

Titus 3

Godliness in the World

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

First of all, it is appropriate to remind ourselves of the overall function and plan of Paul's letter to Titus.

Titus was himself a Gentile Greek. He went with Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, and circumcision was not imposed on him (See Galatians 2:1-3 and Acts 15:2). He was with Paul on his third missionary journey (2 Corinthians 2:13). He was the bearer of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:6-8), and he had the responsibility of taking up the collection in Corinth for the Christian community of Jerusalem. Historians insist that Titus was never married, and that he died when he was over ninety.

The epistle of Titus is marked by the strong assertion of authority; the authority vested in Paul as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Titus acting as his delegate. The reason for that will become clear as we consider today's scriptures.

The Epistle to Titus is also sober and sound. A person who is pure in heart sees only goodness and purity in everything he encounters (chapter 1 verse 15).

The Bible teacher Frank Binford Hole was renowned in the twentieth century for his clarity of thought and simplicity of expression. In his excellent book (Paul's Epistles (Volume Two)) summarising, remarkably briefly, the relevance of Paul's letter to Titus, he helps us with his following introduction:

'As we examine the Epistle to Titus, in detail, we soon become conscious that it has features of its own, and that it fills a [shallow recess] in the scheme of Christian truth which, without it, would remain empty – sobriety, soundness and authority; again I need to say the authority vested in Paul as an Apostle of the Lord, and in Titus as his delegate. The conditions prevailing at Crete, owing to the racial characteristics to which Paul alludes in his first chapter, render this assertion necessary; but as there is all too much of the Cretan difficulties – if not of the Cretan character – about us and among us all today, we shall certainly find the exhortations of this Epistle peculiarly relevant to our own souls.'

Before we go into the detail of chapter 3, I think it is worthwhile to remind ourselves of the overall plan and motive of Paul in writing to the younger man Titus.

(By the way, it does seem to me that Timothy was clearly a quite youngish man who needed a lot of guidance from the greatly experienced Apostle Paul. Titus, by way of contrast, while not fully

experienced, was perhaps a few years older, and with at least a little bit more experience than Timothy.)

I also think it is helpful to remind ourselves at this stage about Paul the Apostle and his relationship with Titus. I find it helpful to take account of the summary given in the Morrish 'A New & Concise Bible Dictionary', before we get into the detail of chapter 3:

'The book is one of the Pastoral Epistles, so called because it is addressed to an individual servant of the Lord. It was apparently written after Paul's first imprisonment at Rome. When otherwise could he have left Titus at Crete (chapter 1 verse 5) and before his second imprisonment? Where it was written from is not decisively known. It's date may be about A.D.64. The epistle urges the maintenance of good works and order in the Christian church, and states the principles on which they are founded.'

Likewise, Frank Binford Hole stated: "There is a very strong resemblance between The First Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus."

As we have heard in the previous talks of this series, the Epistle to Titus in its common form has been split up in a very orderly fashion:

Chapter 1 Godliness in the Christian assembly.

Chapter 2 Godliness in the domestic home sphere.

Now, in Chapter 3, we are about to consider the necessity of a manifestation of Godliness in the world by the Christian believers.

Verses 1 and 2

"Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people."

These statements indicate the common characteristics, naturally speaking, of the people of Crete, where Titus was working, and were the opposite of what Paul required of these believers. Bearing in mind that it is always easy to criticise other people, Paul then brings the lesson closer to home to bear directly upon them.

In this letter we see the true church of Jesus Christ so far as its ecclesiastical order is concerned. It is a very remarkable thing that this letter had to do with a church of Jesus Christ in a most difficult place. In chapter 1 verse 12, Paul describes the Cretans as "evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Throughout this letter, the most startling and amazing things as to the possibilities of Christian life flourishing are said concerning those who are found in the most difficult position, and of those who are in the most trying circumstances, the bond-slaves. In chapter 2 verse 12, the apostle declares that they were to adorn the doctrine of God in everything.

Thus in order to show the true spiritual power of the church in Crete, and the possibility of the lowest member exercising this power, in the midst of trying and most difficult conditions of life, the finest possibilities were assumed to be true. Thus the Spirit of God teaches us that the church of God can be the pillar and ground of the truth in the most dark, desolate and difficult places of the earth, and that men and women whose circumstances are most trying and difficult, can fulfil the highest function of Christianity, that of "adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour."

Verse 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.”

This statement reminds us clearly of what all Christians, ourselves included, used to be like before we trusted the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. The Gospel inculcates not only obedience to all governing authorities but gentleness and meekness unto all mankind. As verse 3 states, the difficulty is that these features are very much the opposite of what we all are, naturally speaking. For this reason, the Apostle puts this on record here.

Verse 4

“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared.”

Following on from verse 3, Paul highlights that it is the kindness and philanthropy of God which produced such a radical change in us. This word philanthropy, by the way, meaning love to man, confirms that God created man to have a special relationship with Himself. The words ‘loving kindness’ literally mean ‘love to man’ and are the translation of one Greek word, ‘philanthropia.’ The kindness and philanthropy of our Saviour God have appeared in His Son demonstrating that God clearly loves man with a special affection. His philanthropy expressed itself in kindness and mercy, and by His mercy we are saved.

Verse 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.”

Paul here reminds us that, if we are truly saved, we have been saved by the mercy of God, not as a result of anything we ourselves have done, or ever could do. We know instinctively that a change has taken place within us. As we so happily sing,

‘Things are different now
Something’s happened to me,
Since I gave my heart to Jesus.’

Paul gives here a very compact little thesis on how God has done that. Once and for all we have been given a completely new nature by what the text says is the washing of regeneration. The Holy Spirit has wrought in us a once and for all cleaning up that brings us into a new life. The cleansing agent He has used to do this is the word of God, the Bible itself. Furthermore, we have been brought into a completely new moral state, before God, called here the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Again, this is an irrevocable, irreversible work of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 6

“Whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

This goes further than verse 5. Not only have we been given a new nature, and granted a new moral state in which the new life in Christ can thrive, we have been given also a new power to enable us to live that new life day by day to the glory of God. That new power is a Person, the Holy Spirit Himself, Who now indwells each believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, so that he or she might glorify God in his or her life on earth in a way that they had no natural power to do.

Verse 7

“So that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Here, I have to say that while I love all the scriptures, there are some that grip me and move me more than others. One of the truths of scripture that moves me immensely is the truth of justification. That is, God declares believers to be absolutely righteous through faith in Christ.

The longer I live, the more grateful I am, and ever shall be, that my salvation, my assurance of a place with Christ in heaven, is not dependent in any respect, or to any degree, on anything that I have done, or ever could do. The strength of a chain is governed by the strength of its weakest link. How glad I am, and am entitled to be, that not one link in the chain of salvation is in the least or smallest degree dependent on me or anything I could ever do. This is one of the many things that the truth of justification brings to me.

How can this be so? Well, I have found nine aspects of this wonderful truth. I will lay them before you one by one. First of all, I will tell you what they are, each of them fully true of those who believe that Jesus died for them, and rose again.

1. We are justified by God.
2. We are justified by the grace of God.
3. We are justified by the precious blood of Christ.
4. We are justified by the personal bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. We are justified freely from all things that we could not be justified from by the Law of Moses.
6. We are justified by faith.
7. We are justified by works.
8. We are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9. We are justified in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today, it is relevant for us to concentrate on the second aspect. We are justified by the grace of God.

Listen to Romans 3:24 – we are “justified by His grace as a gift.” That is, while God is the personal justifier of the saved sinner, He does it by means of His free, unlimited grace. God is necessarily the source of the justification. His grace, His rich, unmerited favour, is the channel through which the blessing flows.

While we are considering this wonderful thought let me say a little about the matter of grace.

In brief, Christian blessing comes to us, not because we deserve it, but because of the free, unmerited favour of God. Free to us, that is. There is indeed a cost, a mighty cost, a tremendous cost, borne in full by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Consider that extremely apt acrostic of the word grace. G-R-A-C-E. God's Riches At Christ's Expense. G-R-A-C-E. Grace! Marvellous!

Most importantly, then, there has already been, in this world, a clear manifestation of the grace of God. As Titus chapter 2 verse 11 clearly says, ‘the grace of God has appeared.’ When did it happen? And in what form? Supremely, pre-eminently, in the Person of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, when He lived in this world, almost 2000 years ago now. We do get occasional glimpses in the four Gospels of His infancy and boyhood. But, largely speaking, it was particularly in those dramatic last three and a half years of His life upon earth that the grace of God was made known in a public way in Him. In Him, personally, the grace of God has indeed appeared, here in this world, in which we ourselves live.

Many scriptures remind us that while God, through Christ, created all things, the whole race of mankind has a special place in the heart of God. As we read, in Proverbs 8:31,

‘[He was] delighting in the children of man.’

As far back as Genesis 1:26 we read,

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over [all created things on earth, on behalf of God].””

A rendering of Titus 2:11 could well be,

‘The grace of God, which bringeth salvation within the reach for all people, has appeared.’

That is, because the Lord Jesus came into the world, salvation has been made available to all people. All men will not be saved. But, salvation is presented freely to all who are willing to receive it by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another contrast follows. Here, in chapter 3 verse 7, we are reminded of the value of the work of Christ for us. Not only has He cleared us as to the past; in the good of that mighty work He has fitted us for the future, for eternity, so that we are fully assured as to eternal life.

This leads on to verse 8, which draws attention to our works, which are intended to be a confirmation that His work in us has been effective.

Verse 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.”

Our works will never earn salvation for us or for anybody else. But once we are saved, the way we live and act demonstrate the effect of the grace of God in us. Good works are the outcome of salvation; they cannot achieve it.

In the rest of the chapter, Paul winds up his letter with some very practical reminders.

Verse 9

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

In other words, don't get drawn into useless debates and discussions.

Verses 10 and 11

“As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”

As an exception, we are told here how to deal with matters if an individual causes difficulty by pressing his own individual and unscriptural views, even going as far as building up a school of opinion around himself.

Verses 12, 13 and 14

“When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.”

The epistle closes with a brief section dealing with other Christians known to Paul, all of whom laboured in the service of the Lord.

A fair summary would be to say, “If you possibly can, help. If you can’t help, don’t hinder.” Many of us, naturally speaking, have a tendency to laziness, but a Christian should be consistently diligent in all he or she does.

Verse 15

“All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.”

As was his usual practice, Paul rounds off his letter by including some personal words of greeting to mutual friends. Isn’t it nice, when you write to someone you have met, while away from home, to ask them to pass on your most sincere greetings to others you met while you were with them?

This happy balance between belief and behaviour is a special mark of true Christianity. Let us ensure that such a balance is evident in our lives. Others might then be attracted to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who 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. God grant that it might be so. Amen.

[Now, if the Lord will, and He has not yet returned to take us to be with Himself, next week’s talk will begin a series covering the opportunities and difficulties of growing old.](#)

In the meantime, let me say, “Thank you very much indeed for your patience and interest in listening to this Truth for Today talk number T1239, entitled ‘Titus chapter 3,’ and dealing with ‘Godliness in the world.’”

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