

The Pastor's Call
Titus 3:1-8

Matthew 11:1-19
Matthew 11:20-30
Responsive Psalms 67

This morning we are going to be in Titus chapter 3, the last chapter of this little letter that Paul wrote to Titus as he was to minister to the Church at Crete. There has been a lot packed into this little letter, both from a theological point of view, and a practical. Really, the argument here is that our theology is what drives our daily lives, Paul always juxtaposes the grace and mercy of God with the commandments of the law. What you believe about God, his Son, and righteousness will drive a certain lifestyle as we talked about last week. You are either seeking justification, or you have already been justified. Where you fall in on that scale will massively effect your motivations, and how to live your life. In the text this morning we get a testimony of Paul, as he talks a bit about his own experience, and how it has driven him in this ministry, we can see why in all of his texts he is adamant that righteousness before God comes through Christ alone, by God alone, through Faith alone.

And it is this which is our driving force as believers to live a life worthy of our calling. God did not call us to faith and redemption to leave us to our own devices and rebellion. No, he changes the hearts of his people, changes the desires, where as we were predisposed to seek after self, in this new birth we seek after Christ. And it is this drive, which encourages us, and pushes us forward to follow him, to work the good works that Paul talks about, to be reverent, sober-minded, loving and patient. Because we know God is all those things, and he has shown us himself, and his love through his Son. So as we will see this morning, the Pastor's role in the ministry of the church, is to remind the people of these things. Exhort and encourage the people of God to live in a way that their lives reflect Christ, and that life is a ministry, a testimony to the goodness, and mercy of God.

This morning we will be looking at verses 1-7 as we read Paul's summary of his own life change in God. Having himself once been a law keeper, by the grace of God having been confronted by God on the road to Damascus, in a revelation that it is God, by his grace and mercy through his Son that we are found righteous. The very faith he was persecuting, in the name of God, believing them to be blasphemers against God, were in fact the true promised Israel justified through the blood of Christ. When we understand Paul's conversion, we can see why in all of his texts he is so adamant against the teachings of the law. For that was once him, and it drove him to beat, imprison and have God's people killed. But look what Christ had done, he took a man whose life was defined by the law, who strived to be worthy, and righteous by defending the law against who he believed were blasphemers, who actively sought out the followers of Christ seeking to silence them, and God revealed the truth to him, turned him into one of his greatest apostles.

So let us go ahead and read this account this morning, imploring Titus to remind the people in their conduct as Paul speaks of himself as an example. (read Titus 3:1-7) The very first thing that Paul says to Titus here, is imploring him to remind them, in this case to be subject to rulers and authorities but the general concept of reminding is running through this entire letter. One of the roles of a pastor is to remind the people of God's teaching, of his nature, and our relationship to him. Much of what we do week from week here is nothing new, these are all things that each and every one of us likely knows and believes, but we are called to teach, and the preach, reminding one another of the gospel, of the hope we have in Christ, and of God's love for us.

In this chapter here, Paul is asking Titus to challenge all members in the church in Crete in their own relation and impact on the wider society. He says, that they are to be subject to the ruling authority, not be rebellious, not rise up, but to be meek, humble, and upright. As scripture says, the world will hate you because they hated Christ first, and yet our calling is to witness and tell this gospel message the two seem to be at odds with one another, for people who hate you, will not listen to you. So I think in many ways to mitigate that hatred, to avoid persecution, throughout scripture there is a call to heed the authorities and rulers, looking to make peace, and be at peace so that the gospel message is not hindered. Quite a few years back now, in China there was a Pastor there who took part in the Hong Kong protests, He became a prominent figure in the Hong Kong independence movement. China allowed for government sanctioned churches, they were of the belief that religious people were quiet, and good followers. That changed, this Pastor was publicly arrested in front of his church during a worship service. China's perception of the Christian religion began to change, so they tightened control, and shut down many churches..in one case they began bulldozing over a building while the service was taking place because they had told that church they must shut down.

My point being here, is that the focus of the Pastor was wrong, on one level you could argue he had a right to protest, but it overshadowed his ministry, it became what his ministry was about, it was no longer about Christ, but about rising up against tyranny. And the Chinese Government shut it down. I think that is one of the main reasons we see Paul mention a few times in his writings to obey the governing authorities, and those who rule over you. Because our mission is the gospel, our goal is to glorify God through the teaching and preaching of his word, not overthrow governments. Far too many so called churches align themselves in the political sphere, their message is a social message about standing up against those who they are in disagreement with. With little mention, or regard to the actual gospel. I just read a few weeks ago, one of these so called pastors had an entire message on abortion and how Christ would have been leading women to the clinics, because that is the loving thing to do. And she added to the beatitudes, saying blessed are those who have an abortion. Not only does this go against everything in scripture and is a sick twisting of the concept of what love is, this is a false teacher who has hijacked a church and made it about being her own political grandstand. Seeding dissension, and unrest in the community

In the time of Christ, and following with the Apostles a big part of the religious call was to uprising against Rome. But Paul says, no, our focus is not to be on this life, but on the next, we are not to be making soldiers in the war against rulers and kings, but against sin and Satan. History tell us that the Cretans were likewise very resistant to the Roman Empire, there were wars and conflicts, and the historians Plutarch and Polybius wrote about the Cretan's unhappiness with Roman rule. But Paul says, no, as much as it is reliant upon you, live at peace with all men. The issue that we have as Christians, is we are in the world, but not of it. Therefore we should be a good influence within our wider society, known as a people of peace, not given to extremes, with our hearts and minds focused upon Christ, and his work.

As Dr. Richison said in his commentary "Although God is sovereign over the universe, He delegated representative governments to have authority over national entities. God designed governments to operate within territorial confines as national entities. As such, they are divine institutions who represent His purpose over a territory on earth. An Individual nation is to keep the

social order. God deemed that a one world government is not good for society, and God is also in the business of judging those nations.

As it is written in the book of Daniel, (2:20-21) Blessed be the name of God forever and ever. For wisdom and might are his, and he changes the times and the seasons; he removes kings and raises up kings; and gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.”

A believer's personal freedom does not justify anarchy against government. The commands to submit and obey, however do not imply blind unquestioning obedience either. If government standards are in opposition to God then we are to give God the priority. God never implies unconditional allegiance to government, our first loyalty is to him, and second to the state. A few examples we have of this are found in the book of Acts. Acts 4:18 “So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Acts 5:29 “but Peter and the other apostles answered and said “we ought to obey God rather than men. Acts 5:40 “And they agreed with him, and when they had called the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

The focus of their so called rebellion, was when it hindered the gospel. It is all about this gospel message, living in peace with the governing body for the sake of the gospel, and standing against the oppression of that same governing body if it seeks to suppress the gospel. They did not rise up, nor call to overthrow the government, but instead continued teaching and preaching as they were before, defying the order, but not calling for an uprising. Again we are to live in this world but not of it, our answers are not found in our government, nor our politics but in God. For he is the one who causes governments to rise and fall at his will, for his purpose. So we pray that whatever that may be the gospel will not be hindered.

In verse 2 Paul shifts back, from the governing authorities, to society at large. He says, “speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. Again these are the things that Titus is to remind the people of the Cretan Church. This standard isn't only for those inside the church, to treat one another in such a way, but it goes for those outside as well and it is living in such a way that reflects the message we have. No one will listen to an angry, slanderer, person, and our calling is to tell, to go forth and minister the gospel. As Christians we have an obligation to keep our relationship with non-Christians with godly standards. Our lives are a reflection of the reality of Christ within us, and we should strive to not taint that with our own sinful propensities. As believers we are to exercise certain qualities of character, that which we inherit as children of God, toward the unbelieving world in order that we may reach them for Christ.

The qualities that Paul tells Titus to remind the believers to seek after, does not mean that we Christians are push overs or ignorant that people can manipulate or take advantage of us, but that we present ourselves in a gospel focused manner, having our lives reflect our message with consistency, and gentleness. Our civilization here in the west has all but left the idea of God, and if God enters the picture it is often not the God of the bible. The new God's in our society is materialism, hedonism, self

promotion and self worth. It is a humanistic belief, that we are at the center of it all, and each of us are the main characters in a story who all others must bow down to. Or religion has become politics, both the left and right are guilty of this, putting hope in the political system to resolve concerns that are seen in society.

Now I am not saying to be disengaged, but simply that our hope is not in the system, but it is in God who is sovereign over that system, who raises up rulers, and tears down rulers. The answer is not to enact change through political reformation, but true and lasting change through the gospel. Nowhere in scripture will you find justification to overthrow a government.

That is because our warfare is spiritual, and as such requires spiritual tools and weapons which are found in God's word. God's answer, and his call to us is to seek regeneration, not reformation. Go, be a witness to the hope that we have in Christ, so that others may know, and others may believe. And it is by this in which people are changed, and when people are changed, society and culture follows. The real issue is then, that we are to be about this ministry and not seeking political reformation. This ministry attacks pagan values at the heart, anything else is just painting over rot, political reformation is not the answer for it doesn't get at the core issue of the nature of man. We do of course have a role as citizens within this nation, and we should of course do what we can with that role, but our primary goal isn't Christian Reconstructionism, or to create a Christian governmental system as much as it is to teach and preach the word of God, and we can, as much as within our power to do so, use the tools that we have as citizens of this nation, to vote, to petition, that our right to speak such things, and minister to others is not impeded.

In verse 2 Paul also calls for Titus, to who all humility to all men, another way to translate is to say to be meek. A meek person is not a weak person, but rather a person who accepts all of God's dealings with them as good. Enduring anything that might come his or her way because they accept that God is in control of all things, not fighting against God on any issue, acknowledging self as sinful with no right to look down upon or be above any other. Meekness is being unselfish, everything that we have and are is from God's and his grace toward us. It is a realization that God owes us nothing, we deserve nothing, and what we have is a gift from God. Therefore we don't deal with God, or others in a merit based system. Law breeds merit, do good, gain good, but God operates in Grace, he does good not because of our goodness, that we deserve it, but out of his love and mercy he gives it to the unworthy.

A meek person doesn't try to make deals with God, because they view themselves as unworthy before God. This does not mean that we have no regard for ourselves as some religions teach, but it is that we do not assert ourselves for our own sakes. Christ was this type of meekness, but no one would say that he was weak, or that he let others take advantage of him. Yet, having all power and the resources of heaven, with Angels at his call, he suffered and died at the hands of those who sought his life, not thinking of himself, but of us. Giving of himself for our gain, this is the definition of meekness, and the example for our own lives as his followers. By extension Titus was to be this example to the people, speak the things that are true, reminding the people to be subject to those who God has put over them, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle showing all meekness to all men. In Chapter 1 we saw the traits that Titus was to look for in those who should be appointed as leaders and teachers within the church, in chapter 2 we see the exhortation to the members to live lives worthy of this calling, the older being an example to the younger, and all people living in grace toward one another as God has given each individually.

And finally here, we see how Titus is to act, how he is to be an example to all. He was to come in and clean out the false teachers, but not with violence and anger, but by showing the people the power of God through right teaching, and a Christ like demeanor. This meekness that we are called to be, and that Paul says should be a defining feature in Titus' ministry there comes from God who is working within us.

This trait does not come natural to mankind, but it is God who works in us to will and to do as such. What happens within us, is more important then what happens to us. And Titus was to teach this by example, as we are to likewise do so today.

I fully intended when I started preparing this for this week to go a bit further into this chapter, getting into Paul's own character and explanation of himself before Christ's intervention in his own life, but only made it to verse 2. So next week we will pick up here at verse 3 and continue Paul's instruction to Titus of his own conduct as we look at the example that Paul sets forth for him by sharing his own life. Showing the reality that all righteousness, all meekness, all goodness comes from God, not our ability, not ourselves, but from God and God alone.