

Sermon Series: Titus
Titus 3:1-15 The Before and After
Part 1 Titus 3:1-3

Sunday February 10, 2019

Title: Gospel Obligations

Subject: Grace, The Gospel, Authority, Humility, Salvation, Obedience

Theme Text: Titus 3:1-3 (NIV2011) 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 always to be gentle toward everyone. ³ At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Theme Illustration: When I was a child, I loved to read comic books, particularly that of Bugs Bunny and Daffy duck and others. Part of each comic book were advertisements. These advertisements were for bodybuilding. On one side was the picture of the 90-pound weakling. On the other side was the ripped body of the weightlifter. The message was that if you buy this or participate in that that the program will transform you from the 90-pound weakling to the bulging hunk of man in the other picture. We are constantly hounded in our advertising with the before and after pictures. We're being bombarded with the difference a particular cosmetic product makes when it comes to crow's feet underneath the eyes, dry skin, or the shine in your hair. There is also the dietary plan that begs you to purchase their prepackaged meals. And in each one of those commercials is some celebrity who tells you and shows you how much weight they've lost on a meal plan. We are all vulnerable to the before and after sales pitch.

The apostle, Paul, is doing the Cretan church and every one of us a great service. Our apostle has taken a snapshot of both the before and the after.

The resulting contrast is designed to demonstrate the power of the transforming agent. By this before and after picture, Paul is demonstrating the power in effect of the gospel of God's grace and its effect on those who have been saved through it.

I can't tell you how many conversations I've had with Christians about their sanctification. Most of these involve encouragement to not become discouraged as they progress towards godliness in and through their struggle with sin and the flesh. I wish I could produce for each one of them side-by-side pictures of who they were before Jesus saved them and their present progress in transformation.

I can produce the picture of each one of us as a finished product, **Romans 8:29 (NIV2011)** ²⁹ **For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.** This Scripture is God's promise to finish each one of His servant projects. The problem is that we have a hard time seeing our own progress in the gospel. I think one of our challenges, if we see our progress, is to think or to take personal credit for it.

Today, the Scriptures remind us of our obligations under the gospel and presents to us the before picture.

Read: Titus 3:1-15

Introduction: We were informed last week and may be surprised to learn that even though we are saved by grace and not by law, nevertheless, the very grace that saves us obligates us to obey God's will.

Titus 2:11-14 (NIV2011) ¹¹ **For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.** ¹² **It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,** ¹³ **while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,** ¹⁴ **who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.**

This grace empowers us to desire and to do God's will.

Paul stresses to Titus that these things were to be taught and, thus, by them to encourage and rebuke the people by the teaching of the word, **Titus 2:15 (NIV2011)** ¹⁵ **These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.**

Transition: Today, we are reminded of the before picture. In doing so, Paul is also reminding us of our gospel obligations to authority, in our relationships, and in our duty to remember our unsaved past. First, we'll examine our gospel obligations:

1. In Submission: Titus 3:1-2 (NIV2011) 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 always to be gentle toward everyone.**

The obligation to be subject to governing authorities is pervasive in the Scriptures. Why? The before picture of each one of us is that of a rebel. Many people, including Christians, take pride in being a rebel. Of course, the model is Satan who is the first and the model rebel. The word "submission" sends warning bells and chills up the spines of human beings. One of the reasons is that we misunderstand God's purpose in our submission. It is not mere passive subservience. Submission is the commitment of our energies, intellect, and gifts to or for in support of a higher purpose. So, submission is more than obedience. It is also readiness to do whatever is good.

We will find the call to submission in Romans, Paul's letters to Timothy, and Peter's epistles. Why would the New Testament so emphasize submission while living under wicked Roman despots? We must resist the temptation to think that because the authorities are unreasonable our obligation to submit is annulled.

There are two reasons for Christians today to honor this gospel obligation. One, the gospel is not a political movement. It must be clear that our moral stances on issues such as marriage, sexuality, and the sanctity of life are gospel issues, not political issues. Moral issues or gospel issues transcend the political.

Secondly, the progress of the gospel is hindered when God's people only honor the authority when they find it agreeable. We must submit to the authorities God has placed in our lives, even if that authority rebukes us. Of course, we should resist authority that requires ungodliness.

Thirdly, a church or Christian who will not submit to governing authority undermines the word of God for the church and the unbelieving.

Transition: Paul now moves to our gospel obligations:

2. In Relationships: Titus 3:1-2 (NIV2011) 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 always to be gentle toward everyone.

Our translation misses the impact by using the word gentle. The Greek word is the word for meekness or humility. Paul is saying the same willingness or humility shown to governing authorities must also be shown towards all human beings, saint or sinner.

In all settings, we must be ready to not speak ill of anyone and to be gentle with everyone. We are reminded of this in **1 Peter 3:9 (NIV2011) ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.** All of this is for the good of others. We need to be reminded that all people are God's image bearers in this and are due this consideration.

Romans 12:18 (NIV2011) ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Transition: Lastly, Paul wants Titus to remind the people of the before picture. We have the gospel requirement:

3. In Remembrance: Titus 3:3 (NIV2011) ³ At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

This is not a pretty picture. Paul wants us to remember our pagan, unbelieving past so that we understand just how dependent upon grace we are.

Paul reminds us of our rebel past. While a rebel, we thought we were free, yet the truth was that we were enslaved by all kinds of passions. In saying that we were foolish, we were not being guided by God's wisdom. We were actually being led astray by a false wisdom, **Luke 7:35 (NIV2011) ³⁵ But wisdom is proved right by all her children.**"

In fact, the Gospel supplies other worldly wisdom, **1 Corinthians 1:30 (NIV2011) ³⁰ It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. James reminds us that James 3:17 (NIV2011) ¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.**

So, Paul reminds us of how we lived towards each other. The Scripture describes the normal worldly pattern of thought and action. But I also want you to notice the apostles use of the word "we". Paul groups himself with Titus and the Cretan believers. The Holy Spirit is reminding us of the level ground of our depravity. We all have a common past.

Apart from the work of Christ, we are all hopeless. No apostle, preacher, nor people can claim a superior position and character.

Conclusion: If we do not know and acknowledge the truth of the before picture, we're not qualified to pastor, teach, and serve in any leadership position in the church. We need to remember that all true Christians were rescued from a pit as deep and dark as hell. This is what Jesus meant when he said, **Matthew 5:3 (NIV2011)** ³ **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

Only when we believe that apart from Christ, there is no hope for heaven for us than there is for the worst sinner we have ever met. It is this we must remember while sharing the gospel with others and when we relating to our fellow believers.

It is good to take out the before pictures for the sake of our own humility and appreciation for the power of grace in our lives.