

Titus chapter 3, we're reading verses 1 through 7 this morning. There's only a brief comment on verses 3 through 7, so if you do your math, we're going to look at verses 1 and 2 primarily. And I'm going to break a brief comment on verses 3 through 7. As you turn there, remember what we've been seeing in this book of Titus.

This book was written by the Apostle Paul by divine inspiration. And what he's trying to do in this book is provide some instructions for Titus, who's a younger minister on the island of Crete, trying to help Titus think about how to put the churches in order on that island. And what he tells him in chapter one is essentially To put the churches in order, you need to establish good elders. And then step two, which is chapter two, this is just a summary, but chapter two, step two, you need to encourage godly homes. So you have elders, chapter one, godly homes, chapter two, and now in chapter three says, and also you need to encourage godly living in public. There's something of a movement in the book from the church to the home to how do the Christians live in public, and so we come to that topic this morning, and the call is to live for Christ in public, to live for Christ in public.

Let us pray before reading God's word. Our heavenly father, we come this morning to a book that is different than any other book. Oh God, we come to the book which you have ultimately written. This is your word. And so we pray that we would receive it as what it is, the very word of God. We pray that we would believe what you say and what you say we would strive to do. We pray that when you teach us, we would humbly learn. Oh God, we ask for your help for apart from your spirit, we can do nothing.

Pour him out in the reading and preaching of your word in the name of Jesus, amen. Titus chapter three, reading the first seven verses. This is the word of God. 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.

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. 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. sends a reading of God's word, may he bless now the proclamation of it to our lives.

Well, many will say, keep your Christianity private. Don't let your Christianity into your public life. Don't let your Christianity into the workplace. Don't let your Christianity into the classroom. Don't take your Christianity onto the football field. Don't take your Christianity into your doctor appointments. Don't take your Christianity into your business meetings. Don't take your Christianity into your social life.

You can be a Christian, that's fine. Just keep it private. But the Bible says live for Christ in public. The idea that you should keep your Christianity private is anti-Christian. It is evil to think that you could be saved by the blood of the Lamb of God and then not let that reality impact your entire life. That's evil to think that you could keep that reality to yourself. Jesus owns you. You are his. Chapter 2, verse 14 says, you are his own possession. You're his, chapter 2, 14.

The Christian, quite literally, can't go anywhere without bringing Jesus with him. You cannot, it's actually impossible, if you're united to Jesus Christ, to go anywhere in life and Jesus not be with you. If you are a Christian, you take Jesus with you when you send text messages. You take him when you send emails. You take him with you when you go to school, and when you go to work, and when you go to the voting booth. You take Jesus with you wherever you go. And this is because, as Paul said, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. He lives in you. Where you go, if you're in Christ, he is in you. And so where you go, he is going, whether in private or in public.

So the exhortation in primarily these first two verses of chapter three is to live for Christ in public. So first, live for Christ in public before civil authorities. Before civil authorities. That's the start of verse 1. Look here. Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient. So first he tells Titus to remind them to be submissive. Now the idea of being submissive is not merely passive in Scripture. It's an active willingness to submit yourself to someone over you. It's not to be done begrudgingly, but with a voluntary heart. Now why do you think Paul, writing by divine inspiration, the Holy Spirit ultimately is saying, remind them to be submissive to the rulers and authorities. Why do they need this reminder? Well, they don't need this reminder because they've literally forgotten in the sense of they didn't know that they were supposed to submit themselves to the governing authorities.

They needed this reminder in the same way your child might need the reminder to eat their vegetables. It's not that your child hasn't been told before. It's not that the child doesn't know they're supposed to eat their vegetables. It's that they don't intend to do it. And so you have to remind them. I don't believe a parent has ever had to remind their child to eat their ice cream. And the reason is because it's exactly what the child intends to do. but they need reminders when it's stuff that they know they're supposed to do, but they don't really want to do it. Like their homework, maybe, or something of that sort.

And they know that they're supposed to obey the rulers that God has placed over them, but they're inclined to not want to do it. And so they need this reminder to be submissive. And the fact is, This applies today, too, because we do not always like to submit to the civil authorities. And the reason is because, whether we're right or not, a lot of times you might be tempted to think you know better than them, and they don't know what they're doing. But the truth is, a text like this says your inclination ought to be, insofar as it is possible, without the breaking of any of God's commandments, to submit to rulers and authorities over you.

And why is it that both of these words are used? to submit to rulers and authorities. Why not just rulers or just authorities? Why both of these words? One commentary, Terry, says this. believe this man is right, doubtless to include all classes of governing powers.

In other words, he wants them to know no matter how much authority they have over you, if they have a lot of authority or a little bit of authority, whoever they are, if they're over you, period, the call is for you to be submissive. So for example, in our day and age, you should be submissive to the president and to the police officer. You can't just say, well, I'm going to be submissive to the one because they've got way, way, way more authority over me, but I'm not going to be submissive to the other. No, to rulers and authorities, to all those whom God has ultimately put over you, there is a call to be submissive. And then he adds this word, to be obedient. Now, what is the difference between the command in verse one to be submissive and the command to be obedient? Well, there is overlap, but they are not exactly the same. You can be submissive and it merely be external compliance.

But obedience also gets at the disposition of your heart in that activity. So it includes that you're at least striving to really sincerely have a good attitude, to go about it in a way that's Truly respectful. So an example would be the child that is commanded by their parents to take out the trash, and they do it. That may just be submission, but if they do it with a good attitude, that is obedience. It's including that external activity, but also an internal heart posture.

So this week, if you happen to get pulled over by a cop, which I hope you don't, But the call would be this, that you don't only do what he asks you to do, but you do it with a good attitude. That's what it would mean in real life to apply this verse. Well, are there ever any exceptions to this?

And the answer is yes. You can think of Acts chapter five, where Peter and the apostles were charged to not speak anymore in the name of Christ. And their response was this. We must obey God rather than men. If ever the authorities over you are asking you to do something that is sinful, you must not obey them. It is actually disobeying God to obey them in that case. Now, it's not always clear, is it, in life when those occasions arise. It is not always as easy to tell as we might wish it were. So there is sanctified reasoning, there's prayer, but especially if it's ever explicit that they're commanding you to sin, then you have to say, I must obey God rather than men.

Now, why is this such a big deal for Christians? Why putting yourself in Titus's shoes, so to speak, why would this be an important thing for him to hear as he's trying to put the churches in order? Well, it's such a big deal for Christians because God is the ultimate authority over all. And so if Christians aren't willing to submit to the authorities over them, it may reflect that they don't like authority at all, which means they don't like God's authority because God is an authority.

He is the authority. And so if your attitude towards authority is very, hate-filled and negative, that it may reflect to onlookers that all authority is to be viewed in this sort of a negative light. Which would mean that even God's authority would need to be viewed in this sort of way and that would not reflect well on the truth because God has all authority. The concept of authority is not evil. God designed authority. God made the husband to be over the wife. God made the children to be under the parents and the parents to have authority over the children. God put elders in his churches to have authority in the churches.

Authority is not evil. People who abuse authority is evil, but authority is not evil. And so we're not dealing with extreme cases here. If somebody happens to be in the room who's underneath abusive authority, that's another discussion. Barring those extremes, that's the abuse of a good thing. Authority itself is not good, it's designed, or it's not bad, it's designed by God. It's the abuse of it that can be evil, or the lack of exercising it that can be evil.

But our attitude as Christians ought to be one of submission, according to verse one, and obedience to the authorities over us. But then secondly, we see here, live for Christ, in public before all peoples. So we saw all authorities, now we move on to all peoples. Look at the end of verse one into verse two.

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. So this call to be ready for every good work is a call for Christians to live doing good works in all of their life in public, not just in relation to the civil authorities, but to all people, the text says.

And what does it mean to be ready for every good work? Well, first you have to be ready, it says. And so that might look like praying, asking God, if you give me opportunities to serve you, grant me the opportunity to speak a word for you. Just simply having a posture of, I want to be ready to do what you ask me to do. And it says every good work, which is a great challenge because oftentimes we want to be selective in the good works that we're willing to do. But he says you should be ready for every good work. It should be your desire to do whatever it is God calls you to do.

I heard a man one time, you'll never know him, and He was in a church and he said, I'll be happy to help so-and-so move as long as it's not on a Saturday because I like to play golf on Saturday. That's not being ready for every good work. The attitude should be, well, I hope so-and-so doesn't move on a Saturday. It's fine to desire they don't move on a Saturday. But if they do, you know what I'm not going to do on Saturday? I'm not going to play golf.

I'm just going to give it up, because this is an opportunity to serve someone. It's real life stuff like that. That's what it looks like to be ready. Well, I wanted to do this, but God opened the door for me to do this. And so I'm going to do that other thing instead. Now, we can't do every work. Take unnecessary burdens on yourself. No one person can do everything. But the thrust of this passage is, as God gives you opportunities, don't try to look for excuses not to do it. Where you can, give yourself up. to serve the Lord in whatever ways that might be.

But what is a good work? A good work is defined by God, not man. God defines good works, not humanity. Lots of people think they do good works, and they're not, they're evil works, because they're not in accordance with God's word. Anything that anybody does, no matter what they call it, no matter what they might think about it, no matter how they might feel about it, if it's not in accordance with God's word, it's an evil work. It's a bad work. It is not a good work.

God defines what good is and anything else is evil. So God defines good works and one of the things he tells us in his word is that they must be done in faith and to the glory of God. And this is why in an ultimate sense no unbeliever does anything good. Because no unbeliever does anything by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to the glory of God.

It doesn't happen. They can't. Why not? Because they hate God. You think that's strong language? Verse 3 talked about how we hated one another and we hated everyone. That's who we were. So this is who the unbeliever is. That's why they can't do good deeds.

But do good works really matter for you? You're here and you're a Christian and you're thinking, well, don't good works not really matter anymore because I was saved by grace? to verse 11, for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. So does grace, do good works have any place in the Christian life?

Look at verse five. I mean, look at it says, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness. So someone might argue that good works have no place in the Christian life anymore. I'm not saved by them, it just said it in verse five, not because of works done by us in righteousness. Well, in terms of your justification, good

works have absolutely no place. You cannot merit anything by your good works. It's impossible. As I quoted last week, somebody once said, J. Gresham Machen, condemnation comes by merit. Salvation comes by grace. Condemnation is earned by man. Salvation is given by God.

So in terms of your justification, good works have no place. But in terms of living for God in your daily life, good works absolutely have a place. Chapter two, verse seven, says this. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works. Chapter three, verse one, be ready for every good work. Chapter two, verse 14, zealous for good works. Chapter three, verse eight, devote themselves to good works. Chapter 3, verse 14. let our people learn to devote themselves to good works.

So five or six times in a chapter and a half or two, it talks positively about the good works of the Christian life. So good works are the indispensable fruit of the Christian life. Your good works do not make you a Christian, but they're evidence of your being a Christian. They are the fruit, not the root, of your Christianity. And so what are some of these good works? Well, he lists some here.

He says, speak evil of no one, verse two. Now this command here to speak evil of no one does not prohibit calling sin, sin, or calling people out in their sin. To speak evil of no one doesn't mean you can't speak of their sin. It simply means do not slander them. Do not try to tear them down in an evil and malicious manner. How can you know that it absolutely cannot mean that you can't speak of other people's sin, you can't call them out on their sin.

Well, because he's been doing that in this very book. Chapter one, verse 10, for there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. You read chapter one, verse 10 through 16, all he's doing is calling people out on their sin. You think of Jesus in John chapter eight, you are of your father, you're just like your father, the devil, you're a liar. Okay, he called their sin.

So when it says to speak evil of no one, it doesn't mean you pretend like there's no sin in the life of some person where there's blatant sin that needs to be addressed. What it does mean is you're not trying to slander them or maliciously tear them down. How easy is it to speak evil of others and then you start to spiral and it just gets worse and worse and worse and you just find yourself unable to think of a single nice thing to say about a person. That is to speak evil of them.

But if you don't slander them, does this mean you should flatter them? Is that what the Bible tells you to do? Well, flattery in the Bible is also evil. And the reason flattery is evil, because flattery is to give people excessive praise that they actually have not warranted, and you know it, and you're being dishonest, and that's also evil.

What you're supposed to do is show your appreciation for other people honestly. not lying, not making things up, but in a tempered and sincere manner. This is biblical. But he also says you're to avoid quarreling. This means that as far as you are able, you are to strive to have peace with other people insofar as it is possible for you.

Romans chapter 12, it says, if possible, so far as it depends on you live peaceably with all. You can think of Matthew chapter five, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be sons of God. Why are the peacemakers called sons of God? Because they resemble their heavenly father who has made peace with them by the blood of Jesus Christ. If God has dealt with you in this way, you should strive to be peaceful with others.

It says to be gentle, right? Don't be harsh with others or severe with others or unreasonable or uncharitable. And then it says to show perfect courtesy toward all. The idea here is that you want to be humble in your relationship with all people. And it is with all people because the word all is actually there twice. You might literally translate it showing all humility toward all people. And the idea is simply this, not just towards some people or the people you like, but towards all people you are to show all humility.

And this takes the grace of God. All of these commands really take the grace of God. Because if you're going to live this out, it's not going to be by your strength or by your might. This sort of life of all humility toward all people is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of the believer.

Richard Wurmbrand was a man who spent about 15 years in solitary confinement in Romania during communist regime. And during that time, he suffered tremendously. He was tortured for Christ. And one time after he got out of prison, an American came and visited him.

And as the American was getting to know Richard Wurmbrand, they would go on some walks together. And one day they were on a walk and Richard began to speak to somebody on the street in Romanian, which the American did not know. And so the American couldn't understand the conversation, but it seemed quite pleasant. And after the conversation was over, the American asked Richard, he said, Richard, who was that man?

And Richard gave him the name of the man. The American was puzzled and he said, isn't that the name of the man who threw you in prison or ratted you out? He said, yes, that is the man. That is the name. And that is the man. And he said, well, how did you speak so pleasantly with him? And he said, everyone makes mistakes. He had spent 15 years in prison, largely being tortured and many years in solitary confinement. And he said, we all make mistakes. You're thinking that response is ridiculous.

But that's the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of a believer. He could respond that way, not because he was Richard Wormbran, but because he was related to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. Now this is not doormat Christianity. The Bible does not say roll over, play dead, let people beat you up and never speak a word and defend yourself. That's not Christianity. But what this is a call to is what I've called love like Christ Christianity. That's what this is a call to. It's a way of living that is different than the sort of fleshly response to circumstances and hatred that is the default of all human beings. Romans chapter 12 says repay no one evil for evil. And so again you might be tempted to say well this is all impossible and it is apart from Jesus Christ.

So live for Christ before all people this week. Live for Christ in your classrooms. Live for Christ in your workplaces, live for Christ in your doctor appointments, live for Christ in public, wherever you're called to be. In every area of life, you are called to live for the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot keep your Christianity private. I want to ask you this question.

How would you act differently this week, or how might you have acted differently in past weeks, if you believed when you went to school or when you went to work, or when you went to doctor's appointments, Jesus was with you. How would you run your business meetings differently? How would you operate differently? How would you act differently? Because the fact is, if you are in Christ, Christ is in you.

And so that reality should permeate even your everyday activities in the public sphere. But lastly, just briefly, I want to comment on verses three through seven, because these words of verses three through seven are really what ground the commands we've just seen. Paul does not call you to live this way as sort of just an exhortation without a context. He calls you to live this way because essentially who you were and who the triune God has made you to be.

Verse three, who were you? He says, you don't want to live this way, well remember who you were. For we ourselves, all of us, he says, we, plural, 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. He says this is who we were. So you don't want to live this way towards other people. You don't want to be patient with other people. You don't be gentle with other people. Do you remember who you were? You were one of them. And the reason you're not now, verses 4 through 7, is because the triune God has made you different. The triune God is one who's done it all, verses 4 through 7.

And so the argument is this. Live out the commands of verses 1 and 2. because of who you were and because of who you now are, because of the triune God, verses three through seven. You live differently because God has made you different, because God has given you and made you who you were not before.

It's the same logic of chapter two. Chapter two, verses one through 10, fathers be this way, older men be this way, older women be this way, everyone be this way, be this way, this way, verses one through 10. And then it said, why? For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. Chapter two, verses 11 and 12.

You do all those things in the first 10 verses of chapter two, why? Because of who you now are in Christ. You do all these things in verses one and two of chapter three, why? Because of who you now are in Christ, because of what God has done for you. And so this is gospel logic. And this is something we can't stress too highly, because this is what makes Christianity Christianity in every other religion, every other religion. because Christianity doesn't tell you to do good things to save yourself or to improve your life or anything like that. It says do good things because God has redeemed you, because God has made you a new creation, because God has done all this for you. Now you have to live for him, but it's all out of reverence and appreciation and love for him. In closing, I just want to share this brief story.

John Lennox is a professor who's a devout Christian at Oxford University, and he teaches mathematics and religion. And John Lennox, when he was 19 years old, was at Cambridge University studying. And this Nobel Peace Prize winning professor brings John into his office with several other faculty around. And here John is at just 19 years old. He's already a Christian. this Nobel Prize winning professor says to John, John, do you want a career in science?

And he says, yes. And he says, well, then you need to give up your naive belief in God right now in public before these witnesses. Give it up. It's gonna cripple your career. Your peers are gonna outdo you. Give up your belief in God right now in public.

And John looked at the man and he said, sir, what do you have to offer me that's better than what I've already got? And you see here today, whether you're a young person like John Lennox, or you're an older person. John was living for Christ in public. That's what it looks like, an unwillingness to give an inch, not in pride, but in humble reliance upon your God who has redeemed you. Live for Christ in public. Let us pray.

Almighty God, we do praise you for who you are. And we pray that we would remember the words of John Knox who said, If Christ is for us, we are always in the majority. Oh Lord God, we always have the weight in our favor. We always have the blessing, even if we're cursed, because you're with your people.

So I pray, oh Lord, we would not be intimidated or afraid to just be faithful in our lives, wherever that might be. In doctor's appointments or school or work or the voting booth, wherever you place us, oh God, I pray that we would be unashamed of the gospel. I pray that we would remember that since we are united to Christ and Christ is in us, we take him in a sense where we go and we should represent him in a way that is good and honoring. Lord, help us to be faithful, to be unashamed. In the name of Jesus, I pray, amen.