



Week Five: Agents of Renewal

In this week's passage Paul wants Titus to remind the church in Crete how to live as believers. This suggests, that as believers, they needed reminding of why and how to do so - we do too. We may have heard all about grace and its implications for our lives many times, but let's face it, we all tend to revert back to our default sinful nature, operating our lives in 'auto-pilot'. We need to be reminded of who we once were, who we are now in Christ, and how we are to live our lives in light of that.

Text – Titus 3:1-8

1. Previously You Had No Good In You

- Read Titus 3:3 & Romans 3:10, 23, Jeremiah 17:9

Though we all love to think we are better than we are, or at least better than others, the Bible makes it clear that we were all absolute rebels in our sin. Paul says that before God's grace appeared to us, as unbelievers, we were all:

- Foolish
- Disobedient
- Led astray
- Slaves to various passions and pleasures
- Malice and envy
- Hated by others and hating one another

We need to be reminded of where we have come from because it is so easy to forget that it was grace alone that rescued us. Everyone other than Christ followers are still slaves to sin and in desperate need of God's grace, which is something that they cannot do or gain by themselves.

- ❖ *Q: Why is it so important to be reminded that we were once exactly the same as the rest of the unbelieving world?*
- ❖ *Q: Why is it unreasonable for us Christians to expect unbelievers to live righteously when they are in fact slaves to sin?*
- ❖ *Personal Reflection Q: Think back to one thing that you were previously enslaved to that God has rescued you from. (Share with the group, if appropriate.)*

2. God Alone Is Good And We Are Recipients Of His Goodness

- Read Titus 3:4-7, Isaiah 64:6, 1 John 4:14 & Luke 19:9-10

Paul reminds us so clearly that it is because of God's goodness and kindness alone that he sent Jesus to save us from our sins. There was nothing inherently good in us that made us deserve his love. No, it was because of his mercy; a one-way transaction where the guilty one is given unmerited favour. Not only did Christ save us from the penalty and power of sin, but he came to reconcile us back to himself; a joy that is ours that will continue with us through this life and into the life to come.



- ❖ *Q: Why does Paul want us as believers to keep remembering the dismal state we were in before God's grace reached down to us?*
- ❖ *Q: Why do you think Paul uses all three words; 'goodness, kindness and mercy' in one short sentence? What does he want us to see/understand?*
- ❖ *Q: What are we being saved from and saved for, and why it is so important to see both sides of salvation?*

3. Doing Good Matters In This World And The Next

- Read Titus 3:1-2 & Romans 12:21

It's easy for us to read these biblical accounts and feel as though it would have meant something different to the readers then, because they were not experiencing our modern-day challenges. But this is certainly not the case here. The Roman government were oppressive and cruel, in ways that most of us would not even begin to relate to. And it was into this context that Paul called the Christians in Crete to live exemplary lives that stood as a witness to the gospel, in all spheres of their lives, including their attitude towards government and their own roles as citizens.

- Paul calls us to be submissive to rulers and authorities, ready for every good work

Submission to authority was the one side of their witness, but actively and intentionally doing good was the other. Paul was not just calling the believers to be morally neutral but to stand out for doing good. In our context, he could be calling us not just to pay our taxes but to be generous and hospitable to those in need. He could be calling us to not just obey the speed limit, but to also drive with caution and consideration, putting other drivers before ourselves. He would be calling us to stop cutting corners at work, doing the bare minimum to get the pay cheque, but to work with such integrity (whether seen or unseen) that excellence is our trademark. It would also mean doing what we are told to do, with a good attitude, even when we think our own ideas are better. Our submission and obedience to authority figures in all matters glorifies God.

- Speak evil of no one, avoid quarrelling, be gentle, and show perfect courtesy toward all people

The way we speak to people and our manner of treating them exposes our hearts – which the gospel needs to penetrate. Our own need for mercy and grace that has been so richly given should motivate us to live lives that are honourable in our both our words and interactions with all people. Our obedience to Christ in these areas has the power to impact our world. His power in us to overcome evil with good causes people to see God's goodness.

- ❖ *Q: Our words reveal what is in our heart. Explain.*
- ❖ *Q: Why is it not acceptable to God for us to talk about our government with such disdain? What would be a godly way to deal with our concerns and struggles against a corrupt government?*
- ❖ *Q: How do you think God gets glory when we willingly submit to our rulers and authorities?*
- ❖ *Q: Why is it important for us to actively do good instead of just obeying the rules and not cutting corners?*
- ❖ *What is God asking you to do in response to this?*