

Text: Titus 3:1-3

Title: Christian Reminders

Truth: We are to live godly lives because we *were* ungodly before.

Date/Location: Sunday August 22, 2021 at FBC

Introduction

In chapter 3 we find additional true and healthy doctrine (2:1) for Titus to review with the new elders and to the churches on the island of Crete. Just like he was to “speak these things” in 2:15, he is also to...

Titus 3:1-3 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. ³For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

I. The Christian’s Relationship to Gov’t and Society, v. 1

A. Remind. John 14:26, 2 Peter 1:12, Jude 5. It means to put something in the mind of another person, though it was there before at some point. Paul does not say to Titus to *tell them* or to *inform them* because they somehow already knew this stuff. Either they were *already* instructed in these basics of the faith, or they intuitively know as Christians what God requires. God has taught us internally by His Spirit to love one another, for example (1 Thess. 4:9). John 6:44-45 informs us that all who come to Jesus give evidence that the Father was already teaching them! Isaiah 54:13 is alluded to by our Lord, from a New Covenant context that is part of a set of promises in the Old Testament (like those in Jer. 31:33-34, Heb. 8:10-11) that will come to full flower in the Messianic Kingdom. Similar blessings, though much less in extent across the population, are felt today.

1 John 2:27 speaks of the teaching ministry of the Spirit of God whereby he brings you illumination and certainty of the truth of God. It does not teach you everything you need to know, but the general nature and broad outline of those things is clear. You still

need instruction and reminders. But if your pastor says, “be submissive, be gentle, be humble,” every true Christian will have some intuitive understanding of that.

Putting things in your brain, by the way, is a dangerous business. Often those things never come out. Traumatic or “big” things are etched into the synapses in profound ways. Educators are putting things into our kids’ brains that will affect them for years to come. The culture with its immorality and fear-mongering is warping our minds today by trying to put garbage into them.

But Christian reminders are desperately needed, so let me put a few things into your brain.

- B. Be subject to rulers and authorities. Inherent in human nature is an anti-authority bent. At some points of history it volcanoes out more than others, but it is seething under the surface all the time. In order to make a workable society, somehow that tendency has to be subjugated, either by “we the people” with a basic internal morality and the rule of law, or by a dictatorship that forces people to live in some kind of order by means of fear and raw power. God uses those governments to keep evil to a dull roar instead of a totally devastating mess. Today, anti-authoritarianism is popular—even to rejecting God’s creative authority over your personal identity! This can only lead to chaos.

Christians have the most powerful internal moral work by the Spirit of God that teaches them to submit to authority—parents, teachers, governors, emperors, etc. Yes, even evil ones. This disposition is what we call “submissiveness.” But then there is the *doing* of the disposition. That’s next.

It is important to add here that if you are a member of a church and one of the pastors has made an honorable, holy request of you, or given you guidance about something, you are under *divine obligation* to be subject to it. I have personally experienced that people hear what I’m saying, but do not attend to it in an honorable way. They ignore it, blow it off, forget it, think they have a better approach. It is disrespectful and shows a breakdown in this area of being subject. Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Thess. 5:12-13 give sufficient Biblical ground for this idea.

C. Obey authority. Paul told those on the boat with him that they should have obeyed him (Acts 27:21)! The word here is a compound that really does mean to obey those in charge. Romans 13:1-8 is the classic passage that deals with this issue. If you are required to pay taxes, pay them. If you are told to follow other laws, follow them. But never obey if it means disobeying God. This is the matter of *civil disobedience* (Acts 5:29, 5:32). Modern examples include church attendance despite the fear-mongering around the COVID pandemic, and conversion therapy that is now supposedly outlawed in Ann Arbor in certain cases.

Obedience applies especially to God, who is the highest authority imaginable. All humans owe Him faithful obedience. Most certainly Christians must obey God.

D. Ready for every good work. The text is self-explanatory. Are you ready for every good work? Are you prepared ahead of time to be able to do good to your fellow believers and neighbors? Are you not only prepared physically but also mentally with the desire and the outlook actually awaiting the opportunity, looking for the opportunity, seizing the opportunity? Or are you so wrapped up in yourself and wasting your stewardship that you have no abundance for every good work (2 Cor. 9:8)?

About the phrase “every good work,” see Col. 1:10, 2 Thess. 2:17, 1 Tim. 5:10, 2 Tim. 2:21, 3:17; Titus 1:16, this verse Titus 3:1, and Heb. 13:21.

E. Speak evil of no one. This is slandering, maligning, blaspheming. Have you ever bad-mouthed another person to others, even in your own family? Have you bad-mouthed your pastor, your husband to your girl friends, your wife to your guy friends, your spouse to your kids, another church member, etc.?

F. Peaceable. Not a fighter. Christians are peace-loving people, but they will fight for righteousness if necessary. See 1 Tim. 3:3 (not quarrelsome).

G. Gentle. Yielding, kind, courteous. Kindness in action.

H. Humble. An attitude of low mind toward all people—whether rich or poor, high or low, big or small. This is sometimes translated as courtesy and gentleness as well. All these things go together.

Christianity does not allow for people to be harsh, slanderers, people who pick fights, always contradict, and are proud of their own supposed knowledge and achievements.

II. Why: Remember We Were not Christians in our Past, v. 3

- A. We were also once messed up in our relationship to other people and to authority, especially to God. The change did not come because we were so wise or insightful or resourceful or clever. It came because God persuaded us that we needed to be transformed and to depart from that life which bears the fruit of death instead of the fruit of life (Rom. 6:21, 7:5).
- B. Foolish. This word can mean unintelligent or dull-witted, but foolish is the best translation because there are very worldly-intelligent people who are also foolish. They reject the birthright of heaven for a mess of worldly stew that will end in destruction. They believe they came from nothing, are going nowhere, and are ultimately accountable to no one. They believe historical facts are pretend (about Israel and Jesus) and that pretend is reality (they pretend that abortion does not kill a living *homo sapiens*, that ‘talk’ through diplomacy will change people, that life consists of entertainment, etc.).
- C. Disobedient. Those who are disobedient simply cannot be persuaded of the right course of action. This starts at home (2 Tim. 3:2). Paul did not want to be disobedient to what God told him to do (Acts 26:19). The ungodly are disobedient (Titus 1:16). But God turns disobedient people into righteous people (Luke 1:17).
- D. Deceived. We were, as all people, led astray, wandering from the truth of God. One definition is interesting: “to wander about aimlessly.”¹ Example: the idea that humans are basically good and will do what is best. This is not only foolish thinking, but also deceived because it is nowhere close to true. The deception arises

¹ BDAG, s.v. *πλανᾶω*, definition 2.

because of wishful thinking, or lack of information or purposeful ignorance or something else. Not only is it wishful thinking; it is also dangerous to the well-being of large communities of people. Deception ends in destruction.

- E. Serving lusts and pleasures. Unbelievers are slaves of all kinds of delights and cravings, passions and desires. These are not just sexual desires, because they are more than that. They are *sensual* desires, having to do with the senses. All kinds of pleasure rules the roost. One example is willingly choosing to be lazy and sit in front of the TV and computer instead of working all day. That is a lust and pleasure. The millions of people who are able-bodied on food stamps are an example. That program breeds more of the pleasure-mindset. There are a manifold number of other such things that I am sure you can imagine. Check yourself to see if you are a slave of these kinds of things in entertainment, ease, etc.
- F. Malice and envy. Here is a callous disregard for the image of God. It is evil intention. It is depraved mean-spiritedness toward others. It is jealousy of their qualities or things or stations in life. Paul says that we were people “spending our lives” in these ways.
- G. Hateful and hating one another. This is tied closely to the malice and envy above. It is loathing directed at the person, and from him toward others. “Hated by others and hating one another,” translates the ESV very well. This is not a Christian “one another” command!
- H. “Formerly” or “at one time” we were *all* marked by these characteristics. Not a one of us—no matter how young we were born from above—can say that we were not any of these things. No matter how “benign” we think we were (or are), we are disobedient and deceived and foolish and the like. Check it out—is there anyone who honestly can say that they were guilty of none of these sins? And if so, how is your humility?

Gloriously, and by God’s grace, we are not like this now! And that is the reason why we cannot live that way anymore. We have been transformed by the kindness and love of Jesus and the work of the Spirit and of God the Father (2:4-7). We are reminded, just like we were at 2:11, to live godly.

Conclusion

A side-by-side chart shows the contrast head-to-head. I have added a couple of things in brackets that are not addressed directly in these verses.

Before Salvation	After Salvation
Foolish	Humble, [wise]
Disobedient	Subject to rulers, obey authority
Deceived	Remind them [of sound doctrine]
Serving lusts and pleasures	Ready for every good work
Malice and envy	Peaceable, gentle, humble
Hateful and hating one another	Speak evil of no one

Finally, consider 1 Peter 4:1-3. That's the message today: we have spent enough of our life in sin. Time to move on for Christ.

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