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Titus Bible Study (Ready For Every Good Work)

## Titus 3, Right Conduct in an Evil World

👤 Brent Kercheville 📅 November 23, 2008

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The third chapter of Titus describes the Christian conduct necessary in an evil world.

**1 Remind them to be subject 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 every courtesy to everyone. (NRSV)**

Paul issues a reminder for the Christians in Crete. Don't forget to be subject to the rulers and authorities. This is an important reminder. Remember, Cretans are known for their immorality. The leaders on the island would have certainly been of the same moral fiber as the island, if not worse. Further, this letter was written when Nero would have been emperor over the Roman Empire. It is not like the time then was an easier time to yield to the authorities. As much as we have immoral, godless leaders and continue to elect more immoral, godless leaders, this is nothing to the godlessness that existed on Crete and within the Empire. Even under the most extreme circumstances, Christians are called upon to yield to the government. We are not to be zealots against the government. It is easy to get caught up in political issues and politicians, but we are to maintain the reflection of Christ. Notice the rest of verse 1 and verse

2. We are to be obedient to the government, not rebels against the government. We must continue to be ready to do good works regardless of political circumstances.

Speak evil of no one. Carefully soak in those words. Speak evil of no one. No one is excluded here. We may call out where a person does not live up to the law and grace of the scriptures. But we speak evil of no one. No malicious words. No exceptions. Further, avoid quarreling. It does not look good nor godly to be quarrelers, especially over so much of the nonsense in the world. We need to be careful that we are not arguing for the sake of argument, or for the sake of winning an argument. Instead of quarreling, we need to be gentle and kind. The character the world should see in us is not a fighter or evil speaker, but a gentle and kind person. Finally, "showing every courtesy to everyone." The phrasing of this literally is fascinating, but a little clunky: showing all gentleness (courtesy) to all people. There is a double "all." Everyone person should receive kind conduct from us at all times.

**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. (ESV)**

Why should we do this? Why should we be in subjection to authorities? Why should we speak evil of no one, avoid quarrels, be gentle, and show all gentleness and courtesy to everyone? The answer is that we were the same as them. We did the same evil things that they are doing to us. We made the same errors when we were without God also. Essentially, you were a mess also! We were foolish and disobedient. We were led astray before we came to the light of the gospel. We were slaves to our sinfulness. We acted with malice and evil toward others. Hated by others and hating others was what we were doing. So don't be so self-righteous! We used to do the same thing.

Sometimes Christians act the worst because they have forgotten where they are and where they have come from. We are to be different from the world. We certainly are not to act worse than the world. If the world is kinder than us, then we are certainly coming up short of what God wants us to be.

**4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 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, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (ESV)**

The only difference is that we understand that the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared. Notice that in chapter 2 we read about the grace of God appearing, bringing salvation to all

people (2:11). Now we have the goodness and loving kindness of God appearing. A concept cannot appear, but a person can. Hence, “he saved us.” At the appearing of Jesus, God saved us. Let’s go back to the beginning of verse 4. In verse 3 we are reminded of what we were. But God intervened. But the goodness and loving kindness of God appeared. The Greek word for “loving kindness” is a compound word- philanthropia. We know that we get our English word “philanthropy” from this. The first part of the compound word is phileo, which is love. The second part of the compound word is anthropia, which is humans. But when the goodness and love for humans appeared, he saved us.

He saved us, but not by our doing! We are nothing but filthy rags. We have nothing to offer God but sinfulness. What can we contribute? We come to God stained in our sins. God did not save us because of what we were doing. We were enemies deserving of God’s wrath, punishment, and judgment. Our goodness is not what compelled God to act and have grace, goodness, and the love of humans appear in Jesus. I believe our actions should have convinced God that we were too evil and too undeserving for God to die for us. No, he saved us because of his own mercy. God simply chose to be merciful rather than wrathful.

So how do we get the mercy of God? How do we receive it because we know that we are sinful, undeserving of God’s goodness and loving kindness? We receive it “by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” The Greek word for “regeneration” is also a compound work- palingenesia: new birth, re-creation, new beginning. We receive the mercy of God by the washing of a new birth. What in the scriptures is describing as a washing that brings about a new creature, a new birth?

**Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life. (Romans 6:4; HCSB)**

**11 In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of the Messiah. 12 Having been buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses. (Colossians 2:11-13; HCSB)**

Jesus gave this answer to Nicodemus: Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:5; ESV)

In baptism we are putting our trust in God, asking God to take away our sins. This is when God's mercy is applied to the individual. We continue to receive the mercy of God through the renewal of the Holy Spirit. This is perhaps the whole point to the book of Titus. We are to live a particular way, as God's purified possession for good works. To be that, we must be renewed by the Holy Spirit. This is not us waiting for some sort of feeling to come over us. The renewal of the Holy Spirit is not waiting for the Holy Spirit to whisper words in our ears. The renewal of the Holy Spirit is the changing our hearts by the words revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. We have to let the Holy Spirit work in our lives and change us from Cretans to Christians. But the Holy Spirit cannot work when we have stone hearts that are not listening to his leading, revealed in the scriptures.

Further, the blessings of the Holy Spirit have been abundantly poured out upon us. Just as Peter tied together baptism for the forgiveness of sins and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the apostle Paul does the same. The blessings of the Holy Spirit include the restoration of the kingdom of God, the restoration of God's blessings upon his people, and the restoration of God's covenant with his people. All of this happened through the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ.

Therefore, we are justified. This means we have been declared righteous and pronounced innocent. So let us back up and recap all that we just learned. We were miserable, evil wretches like the rest. But God saved us, not because we were doing anything righteous, but because God's mercy, goodness, and love for humans. We receive God's mercy by being washed in a rebirth, a baptism where we put our trust in God by asking him for forgiveness of sins and by renewing our hearts by letting the Holy Spirit change us through his revealed word. This is how we receive the abundant blessings of God which was enabled by Jesus dying for us. Therefore, by being washed and renewing our hearts and lives, we are pronounced innocent from our sins and declared heirs of eternal life.

**8 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. (ESV)**

This saying is trustworthy. This is how you will obtain mercy. You can have a new life in Jesus. Insist on these things. We must devote ourselves to the ways of God, doing good works. God insists on us have a new birth and a new life.

**9 But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then**

**twice, have nothing more to do with him, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. (ESV)**

Do not get tangled in worldly things. Do not tolerate those who cause divisions. After two warnings, they need to be avoided. We are to be spiritual, not worldly. When we see the mercy, goodness, and love for humans that God has, how can we become embroiled in senseless, useless disputes? Winning arguments is not our goal. Focus on the word of God. Focus upon renewing our hearts and changing our lives. Focus on devoting ourselves to good works. Focus on being Christians, not Cretans.

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