

## INTRODUCTION

Paul does not waste words. Having exposed the rebellious empty talkers and mind-deceivers in Titus 1:10-16, especially those “of the circumcision” who were upsetting whole households for sordid gain, he then turns sharply to the positive charge in chapter 2. Right after the devastating diagnosis of false teachers who “profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him,” the Apostle pivots with a single, commanding “But you...” in 2:1. Titus must speak the things that are fitting for sound doctrine. This is not a gentle suggestion. It is the direct antidote to the chaos the false teachers produce.

The section we now examine (3:1-7) forms the closing bookend of the practical and theological heart of the letter. Titus 2:15 ties everything together with the same authoritative command we saw in 1:9 and 2:1. Titus is to speak, exhort, and reprove with full apostolic weight. Then, in 3:1-7, Paul gives the concrete content of that authoritative reminder: how believers—and especially those who have been influenced by the false teachers—are to relate to authority and to all people. The theological engine driving this conduct is the same saving grace that appeared in 2:11-14. Grace trains us to deny ungodliness and to live in line with our identity in Christ. The reminder of what we once were and what God has done in mercy is the very thing that produces gentleness, readiness for good works, and proper submission.

This passage is the practical outworking of the identity believers already possess in Christ. The repeated emphasis on self-control, dignity, good works, and proper relationship to authority flows from the grace that has already appeared, not to gain favor, but because we already have it.

## EXPOSITION

## Titus 2:15 – The Authoritative Charge

λάλει (lalei – speak)

παρακάλει (parakalei – exhort/encourage)

ἔλεγχε (elegche – reprove/expose)

These imperatives echo the same authoritative charge Paul gave Titus in 1:9 and 2:1. Titus is to keep declaring the truth, encouraging the saints, and exposing error with the Word of God. The false teachers tried to undermine him by questioning his authority and by slandering the Cretan believers. Paul says, in effect, “Do not let anyone look down on you or treat your ministry as invalid.” His authority rests on the message entrusted to him by the Lord, not on human approval.

This verse is the hinge between the instructions for the various groups in 2:1-10 and the theological motivation in 2:11-14 on the one hand, and the practical instructions in 3:1-2 on the other all based upon the salvation and the hope of eternal life in 3:3-7. Titus is to carry out this instruction by reminding the people of the very things Paul has written and taught previously.

#### Titus 3:1-2 – The Content of the Reminder

The main verb is *ὑπομνήσκω* (*hypomimnēskō*) – remind / bring to mind again. It is a present active imperative. Titus is to keep bringing these truths back to their minds causing remembrance.

The first command is to be subject to rulers and authorities. The key term is *ὑποτάσσω* (*hupotassō*) – to place or rank oneself under, to submit to. It does not mean blind or unqualified obedience in every circumstance, but a recognition of God-ordained order and a willingness to live under rightful authority. The same word appears in Romans 13:1: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” Peter uses it similarly in 1 Peter 2:13-14.

Next, “to be obedient” comes from the *πείθω* (*peithō*) word group—*to persuade, to convince*. The idea is persuaded by the truth and by rightful authority.

“To be ready for every good deed.” The believer’s life is to be marked by a constant readiness to do what (*ἀγαθός*, *agathos* – good in the sense of what God has defined). Good works are not arbitrary or subjective but are based upon what god defines and gives principles for.

The negatives follow: “to malign no one. The verb *βλασφημέω* (*blasphēmēō*) – to speak in a disrespectful way that demeans, denigrates, maligns; to slander, revile, or defame. This is the same word used in Titus 2:5 regarding the word of God not being blasphemed by outsiders because of the conduct of young women. Here the command is broad: defame no one, neither civil authorities, nor spiritual leaders, nor opponents, nor fellow believers. Even when correction is needed, it is to be done with the gentleness described in the next phrases, not with slanderous or abusive speech.

“To be peaceable” The adjective *ἄμαχος* (*amachos*) – not contentious, not quarrelsome, peaceable. It is the opposite of fighting or argumentative behavior.

“Gentle” The adjective *ἐπιεικής* (*epieikēs*) – forbearing, reasonable. BDAG defines it as “not insisting on every right... yielding, gentle.”

Finally, “showing every consideration for all men.” The noun *πραΰτης* (*prautēs*) – meekness, gentleness, humility, demonstrating strength under control.

## Titus 3:3 – The Reason: What We Once Were

The reason Titus is to remind the people of this conduct is because “we also once were” in the same condition. The first-person plural “we” includes a reference to Paul and Titus as well. This is significant. Even the Apostle and his trusted coworker were once in rebellious state. There is no room for spiritual arrogance or claims of inherent superiority.

The list that follows is a sobering description of the unregenerate condition:

- Foolish, without understanding, senseless in spiritual matters. Not merely intellectually deficient but lacking the ability to think rightly about God and truth.
- *ἀπειθής* (apeithēs) –unpersuaded, unbelieving in refence to the truth. The alpha-privative negates the idea of being persuaded.
- Being led astray, deceived, wandering from the truth. Present Passive Participle, while being continually deceived by the world, the flesh, and the devil.
- Enslaved to various lusts and pleasures. The unregenerate person is in bondage to desires that promise satisfaction but deliver only further slavery.
- Living in malice and envy. *κακία* (kakia) – wickedness, malice, ill-will; *φθόνος* (phthonos) – envy, jealousy.
- Hateful, hating one another. This is the end result of life apart from God: relationships marked by mutual self-interest and hatred.

This is not to say that every unbeliever commits every one of these sins or in the same degree. It is a characterization of the mindset and a reality of being dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1-3). The purpose of the reminder is humility and compassion: we have no ground to treat anyone with contempt, because we were once in the same condition.

## Titus 3:4-7 – The Great Contrast: What God Has Done

The great “but” (δὲ, de) introduces the glorious contrast. The same verb used in Titus 2:11 for the appearing of grace now appears again: *ἐπιφαίνω*, *epiphainō* appeared, shone forth. The subject is “the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind.”

*χρηστότης* (chrēstotēs) – kindness, goodness, generosity. It is the quality of God that is most “useful” or “beneficial” to those in need.

*φιλανθρωπία* (philanthrōpia) – love for mankind, philanthropy in the highest sense, affectionate concern for humanity. Together they describe the disposition of God that moved Him to act in salvation. This is a demonstration that God does

not hate anyone, God is not a petulant child with an ant farm. God only has good intentions to all people.

The appearing is the historical incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the moment when the kindness and love of God became visible in human history.

The means of salvation is emphatically not “on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness.” The preposition ἐξ (ek) indicates source or basis. Our righteous deeds are not the source or ground of salvation. Instead, it is “according to His mercy” ἔλεος (eleos) – mercy, the act that withholds the judgment that is deserved. Ephesians 2:4-5: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ....”

“He saved us.” God is the subject; we are the objects. Salvation is His work from beginning to end.

The means are “by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.” The washing of regeneration indicates a new birth. Regeneration is the sovereign act of God whereby He imparts new spiritual life to those who were dead in sins.

The imagery of washing points to cleansing from the defilement of sin and the new birth that follows. This is not from water (i.e. water baptism) but a washing of the Holy Spirit.

The second means is “renewing by the Holy Spirit.” This is a noun– renewal, renovation. This is not an ongoing work of the Spirit but a truth of the Holy Spirit’s work as the agent of the initial regeneration.

The Spirit “whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” God abundantly poured out, lavished, upon us the Holy Spirit; this was accomplished through the agency of Jesus Christ.

The purpose that the Holy Spirit is given is so that we would become heirs of God and co heirs of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:16-17). The means by which this takes place is by being justified by that grace, His grace. It is demonstrated here and many other passages that God is the one who works this truth. It is by His gift, it is by His mercy, it is not by works in righteousness. We must take the focus off of ourselves and place it solely upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. Remember it is through Jesus Christ that He saved us.

The purpose clause is in verse 7. (ἵνα, hina) gives the result: “so that having been justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Having been justified/declared righteous (aorist passive participle). Justification is a

forensic, legal declaration that the believer is right in God's sight on the basis of the finished work of Christ, received by faith alone. We are granted His righteousness; we cannot have righteousness of our own before God (Romans 4:1-2). It is "by His grace."

The result is that we "would be made heirs" – heir, one who receives an inheritance. Because we are sons through faith in Christ, we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7). The inheritance is certain and future, but the status of being an heir is present and secure.

It is "according to the *hope* of eternal life." *ἐλπίς* (elpis) – This act of God is in accordance with hope. One of the most misunderstood words in the Bible, hope is not a desire or a "pie in the sky" wish but a future assurance of what God has promised. We have full confidence in the future knowing that it is by His fidelity and truth that we have been granted life, eternal life. It is based upon this truth that we can live in the here and now, because we know that whether we live or die, we are of the Lord.

Our confident expectation is that this life which we already possess will be brought to its full consummation when we see Christ face to face.

#### WHAT THIS MEANT FOR TITUS AND THE BELIEVERS ON CRETE

To Titus, these were marching orders. He was to counter the false teachers with the clear, repeated truth as spoken through the apostles. Salvation came by the kindness and mercy of God, not by works of righteousness or by ethnic privilege.

The Cretan believers were called to display lives that silenced slander even in their relationships with civil authorities and with those who opposed the truth. Their conduct was to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior so that the opponents would have nothing evil to say. The saving grace of God had appeared to all; now the church on Crete was to live as the treasured possession Christ had purchased.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

The pattern has not changed. When opposition or division arises in the assembly, or when we are tempted to treat others with contempt, we are to remember that we too were once foolish, unbelieving, deceived. Therefore, there is no ground for spiritual pride or for looking down on anyone, whether unbeliever, opponent, or fellow believer who has stumbled. The saving grace of God appeared in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He saved us according to His mercy, not according to our righteous deeds. He washed us in the regeneration of new birth and renewed us by His Holy Spirit, whom He poured out richly through Jesus Christ. He justified us by His grace and made us heirs according to the confident expectation of eternal life.