

March 7, 2010

Titus 3:1-2

Alright good morning and welcome back. Grab your Bibles and turn to the book of Titus with me. We spent the past couple weeks looking at chapters 1 and 2 together as a reminder of what God had shown us in detail from June to September last year, and this morning we are able to pick up where we left off in our verse by verse study of this letter to Titus.

We've discovered again that because the apostle Paul is writing to Titus about how to establish the churches on the island of Crete, that what God gives us in this little three chapter book is **a compact blueprint from God for establishing God's CHURCH**. In the first few verses of chapter 1 through the description of Paul's ministry, we have a mini-blueprint within the overall letter of what God's church is to be and be about. Then in chapter 1, God focuses on the leadership of God's church – that it is to be led by a group of qualified elders and that one of the most important qualifications is their ability to preach and teach – to encourage and refute with sound doctrine.

Then in chapter 2, God moved the focus off of the leadership of the church and onto the congregation of the church. Paul is still telling Titus what he needs to be teaching and in doing so he gives the blueprint for life within the church – the relationships and responsibilities of all ages and genders and stations of life in the church. And God showed us that how we conduct ourselves together as Christians is going to give a testimony to the world of God's saving transforming power when we live holy, gracious, loving, wise, kind lives and all that he said in chapter 2. That makes us different than everyone else who is watching and is going to make the Word of God honored, it is going to silence the critics as we adorn the doctrine of God as a saving God – so our interactions and interdependence are crucial as a platform for our proclamation.

Now as we head into chapter 3, that purpose continues – the goal of evangelism – as we move from the leaders of the church to the congregation of the church now to **chapter 3 which is the blueprint for the church's relationship with the WORLD around it**. Let's look at verses 1-8 though we'll end up just focusing on the first two today. **Titus 3:1-8. TEXT**

Before we exposit the text together, I want to say some things to create a setting for us to understand it. As I studied this passage and researched it, I read several of John MacArthur's comments on this passage from almost 20 years ago and if you change a few of the names, it could have been spoken yesterday – that's where we are. I think you'll agree with me that America is a pagan society.

I think all of us have come to the point – even if we don't want to – that that is the case. Though for over 150 years we experienced a nation of strong Christian biblical influence, that is rapidly declining. People still go to "church services." When you poll them they still say they believe in God. But the reality around us is a kind of practical atheism and at best situational morality. Pretty much whatever remnants of Christian religion still pervade our culture are weak and comprised if not completely apostate.

Some sociologists are saying that we now live in a post-Christian America. One of the things MacArthur pointed out is that maybe a better wording would be a sub-Christian America. We want to say that we are Christians, we just don't want to commit to what Christianity is. Our Christianity has become hollow – we are clearly pagan but with a mask of religion. Our nation's leaders and legislatures and courts are affirming a distinctively anti-Christian agenda. Anything and everything that is distinctively Christian is being swept away under the auspices of equal rights and moral freedom.

The Christianity that was once part of the fabric of our nation and that created what you might call some cultural props to hold us up and to give us biblical morality and standard by which to judge behavior is now gone. Cultural Christianity – whatever it was – is dead. Biblical morality is despised and moral freedom reigns as its own god. Materialism, the break up and break down of family is epidemic. Abortions go on. Sexual perversions, drugs, crime, pagan education flood even the most

conservative corners of America. We've torn down all the standards and now we can't figure out what is right so we don't know what to teach anybody.

So we look at our presidents and we don't like what they do. We look at our governors and mayors and we don't like what they are saying – we don't like the agendas of our senators and congressmen. We are repulsed by the verdicts handed out by our courts. Whether it is executive or legislative or judicial – we aren't happy all the way down. We are angry that perversion is legalized in our country while the will of God is blatantly rejected. It is one thing to have sin, it is something else to redefine it as acceptable human behavior. And it doesn't take much for us to get past the anger to sadness and fear. We fear for ourselves – we fear for our children – and even more for our grandchildren because the worst is yet to come.

And the question we face is how are we to respond now that our society is so pagan – how are we to react – **what is a proper Christian RESPONSE in a pagan culture?** That is precisely the issue in Titus 3:1-8.

In chapter 2 remember he was also talking about Christian conduct and he says in verse 5 that we are to so live that the Word of God may not be dishonored, in verse 8 that our opponents may be put to shame because they have nothing bad to say about us, and in verse 10 that we may make the teaching about God our Savior attractive in every respect. What's the point? We want them to know that God is a saving, transforming God. How? By showing them our transformed lives.

If we are going to make God's saving power visible – we have to make it real in our relations with Christians and NON-CHRISTIANS. It can't just show up in here and with other believers, it must be true in our relations with those out there. And never is it more crucial for careful Christian behavior than when believers are engulfed in pagan culture. That's exactly what Paul is speaking in. You get that right? In Paul's day there was no cultural Christianity. In fact there was no Christianity until he introduced it in most places.

When the apostle Paul wrote this, the church was in the Roman empire. The corruption of Rome was unbelievable. Homosexuality and lesbianism existed all over the empire – even among the highest government officials. Nero himself kept a male lover. Prostitution, both male and female, was legalized and abounded in the empire. Adultery and divorce were as common as marriage. The athletic games were incredibly cruel. Men fought other men and animals to the death. Gluttony, drunkenness, greed, and murder were the order of the day. Still more – these authorities were persecuting the church. And in the midst of that, Paul tells Titus in verse 1 – **remind the people.**

Remind them. Let me just point out that what that means is this isn't anything new. **The church KNEW the responsibilities they had for living in a pagan culture but they needed to be reminded.** And that is so much of what is the duty of those who stand right here. So much of what God calls me to proclaim to you as His truth to His flock is to remind you of what you already know. And that 'remind the people' there in verse one is in the present imperative which means it is the regular ongoing continuing duty to remind them and here he is reminding them of the necessity of behaving themselves in a pagan society. Here's what he says:

“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 to show true humility toward all men.”

Paul lists 7 virtues in there but the first one is that we are to be subject to rulers and authorities – no matter whether your ruler is Caesar or Herod or Pilate or Stalin or Hitler or Churchill or Bush or Obama – it doesn't matter who it is, he says to be subject – he says teach them to be subject. Again – **it doesn't matter WHO IT IS, we are to be subject to the rulers who are over us.**

You can go to **Romans 13** and you'll see the most comprehensive statement about this from the apostle Paul – those first few verses of chapter 13. In verse 1 there he says *“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.”*

That's just a simple comprehensive statement. Everybody is in subjection. It doesn't matter if it is democratic or communist in form, whether it is a monarchy or dictatorship, you're in subjection –

good, bad, whatever form – you are subject to the governing authorities. And then you can look yourself there sometime, Paul gives 7 reasons why we must place ourselves in subjection.

In a nutshell, they are our rulers because God placed them over us. They have been given the right to rule us from God. Therefore, they are the authorities to which we must subject ourselves. **Whether they are righteous by grace through faith in Christ or ungodly; whether they rule conscious of their accountability to God or not, whether they themselves live scandalously or strive to be godly – they are in authority over us for GOD’S SAKE.**

But the reason that is not explained in Romans 13 is explained not only here in Titus, but in **1 Peter 2**. Turn there with me. In 1 Peter 2:9 he says, *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* In other words we are to demonstrate what salvation looks like – what a saved person is. How? Look at **verse 12**: *by living such good lives among the pagans.*

What does he mean by that? Look at **verse 13**: *“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.”* Then **verse 17** he ends by saying *“love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.”*

How you live in a pagan culture is crucial to PROCLAIMING the excellencies of the One who saved you – to demonstrating your transformed life. And that takes us back to Titus. That Paul is saying **you need to be subject to rulers and authorities for EVANGELISTIC reasons.**

So with that mindset, he goes on in the next 6 verses and explains what it looks like to be subject to rulers and authorities for the glory of God. He goes on in verse 1 and says remind them not only to be subject to rulers and authorities – but he builds on that and says remind them to **be obedient**. **You are to OBEY what those rulers say.** So we ask – are we ever to disobey? Yes. There’s one occasion when we disobey and that is when they ask us to do what the Bible forbids us to do or when they ask us not to do what the Bible commands us to do.

There are several examples of this in the Bible. The Hebrew midwives because they feared God refused to murder the male babies as Pharaoh commanded. Think about Daniel and his friends in Babylon. They refused to eat the king’s meat and wine because it involved idol worship and the meat was unclean. Shadrach, Meshach and Abendego refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s golden idol though it meant a fiery furnace for them. Daniel prayed to God as always in spite of the king’s decree and in spite of the lion’s den.

And maybe the best illustration of this exception to subjection is in **Acts 4** when they apostles were told not to preach Jesus. You remember in verse 18 they were commanded not to speak or teach in Jesus’ name and Peter and John answered back, *“Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”* And then in **chapter 5** they were whipped and ordered to speak no more and it says *“The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.”*

There comes a point when the state turns against the church and tells the church not to do what God has commanded us to do, then we have to obey God and suffer the consequences – be it prison or death or whatever. **The only time we DISOBEY is when we are being told by the earthly authority to go against what we have been commanded by SCRIPTURE.** So we are obedient.

Then Paul says in verse 1 remind them **“to be ready to do whatever is good.”** This is great. This is **AGGRESSIVE goodness**. Not just skating under the radar - Not reluctance that says “ok – I’m won’t make an issue here, I’ll grit my teeth and do what I’m supposed to do” – no this is internal eagerness to do every conceivable good deed. Approaching life so that **no matter how volatile the**

culture is against Christianity you PURSUE every good thing so our lives demonstrate the transformation of the gospel – the new birth, salvation, the life of God, the power of the Spirit, righteousness, virtue – we are known for our aggressive goodness.

Then he moves to verse 2 but the list continues connected to what Titus is to be reminding the people of. Remind them next, **“slander no one.”** Obviously slander is **to treat with CONTEMPT**. Not easy to do when you find yourself in the culture and under the leaders we’ve already described.

But listen – **we are to CONFRONT sin**. We must confront the sinner because of his sin – **we must call sinners to REPENTANCE – but we do not stoop to slander and speaking with contempt of people**. I hate it when Christian people do that towards our leaders. That’s not the Christian approach. We may not like what they do but we must remember folks the condition they are in. Do we forget that their minds are blinded by the god of this world? How else do you expect unsaved people to act except like unsaved people? They act under the influence of Satan and his current system and they’re just carrying out the only agenda they can comprehend. To malign and slander them is unacceptable. Don’t slander them – pray for their salvation.

Instead of slandering, Paul says remind them **“to be peaceable and considerate.”** The word for peaceable there is literally **not contentious, not FIGHTING**. It is so easy to be hostile and contentious and angry about what happens in the pagan culture we live in. We don’t like to see God denied and Satan exalted, but we are not to be contentious. Instead we are to be considerate. The word there really is gentle – to be reasonable – in fact some define as sweet reasonableness. It means to **be considerate of human weakness, to be PATIENT with sinners**.

And then the NIV ends with remind them **“to show true humility toward all men.”** The word there is translated **meekness** as often as humility and the ideas go together. It’s the reality of **power under CONTROL**. Never fighting for “my rights” so to speak. The church doesn’t have any political agenda – the church doesn’t have any legislative agenda – we aren’t after any set of rights – we just live for Jesus come what may. This is all about **a patient TRUST in God**.

You see everything we do in relationship with the world has an evangelistic goal. And as we live in this world subjected to the authorities and rulers – obedient to all things that they lay out that don’t directly violate Scripture – as we are eagerly pursuing every imaginable good deed within our society – as we slander no one, fight no one, but instead choose to be patient with sinners, gentle, kind – then we’re going to demonstrate salvation because only people transformed by the grace of God can act like that.

God’s blueprint for His church is not just about the leadership within it or the people within it – but its relationship with the CULTURE it is within. And aside from each of us being reminded and probably convicted about the kind of behavior our lives should be demonstrating in regard to the authorities and world around us, I want to make sure we get the blueprint here.

There are all kinds of books out there about confronting our culture and effecting and impacting our culture. But frankly folks, that’s not our goal. That isn’t what we are about. It sounds like a noble goal and I’m sure there are people who can see certain noble aspects of it – but we are God’s church – God’s people – and our goal is not to impact culture by changing their moral values. Our goal is not to impact our culture by creating traditional values or family values through legislation or judicial process. Our goal is not to make sure that the United States of America adheres to a national policy that equates with biblical morality.

That doesn’t mean that those who are working in those areas and strive for truth and right from biblical starting points aren’t right and good and following God’s plan for them – but the reality is that things are not going to get better – things are going to get worse. That’s not my pessimism, that’s just the truth.

Paul says tells Timothy **(in 2 Tim 3:1-5, 12-13)**

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love,

unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God....”

“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

Jesus explains in **Matthew 24:12** – speaking of the last days and what is going to happen as they approach that: *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”*

So our goal isn't and can't be to prevent what Jesus says is going to happen. **God's blueprint for us as His church is not for us to be about altering social morality. We are not involved in upgrading CULTURAL conduct. We are interested in people being SAVED.** We are about reaching our world, not re-doing the culture. That is our only agenda. **If we are going to change the culture, we're going to do it from the INSIDE out.**

You can look at like this. The church has one mission – like we read in 1 Peter – we – God's church – are a nation of priests. And a priest had one simple function: to bring people to God – to usher them into His presence. That is the only thing we are in the world to do.

Frankly, if people die in a communist government or a democracy, it really doesn't matter if they end up in hell. If they die under a tyrant or a benevolent dictator, it doesn't matter if they end up in hell. If they die believing that homosexuality is wrong or believing that it is right – if they end up in hell, it doesn't matter. Whether they stood on the side of the street screaming for legalized abortions or the other side screaming to stop the killing – if they didn't know Christ, they end up in the same place, right?

None of that is the issue. They are issues – but they aren't the issue – and they aren't God's church's issue – the issue is salvation. And **the sad reality is that when the church gets into a moralizing and politicizing bent, it usually has a NEGATIVE impact on its mission of evangelism.** Because then it makes us hostile to the current system and we become the enemies of the society rather than the compassionate friend.

If we are going to see our nation transformed, it has to be done from the inside out. That's our agenda. **So we are here to PREACH Christ and to know nothing among them except Christ crucified. But behind that preaching must come a manner of LIVING that makes that message believable.** And that is what Paul is addressing in such a simple and clear though brief message in chapter 3.

He tells Titus to remind them.

Today – do we – do you – need to be reminded of why we are here – and how we are to relate to the culture around us?

Titus 3:1-2

1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,

2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

Are you willing to endure whatever it takes – to work at whatever it takes – to do whatever it takes to be moving people to life in Christ one step at a time together?

How is your life reflecting your answer?

Let's pray.