

Are you ready?
Titus 3:1-8; July 22, 2012

Most of you know that if you need to find me on any given Thursday, Friday, or Saturday night there's a great likelihood that I'm at work as a server at PF Chang's China Bistro in the Cambridgeside Galleria Mall (right on the Charles River behind the Royal Sonesta). I'm happy to say that on one of the oldest guys there and not only that, I've been there longer than almost everyone there: 2 years (College students struggle to keep a job longer than 3 months and this is usually because the "bed monster" gets ahold too often). The very first thing that I get when I show up at work is a card with this question at the top, "Are you ready?" Before I can clock in and take any tables and start bringing home that cash, I'm required to fill this card out. I've got to fill in: my name, today's date, the table #'s that I have, my start time, the legal age to order an alcoholic beverage, have my uniform checked (pen, sani wipes, lighter - for birthday candles), and then answer four more questions about the food, drinks, and culture. Why am I required to fill this out for each of the shifts that I work each week? My management wants me to excel at what I do and there's no way I can excel if I'm not ready.

Just as my management team wants to see me excel at PF Chang's, Paul has a burning passion to see the saints at Crete thriving for the glory of God. Paul's overarching message throughout this entire books is that "Good doctrine should lead to good deeds." Paul is combating the false teachers who were in Crete who "professed to know God but denied him by their works" (1:16). Paul's point is that if you truly know God rightly then your life will overflow with good deeds. This message is no more clearer than in our passage today. When we come Titus 3:1-8, Paul's is now advising the saints at Crete how to live *under* rulers and *with* non-Christians. Let's read this text and heed Paul's advice.

Read Titus 3:1-8.

One element of the structure that is prominent is the role that "good works" should play (3:1, 8). Paul does the same thing in this passage that he did in chapter 2. He fronts the exhortation on good deeds and then he follows this up with the proper motivation rooted in good doctrine.

The point: Be ready to imitate God's kindness to sinners in your interactions with government and all people.

Truth #1: Devote yourself to godly living and good works (3:1-2, 8).

Paul returns to describing gospel living, similar to 2:2-10, but this time he references interaction with outsiders, particularly unbelievers. In general, the qualities encouraged here are in contrast to the false teachers (see 1:10-16).

Traits of godliness:

1) Be submissive to rulers and authorities, be obedient (1 Pet. 2:12-17; see also Rom. 13)

"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2:12 ESV).

Let me qualify this though: this is obedience under God. Peter and John in Acts 4:19 says, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." In the next chapter they say, "We must obey God rather than men" (5:29).

Reflective question: What is at the heart of most rebellion? Why do we not like to obey?

2) Ready for every good work

3) Encouraging with words/not slanderous

“Paul is not saying by this admonition that Christians must be naive and never correctly evaluate and speak about the evil that they see in anyone, since this is what he himself does in 1:10-16. Rather, he is urging Christians to restrain their natural inclination to say the worst about people. As he puts it in Romans 12, Christians should not ‘pay back evil for evil to anyone’ and should bless rather than curse those who persecute them (vv. 17, 14)” (Knight, 333).

4) Seeking peace with others/not quarreling

5) Gentle

This is in contrast to roughness, bad temper, and sudden anger.

6) Perfectly courteous to all people

This phrase is emphatic urging for “all” gentleness to “all” people. You can learn a lot about a person by listening to them talk, what they talk about, and how they treat others. We should all ask, “How can I better display and adorn the gospel, not just in my interactions with Christians, but with everyone?” What would non-Christians say about you? Are you ready for good works?

Truth #2: Remember the Depths of Your Sin (3:3).

As in 2:11-14, Paul explains how his exhortations to godly living are based on the gospel. Paul presents the gospel in a traditional “conversion” formula: “formerly...but now.” It’s similar to Eph. 2:1-10 (“You were dead...but God...”). He’s describing in general terms what Christians were before their conversion. What does this have to do with living with non-Christians? In addressing the depths of sin, Paul acknowledges that non-Christians are difficult to live with. It’s not easy to be gentle, kind and considerate to them. But, you know what? Paul says you used to be just like them!

“There’s not a religion in the world that doesn’t agree that something’s wrong us. The question is, what is it?” (Propaganda).

What’s wrong with us? We are badly distorted by sin. Sin distorts:

- 1) **Your Mind** (Intellectually): “...we were once foolish.”
 - a. You were unreceptive to spiritual truth (2 Cor. 4:4).
- 2) **Your Will** (Volitionally): “...disobedient, led astray.”
 - a. You exercise your will against God and his purposes. You are opposed and enemies of God (Eph. 2:1; John 8:34).

“A man’s free will, indeed, avails for nothing, except to sin, if he knows not the way of truth” (Martin Luther quoted in Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 74-75).

- 3) **Your Emotions** (Emotionally): “...slaves to various passions and pleasures.”
 - a. Your affections are distorted by sin causing you to delight in evil (Tit. 3:3).
- 4) **Your Actions**: (Morally and behaviorally): “...passing our days in malice and envy.”
 - a. You fail to discern between right and wrong (Rom. 1:18ff; Eph. 4:19; Tit. 1:15).
- 5) **Your Relationships** (Relationally): “...hated by others and hating one another.”
 - a. You are alienated from God and oppose his purposes and values (Col. 1:21). Your relationships with others are distorted as well.

What’s your response to this? “I’m not that bad. I’m a good person.” We try to justify our goodness by comparing ourselves to people far worse than us.

- I’m not as bad as James Holmes. He just killed 12 people and injured 58 others in a theatre in Aurora, CO.
- I’m not as bad as Jerry Sandusky. He was found guilty of 45 counts of sexual abuse as a football coach at Penn State.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment” (Matthew 5:21-22 ESV).

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28 ESV).

So how bad is your sin?

Martin Luther says, “All our faculties are leprous, indeed, are dull and utterly dead” (Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 74). Sin is like a virus and it has spread all through our bodies. Apart from Christ we are all holistically depraved; sin has corrupted every aspect of our being: mind, will, emotions, relationships, and actions. Have you ever had an evil thought and said, “Where did that come from?”

“There’s not a religion in the world that doesn’t agree that something’s wrong us. The question is, what is it? And how do we fix it?” (Propaganda).

If the problem is deep-rooted sin inside of me, superficial remedies will not solve the problem. You and I need supernatural transformation from above. This sets the stage for the display of God’s marvelous and matchless grace.

Truth #3: Relish the Treasures of the Gospel

God meets every single one of your needs in the gospel. What we see in these few verses is that salvation is a glorious work of the triune God.

1) The *Father* is the ultimate source, planner and initiator of Salvation (3:4-5a)

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8 ESV).

Let’s get this clear. God does not initiate his goodness and kindness to us because we are good people. He sent his son to die for sinners, for his own enemies. Salvation can never be the result of works because no amount of good works can compare with the holiness of God. None of us have a chance when standing before perfection. Doing good works is like spraying cologne on a dead corpse and pretending it doesn’t stink. Your sin must be dealt with. The Father’s plan from the beginning involved the Son.

2) The *Son* provides complete redemption through his obedient life and atoning death (3:6-7).

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV).

Let’s get this clear. Jesus lived a perfect life. He never sinned. He perfectly obeyed God even to the point of death. He lived the life I couldn’t live and he died the death that I deserved. This is the doctrine of justification. His death was PAYMENT for my sin. Reflect back on the depths of your sin. He paid for every single one of them.

3) The *Holy Spirit* applies, makes effective, and preserves the redemption Christ bought to those who believe (3:5b).

Paul introduces the doctrine of regeneration in 3:5. “Regeneration is that work of the Spirit at conversion that renews the heart and life, thus restoring the person’s intellectual, volitional, moral, emotional, and relational capacities to know, love, and serve God” (Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 293). This is what Scripture means when it says:

- “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV).
- “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses” (Colossians 2:13 ESV).
- “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5-6 ESV).

Just as sin spreads like a virus and invades every inch of our bodies, so the Spirit spreads as an antibiotic to cure and renew every inch of our lives. The transformation done by the Holy Spirit is holistic:

- **Your Mind** (Intellectually): we enabled to comprehend the things of God
- **Your Will** (Volitionally): our wills are enabled to affirm and pursue kingdom values; enmity toward God is replaced with a desire to glorify him above all things.
- **Your Emotions** (Emotionally): our’ affections are reordered.
- **Your Actions**: (Morally and behaviorally): we progressively become like Christ in thought, word, and deed.
- **Your Relationships** (Relationally): our relationship with God and others is restored

The Spirit works (progressively) in Christians to diminish the power of the old nature and to strengthen the graces of the new nature. The selfish man is made self-denying, the sluggard is made zealous for good works, the discontented happy, the drunkard is made sober, the sensual is made pure, the liar is made truthful, the proud is made humble, the greedy is made generous, the godless is made godly.

How do you know if you “have been made alive,” are “born again,” are “a new creation”?

- “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8 ESV).

Ills: Microburst in West Medford/East Arlington on Wednesday, July 18, 2012 (show picture of my house). You can’t see the wind, but you can see its effects.

- “So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit” (Matthew 7:17 ESV).
- “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV).

God saves, makes alive, and renews as you respond in repentance and faith. Contrary to the Catholic Church, sin is not washed away in water baptism and a person is not renewed and regenerated in water baptism.

“In sum, no ceremony—even an important Christian rite such as baptism—is able to regenerate fallen human nature and remit sins. What changes hearts is the powerful, inner work of the Spirit, not a humanly administered ceremony or even the Spirit *and* the religious ceremony” (Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 297)

What is your response?

- Repent: hate your sin, turn from your sin, and ask God to help you to please him with your life.
- Believe: believe and trust the promises of God in the gospel. Reject all works and trust in God's work.
- Follow Jesus as the treasure of your life.

The Big Picture and the Point:

Paul's ultimate goal is that the believers would devote themselves to good works as they live among outsiders. The reality though is that non-Christians are difficult to live with (some Christians are hard to live also). It's not easy to be gentle, kind and considerate to them. Paul's reminding you that you used to be just like them when you were dead in your sins and the only reason you've been made alive is the mercy and grace of God. God is the perfect example for how you should live with outsiders. He pursued people who didn't deserve it, and you were one of them. God wants you to live in such a way with non-Christians that adorns the gospel and makes much of him. I'm glad he didn't give me what I deserved. Let's display grace in our relationships and not give them what they deserve. Let's extend grace.

Are you ready? Maybe the best thing for you this week is for you to put together a "Are you ready" card that helps to prepare your mind to live under rulers and with non-Christians in a way that adorns the gospel and makes much of him. Will you pray and ask God to help you be an initiator of grace and kindness in someone's life this week who doesn't deserve it? Be Ready!!!