unique one suffered His suffering was unique. Many died knowing intimately the horrific physical pain of crucifixion, no one died like He died. His suffering was unique, why was it unique? It was unique because of who suffered – Jesus Christ fully God, truly man. His suffering was unique because of WHY He suffered – not for His sins, He was sinless, but for our sins for the sins of others. His death was unique because the purpose of His suffering was to ransom or free us from our captivity to sin. He is the only one who stands in this unique place and in this unique position. He is the only one who ever has, He is the only one whoever can, He is the only one whoever will stand in this unique place. There is only one mediator between God and man, the MAN Christ Jesus.

Regeneration is by God “Justifying us by His Grace.” The text is speaking of God here as the one who justifies us – GIVE DEFINITION

Justification Illustration – God really wishes He could send us to hell... that is not the gospel... no longer abortion, but His first born – *HE MADE HIM THAT KNEW NO SIN...! THIS IS GOOD NEWS!*

- 5) **The Gospel makes us heirs** – amazing promise throughout scripture, *that even if now no one knows your name, you will rule and reign with Christ* (Matt. 19). The reward that is coming should make the goals and desires we have now seem trivial

We will have cash flow, staggering rewards! We will rule the cosmos with our King, gaining all the rewards that were his, everything that belongs to Him belongs to us - And best of all we get Christ! I cant wait to meet Him face to face!

III. The Gospel influences how we deal with people inside the church (8-15)

Verse 8 – Paul now returns to what the gospel produces – Good works

Paul wants Titus to insist on what he has taught in verses 4-7 and there is a purpose: *so that it will lead to a life that is changed by the gospel*

- **We have been saved into a people that will show the World what the coming Kingdom will look like**, what life under the reign of King Jesus looks like (WE WANT THIS FOR IDC)
- **Paul is clear that Belief precedes good works, but our faith is never alone** – and this comes by dwelling on the gospel, not pulling up bootstraps! Be kind because of His kindness displayed in the gospel
 - o **Only by dwelling on the gospel can you fight sin, not by trying harder** – but by resting in what Christ has done! You kill lusts by dwelling on the greater treasure Christ, not just by stopping looking at pornography
- **The Gospel produces a new nature that is not enslaved to pleasures, malice, disobedience, but one that pursues the glory of God**

Application – Declare the Gospel: *Insist as well on these things* of the gospel (love, kindness, regeneration, and grace of God in the gospel) don't stop preaching the gospel, ***to yourself, to your GG, to bros/and sis in IDC and to the watching world/AND THE NATIONS*** who need to hear of this great gift!

Verse 9 – Believing in the main thing helps us not waste time in foolish debates

9 But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Instead of being fruitful below, these things are unprofitable and worthless, they are not excellent and profitable like good works or the gospel

- There will be time debate is necessary, but not foolish ones – Titus don't get distracted from the most important things. Don't waste time on periphery issues like end times debates (we are obsessed with these), etc but on the primary

Verses 10-11 – Those who persist in bringing division should be avoided

The church always must deal with people in her midst that stir up division – It is clear what we do with them, warn them twice and then having nothing to do with them – **which recalls the language of Church Discipline**

- This person is condemned, or warped, because he will not repent. Once confronted he will not turn, thus showing that he was not one of us – he is to be excluded from the fellowship

Application: *This doesn't mean we are theological peeping-toms*, but when someone is stirring up division, we confront, and **if they will not repent, we discipline them lovingly, gently, and humbly for the good of the gospel. The goal is restoration and unity, but if no repentance we are to do what the bible says – for the good of the one, health, and glory of God!**

This is because division is so corrosive to the advance of the gospel and the glory of God displayed in a people – if we are not unified, the gospel is at stake

Implication – don't be a sounding board: And this goes further than just corporate discipline, if you hear **people in the halls or in conversation who are complainers** and their complaining stirs up division – speak out against it, **being a sounding board can passively stir up divisions. (Childcare and stand up for Elders)**

(12-15) Paul returns to talk about how we should think of and care for fellow believers

Verse 12- Paul again shows his love for community, in that he desires Titus to come visit him. He often, as we are seeing in Bonhoeffer, realizes the *brothers are an evidence of God's grace to him*.

Verse 13 – care for missionaries

The church is called to radically care for their own (acts 2) and be a hospitable people. Paul is clear that we are family in Christ and **if one will not care for his own household, he is worse than an unbeliever!** *And in many ways this new family you are a part of is more important than your earthly one.*

We are called to care for those that carry the good news of the gospel and see that they lack nothing!

Verse 14 – Again talks of good works, specifically in the context of cases of urgent need (not law keeping persay) and he compares being fruitful (as opposed to earlier debates being unfruitful) with helping cases of urgent needs!

The phrase “good works” occurs six times in a letter that is only forty-six verses, driving home the point that though we are not saved by faith plus works, we are saved by a faith that does work (Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5).

- “Devote” means “Good works” are to be our habit of life – and devote is strong language, we are not to be passive in this, but diligent

Healthy Doctrine and Life – The Theme of the Pastoral – Often one is neglected (Build houses but weak doctrine) – We want both

Verse 15 – ends with Grace: And as always, Paul ends reminding of Grace – I hope our conversations are peppered with talk of Grace!

Conclusion: The early church was in many ways marked but what is talked about in this passage – Aristedes: *“Now the Christians O king, by going about and seeking have found truth, for they know and trust in God the Maker of heaven and earth who has no fellow, from Him they receive those commandments which they have engraved on their minds and which they observe in the hope and expectation of the world to come. They refuse to worship strange gods, and they go their way in all humility and cheerfulness, falsehood is not found among them, they love one another, the widow’s needs are not ignored, and they rescue the orphan from the person who does him violence. He who has gives to him who has not unbegrudgingly and without boasting, when the Christians find a stranger they bring him to their homes and rejoice over him as a true brother. They do not call brothers those who are bound by blood ties alone, but those who are brethren after the Spirit and in God. When one of their poor passes away from the World each provides for his burial according to his ability, if they hear of any of their number who are imprisoned or oppressed for the name of the messiah they all provide for his needs and if it is possible to redeem him they set him free. If they find poverty in their midst and they do not have spare food they fast two or three days in order that the needy might be supplied with the necessities. They observe scrupulously and the commandments of their messiah living honestly and soberly as the Lord their God ordered them. Every morning and every hour they praise and thank God for His goodness to them, and for their food and drink they offer thanksgiving. Such O’ king is the commandment given to the Christians and such is their conduct.”*

What makes us a people like this? Christ does – He changes us and He is our only hope!

Unbelievers – only by surrendering to Him can you be freed from your slavery! Your Good works wont do it, trying harder wont do it.

Believers – You need to dwell on Him constantly to live this life... as you live a life of gratitude and not duty!

Christ is the only one who can deliver any of us from verse 3 slavery!

How? Because HE was the only man who was truly:

- Obedient to God
- Did every good work
- Spoke evil of no one
- Was gentle and courtesy to all

And so he alone could bear the curse for our: foolishness, deception, disobedience, malice, envy, lusts, and hatred... He stood there in your place, bearing the wrath those sins deserved, and is willing to give you back PEACE and invitation to a kingdom and a banquet.

I close with a quote from Wright that both believers and unbelievers need to hear: *the creator of the World is a lavish host who has sent out a worldwide invitation to His party. We, as His messengers, must live in such a way that people will want to turn up*