

Titus Chapter Three Exegesis

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Background Information

Crete, historically, had a very diversified population. It had people from many different ethnic backgrounds. Since 67 B.C., it was a part of a Roman province with a mixed population of Roman officials, native Cretans, and a considerable colony of Jewish traders. Its inhabitants had a bad name for treachery and the love of money.

Paul had been to Crete on his fourth missionary journey. On that journey he left Titus behind to complete the organization of the congregations there. When he wrote to Titus he was in Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3) or perhaps on his way to Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). With him are Artemas and Tychicus, one of whom he plans to send to Titus, so that Titus, Zenas and Apollos can come to him (2:12-13).

There were several groups of Christians on the island, but their organization was incomplete. False teachers, primarily converted Jews, it appears, were disturbing the congregations by bringing in false teachings both of doctrine and life.

This was the setting in which Titus was to do his work. He was to appoint elders (1:6-9), rebuke with authority (1:11), guide the teaching (2:1-15) and deal with the divisive person (3:11). The latter will be a part of our focus as we look at chapter three.

Outline:

- 3:1-8 The Christian And Society
 - 1-2 Attitude In The Community
 - 3-8 Motivation
- 3:9-11 Dealing With A Divisive Person
- 3:12-15 Closing Instructions And Final Greetings

Paul just gave Titus a list of reasons the people should be encouraged to do good, all of which pointed to the grace of God that was made evident in Jesus Christ. Now, he takes them into society; what their attitude is to be in the community and what their motivation is to be. Paul said in 2:11-15 –

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are things you should teach.. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

It is on the heel of these words that we begin to look at chapter three and learn about the Christian and society.

Verse 1

Translation: Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.

Exposition: The words of Paul to Titus lead him to immediately begin to exercise the guidance encouraged at the end of chapter two. Paul says remind the fellow believers to be subject to and to obey rulers and authorities. No articles are used with the latter terms, thus giving them a generic force to include any rulers or authority which has been placed over them.

The present tense is used throughout this verse to show that the actions are to be an ongoing process and occurrence. The infinitives “to be subject to, to be obedient and to be” are used to complement the verb “remind”.

Paul quickly lays out basic guidelines for a Christian in society under a governmental rule. The reason he may do this could be that the society by which the Christians was surrounded was made up of liars and gluttons, so their life of sanctification would have been tested thoroughly. Christians sometimes forget that we are under the authority God has chosen or permitted to rule over us. We forget who and what we are, and get caught up in the world around us. We can get caught up in our Christian freedoms and rights and forget that the authorities have set laws up for us also. So, yes we too need to be reminded to obey and adhere to the rulers and authorities. Christians will be loyal citizens in th local communities, in the state, and nation. The only restriction of obedience occurs when government commands us to act against God’s will.

But it goes even beyond the ruling bodies, it comes down to the people we mix and mingle with on a daily basis. So, Paul goes into verse two:

Verse 2

Translation: To slander no one, to be peaceable, considerate, showing every kind of gentleness to all human beings.

Exposition: Having given instructions of how to live under a government, Paul moves on to how to live with ones fellow man. He is very clear that it is a matter of our words and our actions. First he says that “no one” is to be slandered.

Here, we use the word “slander” because normally, we “blaspheme” against God. It is clear that God is not the focus of this passage. Paul simply passes on what he told the Ephesians in chapter 4:31 - “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” He gives the negative, then reinforces with what should be done. No one is excluded, but everyone is to be treated the same in society. They are to be treated peaceably, considerately, and gentleness. The participle “showing” is the substantive use of the attributive participle.

Verse 3

Translation: For we were also formerly foolish, disobedient, deceived, slaves to various lusts and pleasures, ones who live in evil and envy; hated, hating each other.

Exposition: Paul makes use of the imperfect rather nicely when he says “we were.” That was a past custom, the way it used to be for him and the hearers of this letter. He is now leading into the motivation for their behavior as Christians, but he must establish how they were to show the difference. Notice how Paul is quick to include himself. He runs off a whole list of negative characteristics: foolish, not knowing any better; disobedient, knowing but not doing; deceived, being led astray by a false guide; serving as a slave, suggests a willfulness; living in evil and envy, a sense of familiarity and comfort, hating and being hated, it was a mutual feeling. Paul uses the word hated, repulsive. This word is used only in Titus and it is a two way relationship.

The dative forms of lust and pleasure are datives of respect/reference or could be taken as the NIV as a dative with the verb. The present participles once again remind us that these things were ongoing in past time.

Paul was at the same point once, but reminds Titus and those Christians that they too are sinners, living in the comfort of sin. The same is true for each of us today.

Verse 4

Translation: But when the generosity and kindness of God our Savior was revealed,

Exposition: The temporal conjunction is a definite. There was a certain period in time when the love of God was revealed in Jesus. When we speak of generosity and kindness, that is not something that we can earn or buy, but it is something that is freely offered and given. Here, we see that it was even something hidden that needed to be made known to the Christians of this letter and to us. The postpositive connective, “but”, points to a major contrast from the preceding. The focus is on these attributes of God our Savior. Here we have the reasons why God didn’t just leave sinful mankind where he was. Here we have the motivation for the action encouraged in verse 1 and 2. It was because of God’s love for sinful mankind.

Verse 5

Translation: Not because of works in righteousness which we did, but according to his mercy he saved us by means of a washing of rebirth and of a renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Exposition: As Paul does so often, he states what was not the way it happened to make the contrast sharp when he states the correct way it happened. This is a section over which much ink has been used. The focus of this verse is on the phrase “by means of (through) a washing of rebirth and of a renewal by the Holy Spirit. Here we are talking in the framework of justification as we look at the surrounding verses. This washing is described by the three genitives that follow it, as to what it does and how.

The rebirth and renewal describe what the washing does. The subject who effects this rebirth and renewal is found in the subjective genitive, Holy Spirit. This washing is “a bath by means of which God brings about new birth.” (Romans 6:3ff, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12)

The contrast is very clear and pointed, not what we did or can do, but what God has done for us by his grace. This is something we always need to be clear on and express clearly to our people. Our renewal is simply a matter of God’s grace as he works through the gospel whenever it is preached, when he comes to those through the sacrament of baptism and in the Lord’s Supper.

Verse 6

Translation: whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Exposition: The pronoun refers to the Holy Spirit, not the washing. It was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the Christians received the Holy Spirit. This may have come as it is recorded in both the Old and New Testament: Is. 32:15, 44:3; Ezek.39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17, 10:45, but also in a renewal by the Holy Spirit where it equals the reception by the Christian at baptism. The Holy Spirit is given to us richly through faith in Jesus Christ. In this verse we see the Persons of the Trinity at work in their various roles.

Verse 7

Translation: so that, because we have been justified by that grace, we might become heirs according to (the) hope of eternal life.

Exposition: This verse gives us the point of the entire letter, “hope of eternal life.” The purpose clause is separated by the participial phrase, but we have the main verb in the subjunctive, “might become.” God has written us into his will as heirs. The inheritance is a sure hope, for God will never change his will. We have this blessed hope now and forever.

Jesus by his work of redemption has done everything that allows us to stand before our Father in heaven as justified children, criminals who have been found not guilty of breaking the law of God.

Verse 8

Translation: The saying is trustworthy, also about these things, I want to make a point to you, in order that those who believe in God give heed to take the lead in good works. These things are good and useful to men.

Exposition: The phrase, “the saying is trustworthy”, points back to what was said in verse 7. Namely, that we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Paul wanted to impress something very important on this group of believers. He says that for good, useful and beneficial work to be done, those who believe in God are to take the lead. They have experienced his grace, love and blessings and what better way to show thanks as well as being examples for others to follow.

Even with good and useful examples, there are still those who refuse to be a part of it, those who choose to be directly opposed to anything good and healthy. There are some who enjoy tearing down more than they do building up. Paul addresses these people in verse nine through eleven, as he speaks on dealing with a divisive person.

Verse 9

Translation: But avoid foolish speculations and genealogies and strife and legal battles; since they are unprofitable and futile.

Exposition: Paul just gave things that were good and useful. Now he gives just the opposite, so he uses the adversative connective “but.” Where Scripture is silent on matters, Paul encourages not to speculate, because the danger is real that in doing so, one is taken away from Scripture. This is where all the trouble begins when it comes to problems within churches and church bodies, people start questioning and speculating on matters that are not debated or even debatable in Scripture. Paul just lists a few. He sums them all up as being unprofitable and futile. We too must warn and guard against such things. The divisive person has planted his seed. So how do you deal with him?

Verse 10

Translation: Avoid a causing divisions person, after one and a second warning.

Verse 11

Translation: seeing that such a one is twisted and sins, he becomes self-condemned.

Exposition: To understand this matter, we need to understand the basic meaning of ἐξέστραπται. Although the word includes the thought of a “heretic,” it is really directed more toward using a difference in teaching to cause divisions and to influence others. When this person was discovered the Christians were to “avoid” him after instructing and warning him. The number of times he is warned may vary with each case, but at a point of impenitence avoid him. Paul tells Titus to have nothing to do with him. This is not as harsh as when Paul says that he has handed people over to Satan. (1 Timothy 1:20) Paul does not state this as a condemnation in itself, but rather says that they should separate themselves from such a person. He use the same word in 1 Timothy 4:7, when he tells Timothy to avoid godless myths and old wives’ tales and in the same way in 2 Timothy 2:23. The main point of this word is separation, not condemnation, that comes about in verse 11.

An example, which can illustrate this difference is that between excommunication and ending church fellowship. When we excommunicate someone, we not only separate ourselves from fellowship with them, but we also say that we believe that person to be an unbeliever. The procedure for ending fellowship can be seen in these verses. First we have to realize that a person is a division causer. Then there is a time of admonition. After failed attempts, we end fellowship and separate ourselves from him, as they themselves have in effect already done.

These verse are similar to Romans 16:17-18. “I urge you brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.” This separation is done out of love for the people which might be led astray by the divisive person’s false teachings.

This person is also “self-condemned.” This can be looked at in two ways. It could be that he has condemned himself to hell by his teachings. This view is supported by the fact that he is described as “twisted and sins.” The other view is that he has separated himself from those who teach correctly, that by his teachings he has pronounce on himself the judgment of separation and shown himself to be separate.

Verse 12

Translation: Whenever I might send Artemas to you or Tychicus, do your best to come to me in Nicopolis, because I decided to spend winter there.

Exposition: Paul would like to send either Artemas or Tychicus to Titus to help out the congregations there. This would allow Titus to go to Paul in Nicopolis to lend a helping hand. The indefinite temporal clause lets us know that things are busy in the church. Paul just isn't sure when the switch will take place. This is the only reference to Artemas in the New Testament. References to Tychicus occur in Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21, 22; Colossians 4:7; and 2 Timothy 4:12. These show Paul's frequent use of Tychicus.

Verse 13

Translation: Do your best to send Zenas, the lawyer and Apollos on, so that they lack nothing.

Exposition: Paul wanted Titus to send two associates to him. And it would seem that Titus was to make all the arrangements so that these two were lacking nothing for their trip. Zenas is called a lawyer. We do not know whether he was a lawyer of Jewish or Roman law, but he has the title.

What encouragement for the brothers in the ministry to be aware that each of us has the support of one another. It may not be financial or material, but it is a constant supply of what we all need, encouragement and prayers.

Verse 14

Translation: And also those that are ours are to learn to take the lead in the urgent needs of good works, so that they might not be fruitless.

Exposition: Paul encouraged Titus to get the people involved in the work of the church and in every other work that was good and fruitful, not only for their personal benefit, but for those around them. It was to be a learning process. The results wouldn't happen over night. Once again, there was to be group from the membership to take the lead. It was not ,to rest on Titus.

Some words of wisdom for each of us when it comes to getting things done around our churches. Don't do it yourself! Teach and lead and get leaders to show the way. These efforts may not bear fruit over night, but in the long run more people will be built up and producing fruits of faith.

Verse 15

Translation: All those with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace with all of you.

Exposition: The closing remarks of Paul always get us back to where he began, with the grace of God. The Christian fellowship is very clear and open. "Greet those who love us" may sound a bit presumptuous at first reading, but love is at the heart of Christian fellowship. Even

after Paul had to lay down some hard guidelines, the love of Christ still shines through and was to do so for the other believers with Titus. What a fitting way for us to open and close each day of our lives, basking in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and sharing our love for one another with one another. What better way is there to close this paper than with the last words of Paul to Titus; *grace be with all of you..*

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