

Titus 3:1-7 – March 28, 2021

Much Needed Reminders

JD Farag

Good morning and welcome to those of you that are online. This is our second service on Sunday mornings. We have two services: the first of which is our Bible Prophecy Update, and now, the second service is our verse-by-verse study through the Bible. We find ourselves currently in the Book of Titus, and our text today is going to be Chapter 3:1-7. If you don't mind, we're going to get right to it.

I'll ask those of you that are here, if you're able, to stand; you can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is fine. The Apostle Paul is writing to Titus by the Holy Spirit, and verse 1, Chapter 3 says "remind." Can you hang on to that word? We're going to come back to it. "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle towards everyone. At one time [verse 3], 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.

But [verse 4] when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom [verse 6] He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ, our Savior. So that [verse 7] having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Wow!

Let's pray; if you would, join with me, please. Lord, thank You for Your Word and this portion that we have here before us today in Your Word. Lord, that's why we're here today. We're here because we hunger and thirst to hear Your Word as You speak into our lives. Lord, we readily admit that we need the Holy Spirit though to give us ears to hear, eyes to see, hearts to receive because absent the Holy Spirit getting our attention and keeping our attention.

That's not up to me; that's the Holy Spirit that does that. You have to anoint this teaching of Your Word, but Lord, when You do that, we don't want to miss anything. The enemy does; the enemy wants us to be distracted, have our minds wander, so we miss what it is that You have for us today. Lord, we pray that You would speak as only You can in that still, small, refining voice of the Holy Spirit In Jesus' name. Amen and amen. You can be seated, thank you.

All right. I want to talk with you about this first word in the first verse of Chapter 3, the word "remind." And here's why. In the text before us today, the Apostle Paul, by the Holy Spirit, writing to Titus, tells him first and foremost to "remind" the people. I chose the title of "Much-Needed Reminders" because I found 7 such reminders in our text, actually, 8. But as we'll see here shortly, this eighth one comes packaged with the "how" of the Holy Spirit.

That's what I love about the Word of God. It's the "how" of the Holy Spirit that enables us and empowers us to do the "what" of the Holy Word. We were talking about this in the Prophecy Update today, that we would have ears to hear what the Spirit of God is saying through the Word of God, to the people of God. That's how it works. It's the Holy Spirit speaking into our lives, not just the Word of God, but the "how." God doesn't, thankfully, just leave us there and say, thus it has been spoken. Thus, it must be done. See ya! No, it's God's calling, and God's enabling. God will never command or call or exhort or tell us anything without also enabling us to do it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's get started. We've got a way to go here. We've got to get to work, so let's roll up our arm sleeves. Of course, we're all wearing short... No, never mind. I know it's cold in here, right? I never ask you that because I know if I were to ask and say, how many of you are cold? 50% of your hands will go up. If I ask, how many of you are hot? 50% of your hands go up. I give up.

[#1] The first one is in the first part of verse 1, and it's that of "Respecting Authority." Here, Paul starts off by telling Titus to remind the people to be subject to and respectful of those in positions of authority over us. That's a biggie. That's a good place to start, wouldn't you agree? Would you also agree that we live in a day and age where there's no respect for authority? Not only is there no respect for authority, there is wholesale disrespect and disdain for authority.

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Again, we need to keep in mind the word "reminds" because this is nothing new. Titus is being told to remind those in Crete of all of these things. They needed to be reminded of this. I would suggest that so too do we need to be reminded of this. Show respect for authority. When you disrespect those in authority over you, you dishonor God.

[#2] The second one really ties into the first one. It's in the second part of verse 1, and it's that of "Living Obediently." Paul, about respecting authority, says that, really, the Christian life should be marked by one's obedience. Be obedient, obey the laws. Now, let me hasten to say that this is not to say that we're to obey the laws or those in authority when doing so would mean that we disobey God.

Think about in the Book of Acts when the disciples said, hey if we are given this choice that you're basically giving us and forcing us to stop preaching in the name of Jesus Christ, we cannot do that. We have to obey God rather than man. By the way, this is probably important to mention as well. Please don't miss this. We do respect authority, but you never obey those in authority over you if by doing so would mean that you would have to disobey God or His Word. So be very careful with this one. This is a biblical truth. Dare I say that has been taken to an unbiblical extreme if I can say it like that.

[#3] This brings us to the third one in the third part of verse 1, and it's to "Do Good." Interesting to note that Paul doesn't say "be good." Do you notice that he says, "Do Good?" Do good: What do you mean? Well, do good and be at the ready whatever the situation. The Christian should be the first in line whenever the Lord presents the opportunity to do what's right, to do good because that brings God honor, that brings God glory.

Let me flip that around. I don't want to, but maybe I need to. Know this, that when we don't do the right thing, when we don't do good by someone, not only does God take notice, but God will not bless that. God can't bless that.

In our study through the Old Testament going through the kings, one of the things that just kind of leaped off the pages of our Bibles was this reality of how many wicked and evil kings Israel had in their history. So many kings, king after king; they did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, wicked reigns. Some of these kings were so evil, so wicked, God just killed them. That will take care of that.

Do you know that there were only nine good kings who did good? That did that which was right in the sight of the Lord out of all of the kings? And none of them were in the northern tribes of Israel. They were all in southern Judah. Only nine kings out of all of the kings did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.

[#4] I need to spend a little bit of time on this one. It's in the first part of verse 2. Paul says, remind them to "Slander No One." Bear with me on this, please. I truly do not know if it's possible to overstate the importance of this. How serious this is, this matter of slandering, gossiping.

In the epistles, one of the things that is really striking to me is when Paul makes one of his lists... We're going to see one of those here at the conclusion of our time together in God's Word. Do you know those lists where Paul goes on to list murderers, adulterers? I mean, whoa, well, I haven't killed anybody. I'm not a murderer; I'm not an adulterer. But then he also includes in that same list, rising to the same level as a murderer: Gossipers. I was doing good with murderer, adulterer: not guilty.

Actually, you are because if you hate somebody in your heart, you're murdering them. If you lust after someone in your heart, you're committing adultery, so you're busted either way. But isn't that interesting that gossiping, slandering would rise to the level of being included in a list of that nature? It's actually one of the things that God hates, we're told in the Book of Proverbs.

The list is quite interesting again: Seven things, actually, six, but the seventh is an abomination. You know what the seventh one is? The one who sews discord and slander amongst the brethren. Here's

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a thought as to why it is that God takes this so seriously. Why it is that slandering and gossiping and talking stink about people is so serious in the sight of the Lord? He was the first recipient of it.

Think about it: In heaven, Lucifer, the first slanderer, the accuser of the brethren who scandalously divided the heavenly host, that's why, because of what it does. Why is that particular one on that list in Proverbs an abomination? Because of what it does to God's people.

You know where Jesus said that He hates divorce? Have you ever asked yourself the question of why? Please know that He doesn't hate the divorced. No, He hates divorce. Why does He hate divorce? Well, a couple of reasons, chief of which is that the marriage is a microcosm of our relationship with Jesus Christ as the bridegroom, supremely. That's why.

But here's a more practical reason. God hates divorce because of what divorce does to the divorced. God hates division because of what division does in His church. That's why He hates it. That's why it's an abomination. Turn with me and join me in Psalm 101. I want to read verse 5, and there's a reason I'm asking you to turn there because this has got fire coming off of the pages of your Bible.

Listen to this: "Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, he will I destroy." Whoa! "The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure." Wait a minute. At first read, this is almost disproportionate. You're going to destroy somebody that talks stink about his neighbor parking in his driveway? Isn't that a little... Are you going to destroy him? Isn't that disproportionate? I'm using that extreme illustration for lack of a better one. Why? Here's what I'm thinking: God has to. He has to destroy the slanderer before the slanderer destroys.

Can I say the same thing again in a different way? You see this, by the way, replete throughout the Old Testament. This is where people wrongly portray the God of the Old Testament as a judgmental, fire and brimstone God. I think that's a misrepresentation. It's not God's will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. How many times do we read prior to the destruction where God gave them so much time in His long suffering, slow to anger, loving kindness and mercy, and they would not repent?

We saw this on Thursday night in Isaiah, Chapter 9, a very interesting chapter. We're going to pick it up in Chapter 10, Lord willing, on Thursday. But here Isaiah is prophesying the coming judgment on Judah. The Assyrian army is going to invade Judah, and he says to them this could have been avoided, but you turned away from Me instead of turning to Me. So, I had to judge you and allow this to happen to you. Four times we read this: "My hand is stretched out still." That's the mercy of God.

Now some have suggested that actually, this is His hand of judgment, the heavy hand of the Lord. That doesn't fit with the mercy of God because chapter 9 just so happens to be that very famous chapter where we read this prophecy from the Prophet Isaiah that "Unto us, a Child is born and a Son is given." We love to quote it, sing it during Christmas, but that was the promise of the coming Savior, Savior who by grace would save them if they would believe in Him. That's the mercy of God.

In other words, you've slapped My hand away, but My hand is stretched out still. Never imagine for a moment that the judgment of God when He pulls back and allows the destruction to ensue, and it will always ensue. It always ensues with pride; it always comes before the fall and haughtiness before destruction. But before that, God in His mercy, His love, His grace, will give us more than enough time to come to our senses and repent and turn back to Him.

One last thing, and I doubt you'll be surprised that I'm going to bring it up, but I have to, again. I really don't want to, and the Lord knows my heart. But on social media, from Christians and dare I say, sad to say, pastors who slander others. God takes notice of that - those social media posts. You're slandering, you're creating division, and that's an abomination in the sight of the Lord. Let's move on. Somebody here is saying, thank you, Jesus, let's move on.

[#5] The fifth one is in the second part of verse 2, and it's "Be Peaceable." Now here Paul talks about being peaceable, which carries with it the idea of being a peacemaker and living at peace with

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everyone inasmuch as it lies within you. This is actually what Paul wrote to the Romans in Chapter 12:18.

He says, "If it is possible..." There are some times where it's just not possible but, "If it's possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Can I take it a step further and suggest that this would also imply that we're to make peace, inasmuch as we're able, if it's possible, as far as it depends on us?

I think it was Oswald Chambers who said it. It's always stuck with me. I never forgot it, and the Lord has reminded me of it more times than I care to mention. But he said, "It's not, have you been wronged, it's have you wronged?" That changes everything. It changes the whole complexion of everything. Yeah, but they really wronged me. No, no, no, no, no, did you wrong them? Well, I'm not going to make it right with them. They need to make it right with me.

Are we talking marriage here? Can we talk about that? We're going to anyway just because of that look that you just gave me. How about that: The husband, the wife out of fellowship with each other for days. Oh, we call it the "silent treatment." They need to come to me. They need to make a right with me because they wronged me. Oh, really?

Guys, can we just talk for a second? Wives, just give us a moment here, and don't elbow your husbands when I say this. We talk about, I'm the spiritual leader in my home. Okay, and rightfully so. But why is it, guys, that we (I'll put myself in there, my wife's here, I have to), but why is it that we want to take the spiritual leadership in all of the areas except taking the lead in this? Stay with me on this.

If you're the spiritual leader, why don't you take the lead and go make peace with your wife? Yeah, but she's the one... That woman you gave me, God. You know that, right, that Adamic sin nature? I tell you, it's chilling, really, when you think about it. I mean, it's humorous if you want to think of it like that. But when Eve was deceived, and then God confronts them.

First, Adam, did you notice that? Check me on this. I hope I'm right. He goes to Adam first, hey, Adam. Wait a minute, what are you talking about? Eve's the one that was deceived. I know, but we're not talking about her right now. We're talking about you. What's up? What's his response? It's the woman You gave me. At first read, you look at that, and you say he's blaming her. No, he's not; he's blaming God for giving him her. Is this getting a little bit too convicting? Then, of course, Eve blames the serpent, and I guess it's God's fault.

I'm so sorry, but it's not "have I been wronged," it's "have I wronged?" By the way, as we're going to see here at the end, you are wrong, too. Do you know that saying: "it takes two to tango"? It does. Well, let's keep moving.

The third part of verse 2: "Be Considerate." This is a word; I mean, how rare is this today? If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the rarest qualities in the life of a Christian today, and shame on us for this, it would be being considerate. It would have to be at the top of the list.

We're inconsiderate. We don't consider others. We only think about ourselves. I mean, let's be honest. Who's the one person you think about the most? You. When you take selfies, you keep taking them until you look good, and that's a good picture because you look good in it. Everybody else's got their eyes closed, but no, this is the one, because you're... Oh, I struck a chord with that one. I'm trying to update my illustrations if you haven't noticed.

Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility (now listen to this) consider one another as more important than yourself." Stop right there. I could probably consider considering one another as important as me. But that's not what it says. The word "more" is there. Okay, now that's a problem. Wait, I consider you more important than me?

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That's the other way around. I consider myself more important than you. I don't consider you at all. In fact, I only think about myself, and that is selfishness, and it's conceit. Some of these words are words that are not used much in our vernacular today. I know the word "abomination," as we just discussed, is not a word you hear much today. But what about the word "conceit" or "conceited"? It's almost a given, sadly. It's the norm, and we are just acclimating ourselves to the norm of the day, and may it never be so, may it never be so. Considering others, be considerate.

"Be Gentle:" fourth part of verse 2. I think you would agree with me when I say that gentleness toward others is among the most attractive, if not the most attractive, qualities in a Christian's life. In the Gospels, I think about how gentle Jesus was. I think about it all the time, and even today in the Prophecy Update in the Old Testament, just how gracious God was with His people.

We were talking about Thomas and the Gospel of John today in the Prophecy Update. We affectionately refer to him as "Doubting Thomas." When the disciples tell him, "We saw the Lord," he's like, "I'm not going to believe it till I see it." Because seeing is believing. "Until I see his nail prints in His hands and put my hand in His side."

So, eight days go by, and Jesus comes back. This time Thomas is with them. He wasn't with them the first time the disciples told him they had seen Jesus and didn't believe it. So, Jesus goes to Thomas, and he says, "Touch the nail prints in My hands. Put your hand in my side. Do you see now? Do you believe now?" And Thomas is like, "Oh, Lord, oh Lord, it's You, it's You."

Then Jesus says this to Thomas, and never imagine that there is disdain or disgust in the voice of the Savior. That's not the tone at all. It's with a compassion and a kindness and a gentleness that He says, "Thomas, you have seen and believed. Blessed are those who will believe but have not seen."

It's kind of like to the disciples when Jesus would say to the disciples, "Oh, ye of little faith." Never imagine that Jesus would say it with a harsh tone like, "Oh, ye of little faith! What's the matter with you?" [using rough tone of voice] No. Man, that messed up a couple of people-maybe. I'm sorry for the drama on that, but do you see the Lord like that? I hope you don't because He's not like that.

He is the epitome of gentleness and kindness. Imagine his tone was, "Why is your faith so little when your God is so big? Why did you doubt?" Out of compassion, just very gentle, very compassionate, very kind, just with grace and mercy and patience - always so patient. We're so not. That's not on the list, by the way, so you can relax. Well, I'm so glad it's not because if it were, that's a whole sermon unto itself - patience.

But I think patience is roommates with gentleness, right? Could you imagine if God had a short fuse, as we like to say? So, you go to pray, "Our father which art in heaven." "What?!!" "Oh! Is this a bad time?" I know you're busy. You've got universes to run and all that. I just thought I'd ask for a parking spot at Costco Iwilei, that's all." He's very gentle.

Can we just put considerate back in the mix here, if you don't mind? We might as well use driving and parking and traffic because that's, as I've confessed and repented, an area for me - an issue. It's sin, but I like to call it an issue. I just have this one issue. No, it's sin. It's sin. You're in traffic, oh, you're more important than the person that just cut you off. Where you have to go is more important than where the person has to go that just cut you off.

I've shared this where you have those recurring nightmares. You know, when you're a kid, it's always that you show up at school in your pajamas, and all of your friends laugh at you. That's a nightmare... did you have those, or is it just me? Okay, never mind, just work with me here. Do you know what my recurring nightmare is now? I'm driving to church, and I'm running late, in a hurry, and somebody pulls in and cuts me off. A messenger from Satan sent to buffet me and slow me down. Now I'm in the flesh; it didn't take very long.

I was in the Spirit when I left the house. Praise you, Lord, thank you, Jesus. Worship music on, right? Hallelujah... And you're looking at them to see if they're looking at you in the rearview mirror

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because you want them to. Oh, you've done this too. Then when you're able to, you're going to pass them, but you're not just going to pass them. No, you're going to pass them and be sure that when you're parallel with them, you look at them to make sure they know they cut you off!

And you speed away to church, pull in the parking lot, and put the smile back on, praise the Lord. This is my recurring nightmare. I pull into the parking spot, and who should pull up next to me? A visitor and they get out of the car like, "Oh, you go to this church?" "No, worse than that, I'm the pastor of this church." That's my recurring nightmare. How inconsiderate and impatient of you. Oh, by the way, that wasn't very godly and gentle and gracious of you. I am so convicted.

We're going to move on to this last one in verses 3-7. I'm choosing and using "Being Humble" for a number of reasons. Not the least of which is that humility is the "how," and I'll explain what I mean by that.

It's interesting to me that Paul would sort of turn this sharp corner from, in verses 1-2, listing these things that Titus is to remind them of, and then go on in verses 3-7 to remind him of this. What? Oh, remember what you were like? Remember before you were saved? Remember what you were like? Oh, that's very humbling. That's the point. That's the "how," and here's how I get to the "how." Humility is the foundation upon which all of this is built, which is why God will deem it fit to humble us by reminding us.

Let's go back to the marriage examples. Husband, you're harsh, not gentle with your wife, unloving, impatient, inconsiderate, the list goes on and on. You hold a grudge; give her the silent treatment, so what does God do? Well, He sends you an email with a lot of attachments. In fact, there are so many attachments it has to be uploaded to a drive with your name on it, to remind you, to humble you.

Oh, really, I see that you're being harsh and inconsiderate and impatient and unloving. Do I need to remind you of what I've forgiven you of? Oh, I see that you're withholding forgiveness. Let me... I just pushed send. Can you open it up, refresh, open it up? It's going to take a little while, depending on the speed of your Internet service provider, to download those huge files of all the things that you were! But are now not because of Me. Oh, yeah, that'll do it.

It's when we remember what we were before we were saved that brings about this much-needed humility in our lives. Humility is the key. Humility, the Proverb says, is the beginning of wisdom, and that goes both ways, too, by the way. Pride is the beginning of folly if humility is the beginning of wisdom.

I want to close with 1 Corinthians Chapter 6. I'll invite you to turn there. I want to read verses 9-11 because Paul is basically doing the same thing with his writing to the Corinthian church as he is in his writing to Titus. As we read this, follow along because there's something here I want to point out.

He says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived." Now here comes the list. Are you ready? "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revelers..." Are you ready for the last one? "...nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

Now, if you were to stop right there before reading verse 11, in your spiritual arrogance and haughtiness and conceit, we'll use that word, you're like, yeah! Those wicked, evil, unrighteous people, they're going to burn in hell. Oh, really? Wait a minute, verse 11, "As such were some of you." Oh, yeah, that's right. Oh, my. "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

Do you see what he did there? "...as such were some of you?" Wait, are you saying that those believers in that church in Corinth used to be gay? Yeah, right here. Sodomites? Yeah. That's pretty graphic. Yeah. They were all of the above, but God saved them. I don't know where we get off on this notion now that we're saved, right? And we look at those who aren't, and we expect them to act like they're regenerated. Wait a minute. What were you like before you got saved?

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You don't want to know what I was before I got saved. In fact, I was so bad that when I called upon the name of the Lord, and I was saved, if I were the angels in heaven, I'd say to God, don't take this one. This is not a good deal for You. Do not accept this one.

What is it about us that after we get saved, we're walking with the Lord, we're walking in the light, and then we forget what we were like before we were saved? That's where God rushes in to remind us and to humble us.

So, here's this married couple, and the husband gets this email with all the attachments. He doesn't get very far down that list before he realizes how much he's been forgiven of. So, then he goes to his wife, humbles himself, and stops withholding forgiveness because he's been the recipient of forgiveness.

When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, one of the ways He taught them to pray was, "Lord, forgive us of our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us." I need to be reminded of that, don't you? Because we forget, and especially as we get older.

I was talking with a friend of mine on the phone this last week and learned that one of our classmates went home to be with the Lord. Thank God he was saved. He lost his battle to brain cancer. So, I got the text and called him up. We spent some time on the phone reminiscing. Oh, that was painful.

He reminded me of things that I forgot and didn't want to remember before I was saved. And he's, hey, do you remember when? I'm like, wow, I do now, thanks a lot. It just really brought me back down to earth. I was like, man, I was a wretch. I know. But God saved me, yeah. Man, I was a horrible person. I was all of these things. Well, not all of them, thank God. Man, this is a lesson to end when the sermon is over. I should have ended it earlier.

Why don't you stand? We'll have Compono come up on that note. Oh, my! Although it's on the same list, sin is sin, right? That's a whole another topic for another time. I'm sorry that I opened up that "can." I think they have a metaphor for that. Once the toothpaste is out of the tube, you can't put it back in. Well, put it back in, and we're going to close in prayer.

Lord, thank You for the reminder, the humbling reminder from You. Lord, we need to be reminded. Every time we partake together of the communion table, which we're going to do, Lord willing, coming up Thursday on the 1st. It's a reminder, "As often as we do it, we're to do it in remembrance of You and what You did for us in that you died for us and saved us.

Lord, thank You for the reminder because we do forget, and we do need to be reminded. Thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.