

Titus: Setting Things Straight: From Chaos to Christ Doing Good in a Bad World (Titus 3:1-15)

July 29, 2007

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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.—Titus 3:8

Introduction

The Cretans were once a people of chaos and the Apostle Paul was urging Titus to lead them to become a people of fruitfulness as they devote themselves to doing good works through grace. The focus is on the good works done in the world and not just in the church. We are to demonstrate the grace of salvation by living our lives through Christ-like interactions with others.

Our new lives as Christians demonstrate the beauty of Jesus (2:10) to a dying world. We must engage the world with both compassion and character. The Cretans were wild and rebellious. The religious people were argumentative and belligerent. The Roman Empire government was corrupt, oppressive and imposed heavy taxation on all non-Roman citizens.

Jesus urged us to engage the world in a strategic way, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16).

Paul weaves a missionary thread throughout this passage. Our approach is not to criticize the ills of the city but rather to bring healing and wholeness through Christ.

Seattle is in what experts refer to as the None Zone. The defining feature of religion in the Pacific Northwest is that most of the population is unchurched." Fewer people in Oregon, Washington, and Alaska affiliate with a religious institution than in any other region of the United States. More people here claim "none" when asked their religious identification. Unlike any other region, the single largest segment of the Pacific Northwest's population is composed of those who identify with a religious tradition but have no affiliation with a religious community. [Patricia O'Connell Killen, "Patterns of the Past, Prospects for the Future: Religion in the None Zone" in *Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Northwest: The None Zone* (Religion by Region Series), edited by Patricia O'Connell Killen and Mark Silk, AltaMira Press, 2004, p.9]

While Christianity is still ranked highest of all major religions, atheism/agnosticism/non-specified theism is third behind Islam with 1.1 billion adherents.
(http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html)

How do we engage the world?

We Cannot Fight With:

1. **Politics** – Tim Keller said, "All problems, personal or social come from a failure to use the gospel in a radical way, to get 'in line with the truth of the gospel' (Gal.2:14). All pathologies [abnormalities, disease] in

the church [and city] and all its ineffectiveness come from a failure to use the gospel in a radical way. We believe that if the gospel is expounded and applied in its fullness in any church [or city], that church [or city] will look very unique."

(www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/centrality.pdf) Another man said, "When Christians become political, sinners become the enemy instead of the mission field." [John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Titus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), p. 138.]

2. **Morality** – Grace transforms us, not a willful choice to be good or an evaluative declaration of your goodness. Morality is a thief of the gospel.
3. **Behavior-Modification** - Verses 2-3 remind us that we're to be like Jesus for the best reason of all: because He reached down in mercy to save us from a life of sin. Moreover, He did it not by reforming us, but by regenerating us, making us alive again. We were dead in sin, not just slightly ill.
4. **Religion**
5. **Education**

If we want to glorify God and make Jesus beautiful to a lost world, we have to remember four things.

1. Remember the character of Christians (3:1-2)

Titus 3:1-2, *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 quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people ().*

- a. Be submissive to rulers – Cretans were known for their defiance. At one time, the island had been a haven for pirates. Not only are Christians to obey civil laws, they are to look to be contributors to the city in which they live. no exceptions are given.
- b. Be obedient to appointed authorities – This was a day of Caesars, armies and coliseums for fighting. This also includes being a church that loves the city, lives in the city and legally cooperates with the city. It means that church business operates in the light and not in the dark. Finances are upright and stewardship is a serious matter. A church elder and a church must be above reproach. The reputation of the gospel and the authority of God's word are at stake.

Romans 13:1-6, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed."

- c. Be ready for every good work – cooperating in those matters that affect the whole community. A cooperative kingdom building among churches and community agencies; serving for the common good of the city.

Jer. 29:5-7, "Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

Jonathan Edwards said in a sermon on 1 Corinthians 13, "The spirit of charity [Christian love] disposes a person to public spiritedness. A man of right spirit is not a man of narrow and private views, but is greatly interested in the good of the community in which he belongs and particularly in the city or village in which he resides. A man of truly Christian spirit will be earnest for the good of his country and of the place of his residence and will be disposed to lay himself out for its improvement." (Quoted in a sermon by John Piper)

- d. Refuse to treat others with contempt.
- e. Be friendly and peaceful to others (not quarrelsome or belligerent). One commentator said, "We must not become so engulfed in trying to force social behavior to conform to our standards that we become enemies of those our Lord has called us to win to Himself. We must reject sin and never compromise God's standards of righteousness. But we also must never engage in defamation and denigration of the lost sinners who make up our corrupt culture."
- f. Be gentle towards others (fair, longsuffering, reasonable) – not returning evil for evil.
- g. Be considerate of others (meekness, humility) – We are to show all kinds of humility before all kinds of people.

Outcome: Demonstration of good works in pagan world for the glory of God (c.f. 2:13-14)

2. Remember your former sinful condition (3:3)

Titus 3:3, *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.*

- At one time before you were saved, you were stupid, stubborn, duped by sin, driven by your natural lusts, going around with a chip on your shoulder and being hateful.
 - a. Have compassion on those who are in the condition you once were.
 - b. Have hope in their salvation through Jesus.
 - c. Have daily dependence because you are drawn toward the vomit of your past without the power of the Holy Spirit living through you.

3. Remember your salvation (3:4-7)

Titus 3:4-7, *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 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, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our*

Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

- It is not dependant upon you. He saved us and we became:
 - a. Saved by His work and not our own (Romans 5:18-19)
 - b. Regenerated - cleansed of our sin into a new life (John 3:5; 1 John 2:29)
 - c. Renewed - complete transformation because of regeneration (2 Corinthians 5:17).
 - d. Heirs of God (Romans 8:16-17; 1 Peter 1:3-4).

4. Remember your mission (3:8-11)

Titus 3:8-11, 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. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. 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.

- Our mission is to point people in our society to Jesus. It is authenticated by the order in our church (1:1-16), our relationships inside the church (2:1-15) and our behavior in a corrupted system (3:1-7).
 - a. Stay focused on demonstrating good works (attitudes, actions and words of Jesus) before a corrupt world.
 - b. Take the message of Christ's atoning sacrifice for our sin and the effects of washing and renewal to the world.
 - c. Do not get distracted by the morons proliferating useless discussions about minor issues.
 - d. Your mission is the mission of Jesus who was sent on mission from God.

John 17:14-18, "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."
- God's plan of salvation calls for strong churches that proclaim and live the reality of the transforming gospel so that Jesus is attractive to the lost.

Conclusion

Paul ends his letter with deep pastoral love and care.

Titus 3:12-15, *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. All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.*

Next Week: Nehemiah 12:1-26