

TITUS
Chapter Three
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Titus 3:1-2 Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, ²to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

Christians need a constant reminder of who they are and how they are to act. The Israelites forgot and so fell and Jesus had to remind His disciples:

Psa 106:7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Thy wonders; They did not remember Thine abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.

Psa 106:13 They quickly forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel,

Matt 16:9 "Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up?"

Even worldly teachers know that they have to first remind the students what has been taught before going on to new material. So Paul told Titus to remind the people under his care of how they are to act in the world. First he is to tell the people to be subject to and to obey the rulers for God has given authority to the state (Rom 13). Of course they are not to give the state unconditional allegiance for we are to always obey God and if there is a conflict between the commands of the state and those of God we are to obey God (Acts 5:29). The state must not only punish evil but also to promote what is good:

Rom 13:3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;

Rom 13:4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.

1Peter 2:14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

So Christians should always be eager for the opportunity to do good deeds and never to slander or malign anyone. Reputations are fragile and the world is quick to pounce upon the possibility that someone has misbehaved so Christians should be very careful not to participate in any slanderous words or activities. Being uncontentious means being considerate of everyone's opinions and to only rebuke someone when statements are obviously against the will of God. Contentious people are eager to argue over the slightest problem and to make "mountains out of mole hills" and such should not characterize Christians. Christians should also be gentle, which can also be translated humble, meek, or courteous. Finally Christians should give everyone the benefit of the doubt, which would also negate any slanderous statements. Paul emphasizes this

characteristic twice by saying “every” consideration and “all” men. Christians should quickly show a humble attitude toward everyone. Paul thus tells Titus to remind everyone in his congregation of believers to have the proper Christian attitude toward all rulers and whomever they interact.

Titus 3:3-7 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. ⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, ⁵He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

He starts the next sequence with the word “for” to remind Titus that all Christians once had attitudes and actions 180 degrees opposite to that of a Christ-like nature. He then gives some of the characteristics of non-Christian behavior and in verse four he begins with the word “but” that introduces the wonderful proclamation of why God saved and renewed us. Knowing what we were once like before God intervened in our lives gives us the proper attitude about continuing to correct our behavior and to instruct others in their behavior. Without such a transformation in our lives we have no right to instruct others. We once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, and spending our life in malice and envy and even hating one another. Such a description of sinful mankind is reminiscent of the third chapter of Romans. Looking back at our actions and thoughts before salvation is very sobering as, in retrospect, we can see how awful and unworthy we were. The Bible has much to say about the characteristics of a foolish person such as the following:

Pro12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Pro14:16 A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, But a fool is arrogant and careless.

Pro15:5 A fool rejects his father's discipline, But he who regards reproof is prudent.

Pro17:24 Wisdom is in the presence of the one who has understanding, But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.

Pro18:2 A fool does not delight in understanding, But only in revealing his own mind.

Pro20:3 Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel.

Pro26:11 Like a dog that returns to its vomit Is a fool who repeats his folly.

Pro27:22 Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, Yet his folly will not depart from him.

Pro28:26 He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But he who walks wisely will be delivered.

Pro 29:11 A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man holds it back.

Ecc 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both.

Isa 32:6 For a fool speaks nonsense, And his heart inclines toward wickedness, To practice ungodliness and to speak error against the Lord, To keep the hungry person unsatisfied And to withhold drink from the thirsty.

Thinking that all that matters was our self-fulfillment, we were enslaved to all that seemed to offer such riches. Malice is wishing other people evil and envy is coveting their good and the coveting led to other actions against them. The hatred that we felt toward others influenced our actions and we lived in total isolation because of our self-interest. What an awful predicament that we could not even understand was evil and self-defeating!

Paul then launches into how we were transformed from such an addiction to evil into a love for freedom from the world and toward God. It is obvious from our self-description that we could not save ourselves. The only hope for such a fool is for God to intervene and save us. Shirley MacLaine wrote two books informing people how they could transform themselves since “the only source is ourselves”¹ and many people continue to swallow such deception. Paul teaches that salvation comes from a transformation within but that from a source that is without. “The kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared” refers to the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Salvation came only because of the mercy of God and not because of any righteous acts of people. All three persons of God are involved in this spiritual transformation. The Holy Spirit is the cause of the regeneration and renewing of sinful man Who was sent by God the Father through Jesus the Son.

Regeneration is the instantaneous process of justification or being born again. Renewing is the process of sanctification that is a lifelong process. Some commentators and certainly the early fathers took the word “washing” to refer to water baptism that is an outward sign of what had occurred inwardly. But this washing was a flood of action that is one of the double aspects of imputation as all our sins were totally marked paid by the actions of Jesus Christ. The second aspect of double imputation is that the righteousness of Jesus were put into our accounts so that, before God, we become saints forever. So now that we are justified (made as though we had never sinned) we will be heirs of all the promises of God because we are implanted with the hope of eternal life with Him:

Rom 8:16-17 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

¹ Shirley MacLaine, *Out on a Limb* (Elm Tree, 1983) and *Going Within* (Bantam, 1989).

Titus 3:8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

Paul then amplifies the truthfulness of what he has written. Since this is the truth, Paul wants Titus to speak confidently of what he has written so that those who have believed God will then act ethically according to the Word of God. The “good deeds” are those actions based upon the truth of God and such actions will be good and profitable for those doing the actions and for the recipients of the good deeds.

Titus 3:9-11 But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, ¹¹knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

Paul then tells Titus some specific actions to avoid and such is great advice for us today. Note that all four of these include actions pertaining to the Law, which is not the basis for salvation and so such errors would certainly be unprofitable and worthless. He is not telling Titus to avoid controversies for he has already told him to rebuke and silence false teachers (1: 11, 13). He is telling Titus to avoid foolish controversies about the Law. The reference to genealogies certainly implies that Jewish debates concerning the Law are what he has in mind (1 Tim 1:3-11). Strife and disputes about the Law would also certainly be worthless and should be avoided as they have no application to salvation. Paul then tells Titus to reject any contentious or divisive people after giving them two warnings. If the person refuses to repent after the two warnings then Titus should have nothing to do with him since the person is perverted and sinning. The actions of such a person show that he is self-condemned. This series of actions is similar to that prescribed by Jesus (Matt 18:15). It is not clear if this final action is a formal excommunication (1 Tim 1:20) or social ostracism (Rom 16:17) but the result is to no longer have any interaction with such a person.

Titus 3:12-14 When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them. ¹⁴And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

Paul then tells Titus that he is sending two people to take his place on Crete so that he can visit Paul. There is no other mention of Artemas but Tychicus is mentioned five other times. Tychicus probably came from Ephesus (Acts 10:4; 21:29), he was one of those chosen to take a collection to Jerusalem and Paul called him a dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord (Eph 6:21). Paul also sent him to Colossae (Col 4:7-8). He also will send him from Rome to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:9). The precise location of Nicopolis is not known but he probably referred to the capital of Epirus

on the Adriatic coast of Greece. Nothing is known about Zenas except that Paul refers to him as a lawyer so he was probably an expert on Roman law. Apollos is probably the learned Alexandrian who had a fruitful ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:24; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4, 22; 16:12). Paul probably gave this letter to them to deliver to Titus and Titus is instructed to help them to have all that they need for their ministry. Titus is further urged to help the people in the congregation to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs of the congregation. This probably refers to their work in furthering the gospel message although it also could refer to being engaged in honorable occupations as Paul also was a tent maker. Whatever the exact meaning the people must live so that they will be fruitful in the Kingdom of God.

Titus 3:15 All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

It is Paul's habit to end his letters with a personal message penned by his own hand and he probably does so here. First he gives the greetings of all his coworkers and then he asks that Titus greet all in Crete who share the gift of the faith of God. He then ends with a blessing that God's grace will be with them all. As we have seen many times, this little letter carefully matches doctrine and ethics as its primary message for one must live the faith or else it is meaningless.