

Titus 3:1-8
“Civic Minded”

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I. Introduction

Having just written Titus about the personal impact that a relationship with Jesus has with the individual believer through: Redeeming Grace, Reforming Grace and Rewarding Grace. Paul now speaks on how that personal transformation would impact society.

When you consider Christianity in the first century it doesn't resemble what we see today. It was viewed within the Roman Empire with great suspicion as believers conduct was so vastly different from the accepted norms of society.

- The practice of their faith didn't involve trying to keep immorality out of society. It was society that saw their lack of immorality as wrong. It was the believer's personal lack of practicing immorality that made society suspicious of Christians and led to their persecution.
- Their participation in church life was not public, there were no facilities at every street corner, no advertising or promotion of the Church. The church met house to house underground in what was largely private meetings for believers only. There was virtually not thought of trying to get unsaved people to go to church in order to “save” them. The emphasis was on transformed believers going into society and living their faith. This too added to the suspicions of the society with regards to the church.

In spite of these suspicions and prejudices, Christians and the Church were expected to be good citizens without compromising their faith. Their fellow neighbors may be practicing immorality condoned and accepted by the Government but where the Empire didn't cause them to compromise their faith the believer was expected to be a model citizen.

II. Vs. 1-2 Remind them

Vs. 1-2 In the Greek the phrase “*remind them*” is in the present tense and means “*keep on reminding them*”. Thus Titus was to continue to remind Christians to show proper humility to all people especially those in a position of authority. The phrase “*ready for every good work*” follows Paul’s exhortation for believers to be “*subject to rulers and authorities, to obey.*” As such the context is that believers were to be cooperating in those matters that involved the whole of society as long as they did not conflict with the higher authority of obedience to God and His word. Our heavenly citizenship does not absolve us from earthly responsibilities and those responsibilities are expandable and flexible enough to fit into any form of government at any time. We are NOT just to be “*subject to rulers*” which would make us not merely passive but active as we are “*ready for every good work.*”

Had Paul left it there this exhortation would have been left up to each and every believer to interpret ***WHAT*** and ***HOW*** such an exhortation was to be applied but the following verses make it apparent that Paul wanted to give the Christian and the Church the specific obligations that would enhance the Church in its mission to transform society. ***It is clearly evident that in the Roman Empire in which the first century church was birthed that this transforming mission was to be “covert” and impactful as each individual believer didn’t any longer conform to the image of society.*** It was this visible transformation of the individual believer no longer practicing the immorality of society that would impact the society.

- a. “...***to speak evil of no one***”: The context of this is the phrase of verse 1 “*be subject to rulers*”. The idea behind these words is that the believer was not to

have a bad attitude towards the government that was demonstrated by slanderous accusations argumentative actions. *Is it just me or do you also find this extremely difficult to practice?* These words need to be placed into the context of the Roman Government which was far more inept and depraved than even our own present Government. To me these words speak to the balance as Paul is not suggesting that we agree with the evils of society that are legislated and encouraged by a wicked government. What Paul is saying is that we need to love the sinner while we hate the sin! We are to speak evil of “**NO ONE**” not that we should not speak with regards to **EVIL**! Clearly this is a difficult thing to do as we speak against the EVIL of sexual immorality or abortion without speaking evil of those who are victims even though they practice these evils.

- b. “...**to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.**”: The above admonition was in the negative, “*what we are not to be towards rulers*” here Paul tells Titus what the Christian citizen is to positively behave like and he uses Greek words that describe a “*peaceful, sweet reasonableness*”. The words describe an attitude that causes actions that do not insist on the letter of the law, but are willing to compromise where no moral or ethical issue is at stake. We are to demonstrate all humility to ALL MEN especially those that we disagree with on issues. Again the balance as this isn’t suggesting that we compromise our opinions or views only that we compromise our self-pride and insistence that every knee bow to us. We must never allow being right on

an issue to overtake behaving right. I'd far rather a person disagree with my position than they reject my position because of my behavior.

III. Vs. 3 The way we were

Vs. 3 Paul linked the **DUTY** of Christian citizens with the **DOCTRINE** of their experience and as such we cannot divorce the two. Our expectation to godly behavior matches our experience and as such we are left without an excuse. Indirectly Paul's words are saying, "**Don't be verbally condescending and combative to your unsaved community; remember what kind of person you were before Jesus transformed your life.**"

Reading through the six examples of the expression of our former enslaved life ought to grant us kindness towards those who are currently afflicted with these same ailments. Saints each of us ought to write down these "**six deadly examples of our former life**" and follow them up with a personal examples from our past. I believe that none of us would have a hard time coming up with a few 100 examples from our past. This list of six should be laminated and keep with us at all times and before we say or act towards an unsaved person we should take the list out with our personal examples and read them to refresh our memory:

1. Foolish
2. Disobedient
3. Deceived
4. Serving various lusts and pleasures
5. Living in malice and envy
6. Hateful and hating one another

At the start of the list of six characteristics of my former life Paul included himself saying "WE" as he graciously described our transformation saying, "**FOR WE OURSELVES WERE ALSO ONCE**". **The assumption and expectation is these six examples are**

indeed part of “my former life” not “illustrations of my current life”! I am left with **“NO ROOM TO TALK”** no high and mighty arrogance of superiority, only a humble gratitude of God’s Redeeming, Reforming and Rewarding grace! Remembering that we were once foolish, disobedient, and deceived builds four things in us:

- **Gratitude:** *For how God transformed us*
- **Humility:** *When we realize that it was His work that changed us*
- **Kindness:** *Towards others who are in the same place we were*
- **Faith:** *In God to believe that since God has changed us He can change anyone*

IV. Vs. 4-8 What a transformation

Vs. 4 Oh what a difference *“the kindness and the love of God our Savior”* made to these six examples of my character. The list of six is one verse but the expression of God’s *“kindness and love”* is four verses in length. We will never appreciate what God has done until we examine the **NEED** for it to be done once we have come to personally admittance of our NEED we must spend far more time in appreciation for God who has transformed a wretch like ME.

Vs. 5 Here Paul explains that God’s salvation, kindness and love came *“not by works of righteousness which we have done..”* **“but according to His mercy”**. The object of the work is further described as *“the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.”* The point Paul is instilling in the reader is that our **“WERE ALSO ONCE”** cannot be accredited to our work but to Jesus’ work so we have nothing to enable us to thinking and acting superior to those still enslaved by those 6 characteristics. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that “baptized” or washed us a new.

Vs. 6 Paul continues to tell us that the Holy Spirit was not “poured upon” us sparingly but rather **“ABUNDANTLY”**. If those 6 characteristics above are **“illustrations of my**

current life” instead of “examples of “my former life” the fault does not lie with the lack of God’s supply but rather my lack of obedient appropriation.

Vs. 7 There are words used in the Bible that we know but we know not what they mean in relationship to our lives and “*having been JUSTIFIED by His grace*” is just such a word. The doctrine of “*justification*” is more fully explained in Paul letter to the Romans in chapter 3:21 and 8:39 but the word describes the gracious act whereby God declares a believing sinner “*right*” because of the finished work of Jesus upon the cross. The term is both a *legal term* as well as an *accounting term* as God declares us both RIGHT and ACCOUTS the rightness of Jesus to our account so that we can no longer be condemned. Because of this *God not only forgets our sins, He forgets we were even sinners!* The outcome of God’s kindness, love, mercy and grace is HEIRS of God and because of this we have the certain HOPE of eternal life! What that means dear ones is that *we can begin to withdraw on God’s riches today, we don’t have to wait till He comes as we are on the account with Him. And when He comes we will share His wealth and His kingdom forever.*

Vs. 8 This inheritance doesn’t come without accountability as we will demonstrate that we have been transformed and heirs of God by “good works” which Paul says are good and profitable to men. The only evidence the unsaved world has that we have indeed changed kingdoms and are heirs is the sacrificial service of believers. *Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone!*