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Living Christian In 'This Present World'

Titus Chapter 3

By

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God has graciously given every Christian a guide to living Christian in this present world (age). That guide is His Word. The Apostle Paul wrote this in his letter to Titus:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. Titus 2:11-15

We studied those verses in the last part of our study. As the world around us becomes a more difficult place for Christians to live, learning how to 'live Christian' takes on more importance. We invite you to read [the introduction to this series](#) for some historical background to Paul's letter to Titus.

Paul moved next to some important reminders for Christians about how to live Christian in this present world.

Titus 3:1-2

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

Paul told Titus to “remind” Christians about seven important aspects of living Christian in the present world.

1. be subject to rulers and authorities
2. obey
3. be ready for every good work
4. speak evil of no one
5. be peaceable
6. be gentle
7. show all humility to all men

Imagine living in a community where everyone did those seven things? It would seem like a paradise! That's how God wants His children to live in this present world, even when people hate us and persecute us for our faith in Christ. The world has been tough on Christians during the past 2,000 years and it will be even more difficult in the coming weeks, months and years. That's why we need to be in God's Word and be reminded of how God wants us to live in this present world. You might think of these seven areas of behavior as being God's standard to how He wants Christians to live their lives.

Keep in mind that when Paul wrote his letter to Titus they lived in a predominately pagan society ruled by the Roman Empire. The spiritual and physical forces facing Christians were intense.

Remind

The Greek word for “remind” is *hupomimnḗskó* and means “to call to mind, to remember because prompted.”

That’s what Paul wanted Titus to do on Crete .. prompt Christians to remember how God wanted them to live in their communities and the world of that time. This “reminding” was to be continual. The verb *hupomimnḗskó* is in the present tense, imperative mood, which means “keep reminding them.” It’s not enough for Christian leaders to say it one time and expect Christians to remember for the rest of their lives. Christians are human and forget things, even important things. The reminder about how to live Christian needs to be repeated .. often. Paul had probably taught these things to the new Christians in Crete, but he knew they would need reminders as they faced the challenges of living Christian in the present world.

Be Subject To Rulers And Authorities

The first reminder is about being subject to rulers and authorities. Here's a quick look at key words:

- subject — *hupotassó* .. “to place or rank under, submit to”
- rulers — *arché* .. “beginning, origin, chief, first”
- authorities — *exousia* .. “power to act, delegated power”

Every town and community has several people who “rule.” Think about all the authorities in your life from law enforcement to mayors, city councils, county commissions, the executive branch to legislative branch to judicial branch of governments. That's a lot of rulers and authorities! Paul told Titus, “remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities.”

The Roman government began as a monarchy, then became a republic, similar in some ways to the structure of the government in the United States, and then as an autocracy as emperors took more and more power away from elected officials. They used their power to inflict great damage on their enemies. The autocracy was the type of government in power when Paul wrote his letter to Titus. Nero was the Roman emperor at the time. If you read about the cruelty of Nero, you may wonder why God would want Christians to be “subject” to him and those who ruled under him.

Christianity is not about who is ruling on earth. Our Ruler is in Heaven. King Jesus wants His followers to be subject to earthly rulers, no matter who they are or how they rule. We can do that because Jesus rules from Heaven and is above all earthly rulers. The Apostle Paul had written this to the Ephesians a few years earlier:

... and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. Ephesians 1:19-21

There is no one on earth who is higher than Jesus Christ. Jesus is “far above” all principality and power and might and dominion. He is far above every name that is named, “not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” Jesus, our great King, wants us to be subject to earthly rulers and authorities. As difficult as that may be for us to deal with in our mixed-up world today, that’s what God wants us to do.

The same was true for the Cretans. Rome defeated Cretan forces in a three-year war that ended in 69 BC, which was a little less than a hundred years from when Paul visited Crete and wrote his letter to Titus. It was important that Christians on Crete remembered that King Jesus wanted them to be subject to those in authority over them.

Paul addressed this issue of subjection to civil authorities several years earlier in his letter to the Romans:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ROMANS 13:1

The Apostle Peter also addressed it in his first letter:

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who

do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men — as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. 1 PETER 2:13-17

Obey

Paul added the word *peitharcheó*. It means “persuaded of what comes first.” The context might dictate its connection to obeying rulers and authorities, though the words “be subject to” would seem to cover that. Here’s an interesting note from one commentator:

It is probable that the reason why the apostle enjoined this so particularly was, because the Judaizing teachers in Crete affirmed, that no obedience was due from the worshippers of the true God to magistrates who were idolaters, and because by that doctrine they were beginning to make not only the Jewish, but the Gentile believers, bad subjects, and liable to be punished as evil-doers. BENSON COMMENTARY

That raises an important question for every Christian today. Should we obey government leaders who are unbelievers? The answer is “yes” and “no.”

Jesus, Paul and Peter made it clear that followers of Christ should obey the lawful directives of government. However, Peter also made it clear that followers of Christ should not obey the directives of government when it comes to disobeying God.

And the high priest asked them, saying, 'Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!' But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him. Acts 5:27-32

The lawful authorities in Israel commanded the apostles not to preach in the name of Jesus. That's where Christians should draw a line in the sand. We will not stop preaching in the name of Jesus, even if government rulers tell us to stop.

Another aspect of this that early Christians had to face was when Roman emperors demanded that Christians worship them. Emperor worship, also known as the Imperial Cult, had a history before Christianity. However, Rome allowed Jews to be monotheistic so they did not have to worship the emperor. Roman authorities looked at early Christianity as being a sect of Judaism since Jews were the first to become followers of Christ. Emperor worship was apparently not an issue at the time Paul wrote the Romans or Titus, so he didn't address that in his letters.

It was later in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD that Christians were no longer viewed as a sect of Judaism and were forced to perform a sacrifice to Roman gods and the well-being of the emperor. Many Christians refused and were imprisoned and tortured. Some Christians were killed. Many Christians went into hiding. However, some Christians did perform pagan sacrifices and received a certificate (*libellatici*) from their local magistrate to prove what they had done. Christians who refused to offer sacrifices to the Roman gods and burn incense to the emperor during the 3rd century viewed those Christians as apostates and called them *lapsi* (fallen). The number of *lapsi* was so large that it became a problem for the Church after Christianity was legalized in the 4th century. Many Christians who had suffered or had family members who had suffered because of their loyalty to Christ in refusing to offer pagan sacrifices did not want any of the *lapsi* to be forgiven and allowed to return to worship in their local churches. Mercy was eventually offered (*lapsi* often had to perform some type of public penance before being allowed to rejoin Christian worship), but it demonstrated the seriousness that many

Christians had about not obeying government orders that conflicted with the teachings of the Bible.

That's good advice for Christians today. We should obey government authorities UNLESS they demand that we do something that is clearly forbidden by Christ and His apostles (e.g. not preach in Jesus' name, offer sacrifices to pagan gods, etc).

Ready For Every Good Work

The third behavior Paul wanted Titus to remind Cretan Christians about was to “be ready for every good work.” The word “ready” is *hetoimos* and means “prepared, ready because preparations have been made.”

“every good work” is *pan ergon agathon* (every work good). It means “every kind of deed that is intrinsically good.”

That’s the attitude Jesus wants all of His followers to have. He wants us to prepare ourselves for every kind of intrinsically good deed and be ready to do it.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. Acts 9:36

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

... that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:10

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. Hebrews 10:24

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 2 Peter 2:11-12

It may also be helpful to remind ourselves what Paul wrote about good works earlier in his letter to Titus:

They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. Titus 1:16

Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works. Titus 2:6-7

... looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every

lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Titus 2:13-14

Good works are at the heart of God's will for our lives. We cannot perform any work that is good enough to earn salvation, but good works should flow from our lives after we have been saved by God's grace.

Tabitha (Dorcas) was an example of what God refers to as "good works." When Peter arrived at Joppa he heard that Tabitha had died. The widows who were in the upper room of the house showed Peter the tunics and garments Dorcas had made while she was with them (while she was alive). Peter prayed for Tabitha and the woman came back to life.

What we learn here is that something as seemingly simple as making tunics and garments for people is called "good works."

Romans 16:1-6 is another example of how Christians perform “good works.” The people Paul mentioned were involved in many aspects of supporting the Gospel ministry. Each of them gave of their time, talents and gifts, which is what each of should do every day. We need to prepare ourselves to be ready for “every good work.”

Reminders

Paul told Titus to “remind” Christians who lived on the island of Crete. That means Paul and Titus had told them these things before. No matter how long we are Christians, it’s always good to be reminded of how God wants us to live. It’s so easy to forget.

The word “remind” is the Greek *hupomimnēske* and means “to call to mind, to remember because prompted.” Paul used the verb in the present tense, imperative mood, active voice, which meant to “keep reminding” the Christians on Crete. These are things that need to be repeated. Christians need a continual prompting lest they forget the importance.

Speak Evil of No One

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. Titus 3:1-2

The fourth reminder was about not speaking evil of anyone. It appears from the change in terms that Paul was moving from a Christian's responsibility to government leaders to their responsibility to fellow human beings. Even as Christians may have differences with government officials, they may also have differences with fellow citizens. How should they respond to those differences?

The Greek words *mēdena blasphēmein* mean "no one to speak evil of." The Greek word *blasphēmein* was transliterated into the English word "blaspheme." It's a strong verb meaning "to slander, speak evil against." The word could be used for slandering humans or that which is sacred (e.g. God).

Christians need to watch how they speak about people, including people in both high and low positions. Unbelievers learn a lot about what Christians really believe by how they speak about others. Christians who speak well of others in public, but blaspheme those same people in private are viewed by unbelievers as hypocrites.

Some of the cruelest things are said by people who are part of the same family. This can also be a problem among Christians. I remember as a twelve-year-old attending a church business meeting and hearing people say very cruel things to one another. The same people who pretended to be nice to each other during church meetings expressed the real contempt they held for each other. It was an ugly scene and was the beginning of my deciding to leave the church a few years later. I saw those people as hypocrites and mean-spirited. Christians need to carefully watch what they say about others. You may not realize how your words affect others.

Be Peaceable

The Greek is *amachous einai* – “peaceable to be.” The word *amachous* is an adjective that means “not contentious, abstaining from fighting.” The idea is that Christians should not be “quarrelsome.” Paul mentioned the same thing to Timothy when he wrote that bishops should not be quarrelsome (*amachon*). Paul wanted Christians in the pew to be like pastors in the pulpit.

That just brought to my memory a very sad event that I haven't thought about for many years. We visited my parent's church decades ago and left at the end of the service. We were eating lunch when my parent's phone rang. My mother answered the phone and we could tell something bad had happened. He returned to the table and told us that one of the men had run up to the platform during the business meeting with a knife in his hand. The pastor ran from the church, packed up his wife and children and left the nearby parsonage. The pastor and his family did not return.

While you might think that's an extreme case of being "quarrelsome," it's not. That was not the first time I personally witnessed Christians and leaders openly quarreling with each other. Many pastors have left the ministry because of verbal and physical abuse by members. Many members have left their churches because of verbal and physical abuse by pastors and other church leaders. It can go both ways, which is why Paul told pastors and members not to be quarrelsome. If we're going to preach the Gospel of peace, we need to "be peaceable."

Gentle

The word “gentle” is *epieikeis* and is an adjective that means “yielding, equitable, reasonable, moderate.” One definition is “justice beyond ordinary justice.” The noun form, *epieikeia*, means “fairness, forbearance, moderation, equity-justice.” Paul used the same word in 1 Timothy 3 about bishops (pastors). James wrote that gentleness is part of “the wisdom that is from above” (James 3:17).

Christians need to be reminded to be gentle, to be ready to yield to others, be reasonable and equitable. Why? Because that’s not inherent in human nature. Being gentle in difficult situations is part of the Spirit’s fruit in our lives as God’s people (Galatians 5:23). Outbursts of wrath and dissensions are some of the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:20). It’s natural for people to demand their rights. It’s supernatural for people to yield some of their rights for the benefit of others.

I think we can agree that we need more gentleness in our world today, but where will it begin? Should we wait for unbelievers to show the path toward gentleness? I don't think so. Paul told Titus and Timothy to remind Christians that gentleness should begin with them (us). Think about our highest example of the Christian heart and spirit – our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ:

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29

If we are to be like Jesus, we need to be gentle and lowly in heart.

Showing All Humility To All Men

Showing humility to all men is *pasan endeiknumenous prautēta pros pantas anthrōpous*. The word *endeiknumenous* means to “prove, indicate, show forth, make fully evident.” The word *prautēta* means “gentleness, mildness, meekness.” To be meek does not mean to be weak. It means having “gentle strength.” Showing humility is the opposite of promoting your own way of doing things. Yielding to others does not demonstrate weakness. It demonstrates strength of character and resolve. It’s what Jesus did when He suffered and died on the Cross for our sins. As Jesus told His disciples:

Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:4

Jesus also promised a reward to those who humble themselves:

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Luke 14:11

The Apostle Paul pleaded with the Corinthian Christians by both the meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:1). In using these terms for Christians in Titus 3, we see a powerful combination that will prepare us for whatever this age throws at us.

Crete was not an easy place for Christians to live. That's true for most places on earth today, including the United States. Paul wrote to Titus in an "early-Christian" environment. The Gospel message Paul preached to the Gentiles living on Crete was very new – less than 35 years from Christ's death and resurrection. Most Gentiles at that time were pagans and worshipped idols. They viewed the Christian life and message as ignorant, irrelevant and even oppositional to their pagan lifestyle.

We are living in what some people call a "post-Christian" environment. The Gospel has been preached for almost two-thousand years, but Christianity is no longer admired and desired by masses of people. They view the Christian life and message as ignorant, irrelevant and oppositional to their 'modern' lifestyle.

Practicing Christianity

Though Christianity is still listed as one of the world's major religions, the number of people who practice what's known as *evangelical* Christianity (people who believe in having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and preaching of the Gospel of Christ to unbelievers) is small and eroding quickly. Unfortunately, a large number of evangelical Christians no longer accept central teachings of the Bible as true (e.g. Jesus Christ is Eternal God rather than a created being, rose from the dead, etc.). As one Christian leader stated – “Evangelicals are sadly drifting away from God's absolute standard in Scripture” (Stephen Nichols, President of Reformation Bible College, Professor of Apologetics).

The number of people who *practice* Christianity today is an extremely small minority among those who claim to be Christians. While some surveys put the percentage at 20-25%, that is down from 45% in 2000 ([Barna, 2020](#)). However, based on the criteria used to determine a “practicing” Christian, the true number may be even lower.

It is possible to “practice” something incorrectly. The old saying “practice makes perfect” is not correct if what a person practices is wrong. In the martial arts world we say “perfect practice makes perfect.” That means the teacher and student are focused on doing right things right. Who determines what’s right? The founder of a martial system and those he or she trained to pass along the art. We need that desperately in Christianity. We need teachers and students focused on doing right things right. We need teachers who teach God’s Word according to the Founder and those He trained to pass along the Truth of the Word. We call that *rightly dividing* the Word of Truth.

That’s practicing “biblical” Christianity. That means going back to the Word of God and inviting the Spirit of God who inspired the writing of the Bible to teach true Christianity. What do you do if the Spirit of God reveals that what your pastor has been teaching is wrong? What do you do if the Spirit of God reveals that what your denomination has been teaching is wrong? I hope that you would listen to the Spirit

of God. Why do I say that? Because Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church, said it:

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. John 16:12-15

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Revelation 2 & 3

And because those who Jesus trained to pass along the truth said the same thing:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but ^[b]holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:19-21

Biblical Christianity

When we look at the criteria of companies that survey Christians about their beliefs, we often find that their view of a “practicing” Christian is based on a less than *biblical* view of Christianity. Here’s an example of how the head of one leading survey company views a practicing Christian:

A lot of religion research—even Barna’s—tracks single factors, such as church attendance. But the ‘practicing Christian’ measure is unique in that it combines three variables: calling oneself a Christian, strongly prioritizing faith and regular church attendance. [David Kinnaman, President of Barna](#)

Think about that for a moment. *Practicing Christians* –

1. Identify as a Christian
2. Strongly agree that faith is very important in their lives
3. Have attended church within the past month

While those are certainly good points to mention when discussing what it means to be a practicing Christian, I hope you'll agree with me that the criteria for being a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ is much deeper and broader than just those three. That's what we are seeing in Paul's letter to Titus – a deeply holy expectation of what it means to be a “biblical” Christian.

[Let me insert something here for just a minute so I'm not misunderstood. As a Christian journalist I appreciate what survey companies do. They do research and interpret and explain their research. Journalists also do their own research and report on that research in addition to research from survey companies. While I'm grateful for the work these companies do, my job as a journalist is to report more than just the data discovered in a research project. Journalists should dig deep into the data and ask tough questions about the methodology and criteria used in the process of presenting and interpreting the data.

Unfortunately, a deep dive perspective is often missing in how company researchers report their findings in public statements, news releases, on their websites, etc. That's why I want to go to the heart of a research project (the full, unreacted script) and find the purpose that drove the process. That information is sometimes available to journalists, but is often not reported or made available to the public. Why? Maybe journalists aren't given time to do thorough research .. maybe they don't know how .. maybe they just aren't interested in getting to the bottom of why a story is a story. That's unfortunate because knowing all aspects of any story (e.g. who, what, when, where, how, why) is necessary to knowing the truth. Understanding what's happening to the Lord's Church seems like a very important story to get right.

Just like science is driven by scientists, research is driven by researchers. If you want to know if the findings of scientific research leads to information you can trust, look at how scientists do their job. If you want to know if a research project will lead to information you can trust, look at how

researchers do their job. I often say that the process is “follow the people, follow the money.” Journalists should be **curious and skeptical, accurate and objective**. The more I know about the people involved in doing the research and the money behind the research (who’s paying for it?), the better I’ll understand the findings of a research project and whether I can trust research conclusions.

While I think some survey researchers do a good job, those of us who use the findings need to make sure we’ve done our due diligence to understand the people and money behind the research and the true meaning of the findings. It is because of the stated criteria for what determines a “practicing Christian” that I think the percentage of “biblical Christians” in churches is much lower – maybe as low as 10-15% (if not lower). Most survey companies use similar identifiers and criteria, but look closely at how they define various groups before comparing findings in one piece of research to another (apples to apples – or apples to oranges?). I hope that helps clarify both my concern and caution in using survey results and the reason I may report

on surveys differently than some other journalists who use survey results to explain what's going on in churches and denominations.]

Back To Crete

Okay, let's get back to Crete and Paul's letter to Titus.

The number of people who practiced *biblical Christianity* on the island of Crete was small, but for a different reason than today. The Gospel message was new to the people living on Crete. Paul and Titus had visited Crete for the first time just a year or two earlier. Paul left Titus on Crete to “set in order the things that are lacking” (Titus 1:5), which is the primary purpose of Paul's letter. Paul wanted Titus to ordain qualified elders in each church, guard against false teaching in the churches, teach Christians to live godly in an ungodly society, and become effective in reaching people on the island with the Gospel of Christ.

That brings us now to the next part of Paul's letter to Titus where the apostle emphasized the essentials for evangelizing cities and nations. Let's all take note of what Paul wrote because we desperately need to hear these words in our own time.

The Past

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. Titus 3:3

Paul started with the past. Every Christian has a past. Even people who were raised in Christian families and can't remember a time when they didn't believe in Jesus have a past. That's because every person is born into sin. I know – it's hard to look at the sweet face of a newborn child and think of them as sinners, but God says everyone is born with a sin nature.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. Psalm 51:5

The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Psalm 58:

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
Romans 3:23*

There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one. Romans 3:10-12

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. Romans 7:14

So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:8

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. Ephesians 2:1-3

The solution to this “sin” problem?

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. Romans 5:6-9

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2

Paul included himself in his statement to Titus – “For we ourselves were also once...” Every Christian leader needs to remember from where they came. As we preach the Gospel of God’s Love and Redemption, hearers of the Gospel need to know that the preachers and teachers are humble and aware of who they are in Christ – sinners at birth, saved by grace through faith.

- Every Christian was once foolish (*anoétos* – thoughtless, lacking understanding, mindless, dense).
- Every Christian was once disobedient (*apeithés* – unwilling to be persuaded, unbelieving, rejecting of God’s truth).
- Every Christian was once deceived (*planaó* – led astray, caused to wander, deviate from the correct course, go astray).
- Every Christian once served various lusts (*epithymiais* – evil passions) and pleasures (*hēdonais* – sensual pleasures, physical lusts).

- Every Christian once lived in wickedness (*kakia* – wickedness, vicious disposition, inherent evil) and envy (*phthonos* – corruption, grudge, jealous envy).
- Every Christian was once hateful (*stugétos* – abominable, disgusting, detestable) toward others.
- Every Christian once hated each other (*miseó allélón* – detested others, loved others less, elevated some people over others).

Paul said that's the way people were. However, that's in the past for someone who is a true Christian. Yes, we were born into sin and, yes, we were by nature "children of wrath." However, God put that part of our life behind us when He demonstrated His great love for us:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). Ephesians 2:4-5

We are learning how to live Christian in this present world from a letter written almost two-thousand years ago. How does that work? How can someone who lived in the 1st century AD write something that addresses how to live in the 21st century? Simple. God inspired them to write it.

Paul the Apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit to write to Titus in Crete, shared what was and still is necessary to live Christian in the present age.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. Titus 2:11-15

There really is no “secret” to living Christian in this present age. Yes, God revealed many secrets (mysteries) to Paul that the apostle revealed to Christians. However, once a secret is revealed it is no longer a secret. If Christians read Paul’s letter to Titus (along with Paul’s other letters), they’ll know how to live for God in difficult circumstances.

Here’s a short reminder of what we studied previously.

The Past

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. Titus 3:3

Every Christian has a past. Whether you were saved at seven or seventy, you were dead in sins at one time. We all need to remember from where we came. The wonderful thing about Christianity is that we do not have to live in the past! Yes, we were once foolish. Yes, we were once disobedient. Yes, we were deceived. Yes, we served various

lusts and pleasures. Yes, we lived in malice and envy. Yes, we were hateful and hated other people. Is that who Christians are now? No!

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Our past is behind us! We are a new creation. Old things have passed away and all things have become new. That's the good news of the Gospel.

So, we move now from the past to the present. That's Paul's next point for Titus to share with the Christians on Crete.

The Present

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom

He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. Titus 3:4-6

What really changes a person? What takes a wicked, selfish sinner and turns them into a loving, caring person? It is “the kindness and the love of God our Savior.” Think about what that means in your life and the lives of people you know. So many people view themselves as victims in life. They see themselves as unloved and even disposal. Nothing could be further from the truth. God values people and turned His kindness and love toward people. That’s often a good place to begin talking with people about the Gospel of Christ. They need to know that their Creator loves and values them.

The Greek word for “love” here is *philanthrópia*. It means “love for mankind.” Our word “philanthropy” comes from it. God is the first and greatest “Philanthropist.” He created the heavens and the earth and everything in it. He “gave” His only Son to die for our sins. Even though people reject God and turn their backs on Him, He continues to be philanthropic in His attitude and behavior toward people.

God keeps reaching out and offering Himself to them – to us.

Notice that Paul wrote about the “kindness and love of God.” How often does someone do something kind for you in a day? Once? Twice? Not at all? Many people in our world have little to no experience with kindness. Their experience is with people who treat them harshly without concern for their well-being.

God, on the other hand, cares about people. He treats them with kindness and love. The Greek word for “kindness” is *chrétotés* and includes the idea of gentleness. Someone who is kind is gentle in how they treat others. The two go together. The word also carries the idea of meeting the needs of others. We see that in how Jesus treated people and taught His followers to treat people.

God saved us “according to His mercy.” The Greek word for “mercy” is *eleos*. It means “pity, compassion, mercy.” That is God’s attitude toward us. We should also share that attitude toward others. We should have compassion on those who do not believe in Jesus and tell them about His love for them. We should have compassion for those who are less fortunate in this world and demonstrate Christian compassion toward them. We see many times in the Gospel accounts that Jesus was “moved with compassion” as He looked on the physical and spiritual condition of people.

As for how we should treat our fellow Christians –

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 1 Peter 3:8-9

Another important insight comes from 2 Corinthians.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

God is called “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” The word “mercies” (*oiktirmos*) is also translated “compassions.” The word “comfort” (*paraklésis*) means “a calling to one’s aid, a legal advocate.” We receive compassion and comfort from our Heavenly Father who has shown us great mercy. He expects us to do the same for others. In fact, we are able to “comfort” people who in trouble “with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

An important aspect of living Christian in this present age is showing kindness and compassion toward others. We are able to do that because of our own experience with God who has shown us continual kindness and compassion.

The Future

... that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:7

Every Christian will experience a wonderful future. Because we are justified by God's grace, we are heirs with Christ. That's according to the "hope of eternal life." I honestly can't think of anything better than that. God has forgiven us and given us the hope of life everlasting in Heaven with Him.

Paul wrote many times about Christians being "heirs." Here are a couple of examples from his Letters:

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:16-17

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. Ephesians 3:1-7

I love the phrase, “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” The Greek word for “heirs” is *klēronomoi* and means “an inheritor, one who inherits from another.” The word combines two other Greek words which mean “lot” and “to allot, distribute.” Greeks in the 1st century AD understood the word to address the issue of inheriting property through the casting of “lots.” The word for “joint heirs” is *synklēronomoi* and means “a co-inheritor.” We “inherit” from God the Father and are “co-inheritors” with God the Son. How remarkable is that?

Why are Christians heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ? It's because of this:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of

His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:3-6

God blessed us with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Becoming heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ are two of the wonderful “spiritual blessings” that we have in Christ. God “chose” us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. How can we be holy and without blame when we were born sinners? God “predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ.” We are legal inheritors because God made us legal sons through spiritual adoption. Why? Because it pleased Him to do so: “according to the good pleasure of His will.” God made us “accepted in the Beloved” by His great grace. That’s how we became heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

According to the hope of eternal life – In reference to the hope of eternal life; that is, we have that hope in virtue of our being adopted with the family of God, and being made heirs. He has received us as his children, and permits us to hope that we shall live with him forever. Barnes' Notes on the Bible

In the Ancient Greek culture, someone who was an “heir” received property as a personal “possession.” It belonged to them. Even if the inheritor was some distance from the property they inherited, it belong to them. Paul explained the role that God the Spirit has in guaranteeing our inheritance for our future.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13-14

If you are a Christian and reading this eBook, you have God's guarantee of your inheritance "until the redemption of the purchased possession." Jesus purchased our eternal possession with His Blood. Our future redemption of that eternal possession is waiting for our arrival in Heaven. There, we will receive our inheritance. We will be "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," and as Paul promised, "that we may also be glorified together."

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4-7

Our Guide

The apostles of Christ lived two-thousand years ago. Yet, their writings continue to guide God's people to this day. Why is that? Jesus Christ explained it to them in this way –

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. John 16:12-14

The apostles, guided into “all truth” by the Holy Spirit, explained it this way –

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:16-21

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Paul the Apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit to write to Titus in Crete in the early part of the 7th decade of the 1st century AD, shared what was and still is necessary to live Christian in the present age. 'Living Christian' didn't change because of the passage of time. It's still true today and absolutely foundational to Christianity.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good

works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. Titus 2:11-15

Notice the 'spiritual keys' Paul passed along to Titus, that he would then pass along to the elders in each of the churches on Crete –

- the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men
- teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live “soberly”
- teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live “righteously”
- teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live “godly”
- teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age
- looking for the blessed hope and glorious appear of our great God Savior Jesus Christ

- who gave Himself for us
- who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us
- who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed
- who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people
- who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people zealous of good works

Look very carefully at these 'spiritual keys' that the Holy Spirit gave to Paul to give to Titus to give the church elders to give to the people of God.

Our Helper

If I may be so bold, I'd like to say that God is not playing games with us. God is not offering His people choices in how to live Christian in this present age. God is not offering a 'cafeteria' system of faith and practice. God is serious and gave us His Spirit to help us live the life He wants us to live.

Paul told Titus to "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you." Prior to ascending back to Heaven after His resurrection, Jesus said that He had all authority "in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Based on that authority, Jesus told His disciples to "make disciples of all the nations." Based on that authority, Jesus told His disciples to teach every disciple they made to "observe" (obey) all of the things He had commanded them to believe and do. Even though Jesus was ascending back to Heaven, He told His disciples that He would be with them "always, even to the end of the age." How could Jesus do that? Through the Holy Spirit –

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. John 16:7-11

Jesus ascended to Heaven to rule and reign, even as He sent “the Helper.” The Holy Spirit, Eternal God who is Co-Equal with God the Father and God the Son, would come and “convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

- Convict the world of sin
- Convict the world of righteousness
- Convict the world of judgement

Why?

of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

- of sin, because they do not believe in Me
- of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more
- of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged

God is not playing. He's serious – deadly serious. God is Almighty. He is All-Knowing. He is All-Seeing. He is Everywhere Present at the same time. He is Unchanging. He is Eternal. He is the Creator. He is the Sustainer of all things. God is the great "I AM."

There really is no “secret” to living Christian in this present age. It once was a secret (e.g. Ephesians 3), but God revealed many secrets (mysteries) to Paul that the apostle then revealed to Christians. Once a secret is revealed it is no longer a secret. If Christians read Paul’s letter to Titus (along with Paul’s other letters), they’ll know how to live for God in difficult circumstances. Only one thing to fear – God. Fear God. That fear is the beginning of wisdom, knowledge , and true understanding.

Learning from Paul

We have learned a great deal from the Apostle Paul's letter to Titus already, but there is more to come. I hope you will read previous parts of this study (Parts 1-13) to help you better understand this next part.

But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. Titus 3:9-11

Paul is writing to Titus, a colleague of the apostle, who is setting in order “the things that are lacking,” and appointing “elders in every city” on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5). The context of Titus chapter 3 is for Titus to remind the Christians in churches across Crete “to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all

humility to all men.” The verse that leads into verses 9-11 is – “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.”

So, we now have the context. Without context, we will never correctly interpret the Bible. We will never experience the Word of God “rightly divided” (2 Timothy 2:15). Without experiencing the Word of God *rightly divided*, we will never be “approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed.” The unfortunate fact that many pastors and Bible teachers in our country (and across the world) do not preach or teach the Bible in context demonstrates that God does not approve of their work. They need to get to work and do a much better job preparing God’s people “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). Otherwise, they should be ashamed.

I know that sounds harsh, but would you prefer I skip over Scripture that causes some people who attend church to feel “uncomfortable?” I hope you don’t want me to do that. Don’t ask me to do that. I won’t do that. Why? Because God is God, and He has spoken. God’s Word is unchanging. It cannot be interpreted on the whims of just anyone who wants to call themselves a pastor, or preacher, or Bible teacher. If someone who claims to preach or teach God’s Word but won’t take the time to “rightly divide” God’s Word, they should be ashamed, counseled, and possibly removed from any position of leadership in a church, denomination, or school until they grow in their understanding of what it means to “rightly divide” God’s Word.

One of the first things I would recommend for a group of church elders to do is determine if the offending pastor, teacher, or preacher is saved. If they are saved, the elders should work to restore the offender. If they are unsaved, the elders should determine if the person is misled or a misleader. If they are misled, the elders should work with the unbelieving offender to determine how they could become a preacher or teacher without first being a believer, then

preach the Gospel to the the unbeliever. If the unbeliever confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believes in their heart that God raised Him from the dead, the elders should treat the former preacher/teacher as a new believer and begin a process of teaching them. If the unbeliever will not confess or believe, yet desires to continue to preach or teach, the elders should remove the offender from the church and not allow them to influence church members any further.

Is that any easy process? Absolutely not. Is it what God demands church leaders do? Absolutely.

Being a church leader is not easy for many reasons. Some of them are spelled out in Titus. You'll find others in Paul's letters to Timothy, as well as his other letters, and what he did and said as recorded in the Book of Acts. You'll find more reasons in letters written by Peter, James, Jude, and John, and especially in what Jesus said to the pastors of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation.

Avoid

Much of what God teaches us in His Word concerns things we should “avoid.” God created us. He knows how the “fall” into sin affected us. He knows what things and activities we should “avoid.”

Paul used the Greek word *περίστημι* (*periistémi*). It means “block out, to stand around, to avoid, shun.” It’s a strong word that Paul also used in his second letter to Timothy – “But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.” (2 Timothy 2:16) The word comes from *ἵστημι* (*histémi*) which means “to make to stand, to stand.” Paul wanted Titus and Timothy to make a stand against certain teachings and practices in the churches. In his letter to Titus, Paul wrote him to “avoid” –

- foolish disputes
- genealogies
- contentions

- strivings about the law

Let's look at each one from both the text (original language) and context (how people would have understood Paul's words in the 1st century).

Foolish disputes – the word “foolish” comes from the Greek word μωρός (*móros*). It means “stupid, slow, dull, foolish, silly.” It is the the root word for the English words, “moron, moronic.” The people of Crete would know that Paul was describing something that made no sense (nonsense). The word *móros* is an adjective that described “disputes.” That is a translation of the word ζήτησις (*zétésis*) which means “debate, controversy, meaningless question.” Paul wanted the Christians in Crete to “avoid” stupid controversies that so often come from meaningless questions. Unfortunately, we see a lot of that in a lot of today's churches. Foolish disputes waste valuable time and distract Christians from their primary calling to preach the Gospel, make disciples, and equip each other for ministry. It's definitely one of

Satan's favorite tricks in his continual attack on churches and denominations.

Next, we see Paul addressing the issue of avoiding "genealogies." γενεαλογία (*genealogia*) concerns a person's "pedigree." Paul also issued a similar warning in his first letter to Timothy –

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. 1 Timothy 1:3-4

The Bible is full of genealogies. They were important to God and His people for many reasons, the most important being those that pointed to the Messiah. Here are some examples

—

This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. Genesis 5:1

This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. Genesis 6:9

Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood. Genesis 10:1

This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac. Genesis 25:19

Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David. Ruth 4:18-22

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Matthew 1:1

This is not the “genealogies” Paul was referring to in Titus 3 or 1 Timothy 1. It was something much different and divisive. Our “share” in the genealogy of Christ “by grace through faith” brings people together. It unifies; it does not divide.

In Paul's letter to Timothy, he combined "fables and endless genealogies." In Titus, Paul connected the words "foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law." Might that be a clue for us to understand? Timothy was in Ephesus and Titus was in Crete (hundreds of miles from each other), but the people in both places spoke Greek and were part of the Roman Empire. They would have understood the word γενεαλογία in a similar fashion. Remember the definition of the word – "pedigree." The idea contains a sense of self-importance and superiority. In Christ, we are all the same and receive our position by grace through faith in Him.

Paul addressed something similar in his letter to the churches in Galatia –

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are

*Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
Galatians 3:26-29*

There is no place for arguing one's importance or 'pedigree' in a church setting. It's a waste of time, as well as being divisive. I don't think the arguments concerned the genealogy of Jesus Christ because that would have been important. Whether the churches of the 1st century were arguing because of the gnostics' or Judaizers' emphasis on "genealogies," Paul wrote that the arguments were "unprofitable and useless." The apostle's concerns were about unity of purpose in the service of God. These arguments had the potential of dividing church members by "genealogy" – Jew or Gentile. As we saw in Galatians 3, and also read in Ephesians 2, Christ died to make one new man out of the two old men (Jew and Gentile).

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to

create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 2:14-18

Titus and the church elders knew what Paul meant and that they needed to address the problem right away.

Here's a bit more insight from *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers* (1 Timothy) –

Endless genealogies.—*Genealogies in their proper sense, as found in the Book of the Pentateuch, and to which wild allegorical interpretations had been assigned. Such purely fanciful meanings had been already developed by Philo, whose religious writings were becoming at this time known and popular in many of the Jewish schools. Such teaching, if*

allowed in the Christian churches, St. Paul saw would effectually put a stop to the growth of Gentile Christendom. It would inculcate an undue and exaggerated, and, for the ordinary Gentile convert, an impossible reverence for Jewish forms and ceremonies; it would separate the Jewish and Gentile converts into two classes—placing the favoured Jew in an altogether different position from the outcast Gentile.

In the Gentile churches founded by the Apostles, for some years a life and death struggle went on between the pupils of St. Paul and his fellow Apostles and the disciples of the Rabbinical schools. In these earnest warnings of his Pastoral Epistles the great Apostle of Gentile Christianity shows us, how clearly he foresaw that if these Jewish fables and the comments of the older Jewish teachers were allowed to enter into the training of the new-formed congregations, the Church of Christ would shrink, in no long space of time, into the narrow and exclusive limits of a Jewish sect. "Judaism," writes the

anonymous author of Paul of Tarsus, “was the cradle of Christianity, and Judaism very nearly became its grave.”

Paul addressed this further in his next words in Titus 3:9 – “contentions, and strivings about the law.” The word “contentions” comes from the Greek ἔρις (*eris*), which means “strife, wrangling, contention.” The word “striving” comes from the Greek μάχη (*maché*), which means “battle, fight, conflict.” It comes from the word μάχομαι which means “to engage in a battle, fight.” The idea is that people are “contending” about something. That something, Paul wrote, was about the “law” (νομικό, *nomikos*). The people were fighting about legal views they considered important important enough to divide them from one another. What did Paul write? “they are unprofitable and useless.”

The word “unprofitable” comes from the Greek word ἀνωφελής (*nóphelés*). It means “of no advantage, useless.” The word “useless” comes from the Greek μάταιος (*mataios*). It means “vain, useless, without purpose, ineffectual, unproductive.” That’s what Paul thought of some of the conversations being introduced into the churches of Crete. That’s why Paul wrote these words next:

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. Titus 3:10-11

Paul gave Titus and the church elders a direct order – “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition.” The word “reject” is the Greek word παραιτέομαι (*paraiteomai*) and means “shun, avoid, refuse, decline, reject.” The word “divisive” is the Greek word αἰρετικός (*hairetikos*) and means “factious, heretical, sectarian, disposed to form sects, causing division.” It is used only once in the New Testament – here in Titus 3:10.

Notice that Paul told Titus that a person who caused divisions in the church should be rejected (shunned, avoided, refused) after the first and second “admonition.” Paul believed in giving people a chance to repent, which is good for us to remember. However, we also need to remember that allowing someone to cause divisions in a church without any call to repentance is also good to remember. Paul, as did Jesus in Matthew 18, wanted unity in the church and allowed only a small number of chances for repentance –

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Matthew 18:15-17

The word “admonition” comes from the Greek word *νουθεσία* (*nouthesia*) and means “warning, counsel, admonition.” Paul directed Titus and the elders of the churches in Crete to reject a divisive person after “first and second admonition.” Two chances to heed the warnings of church elders. That’s the apostolic rule.

But doesn’t that seem a bit harsh? Can you imagine the problems following such a rule would cause in today’s ‘modern’ church where everyone has their own idea of truth (subjective)? Yes, I understand what would happen. The ‘modern’ church would finally start acting like the ‘church’ Jesus wants.

God knows the danger of *hairetikos* people not being challenged by church leaders. They are – “warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” The word “warped” comes from the Greek word ἐκστρέφω (*ekstrephó*) and means “corrupt, turned inside out, perverted, completely out of place, warped.” The word “sinning” is ἁμαρτάνω (*hamartanó*) and means “miss the mark, do wrong, sin.” The word “self-condemned” comes from the Greek word αὐτοκατάκριτος (*autokatakritos*) and means “self-judged, self-condemned.” The idea is that the person is worthy of punishment (κατακρίνω). It’s used only once in the New Testament – here in Titus 3:11.

An Important Warning for Today

Paul is coming near the end of his letter to Titus. He began by writing, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking.” Paul ends with one of the most important aspects of setting in order “things that are lacking” in the church –

- But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless
- Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned

Avoid and reject. What Paul wrote Titus to instruct church elders in Crete two thousand years ago needs to be echoed throughout Christendom today. Every church needs to deal with *hairetikos* immediately. Those are the people who cause divisions in churches and will not repent when admonished by the elders of those churches.

Church leaders need to do what they've been commanded to do by the Apostle Paul, other apostles, and most importantly by the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. If they don't, then they will reap what they have sown and receive what they deserve. Unfortunately, members of churches where pastors and other church leaders refuse to obey God's Word will continue to suffer because of them.

As someone who loves God and His people, that is heart-breaking. So many "little ones" are being led astray by *hairetikos* and church leaders who either don't have the knowledge or the courage to do what God commanded them to do.

This reminds me of the words of the Lord's earthly brother –
“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.”
(James 3:1) People who present themselves as preaching and teaching God's Word will one day stand before Him and receive “a stricter judgment.” God help us all.

Paul's letter to Titus may be one of the most important documents of Holy Scripture needed for our time. Paul wrote his letter during the middle part of the 1st century AD. We are living in the early part of the 21st century. That's almost two thousand years apart, yet the circumstances in the church and in the culture are unfortunately similar. So similar, in fact, that every pastor in every church in the world should preach and teach Titus to their congregations exegetically – verse by verse – from the original language (Greek) – so that the members of their church understand exactly what the Holy Spirit expects from them.

I also believe that it is incumbent upon pastors and church elders to obey the Holy Spirit and do exactly as He directed Paul to direct Titus – “that you should set in order the things that are lacking.” There is a LOT lacking in many of today's churches, denominations, Christian schools, Bible colleges, and seminaries. That means there is a lot that Christian leaders need to set in order.

That has been the purpose of this study of the Book of Titus, that we titled 'Living Christian In 'This Present World.' We got the idea for the title from Titus 2:2 – “in the present age.” The Greek word translated ‘age’ is αἰών and speaks to “a space of time.” That time is now (present). The place is here (the world). Members of Christ’s Body alive on earth right now should “live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” That’s a direct order from the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul to write those words to Titus and the church leaders on the island of Crete.

Final Message to Titus

Paul ended his letter to Titus as he often did in his letters – on a personal note:

When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen. Titus

3:12-15

Paul “left” Titus on Crete to “set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:5). After preaching the Gospel on Crete and helping establish churches in various towns, Paul left the island and headed for other areas of the Roman Empire to preach the Gospel. He planned to “winter” in the city of Nicopolis and asked Titus to join him there – “When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus.”

An Investigation

I am an investigative journalist in addition to being a Bible teacher. I'd like to put on my 'journalist's hat' for a few minutes to share an important process we use:

- Follow the People
- Follow the Places
- Follow the Money

We'll begin by 'following the people and places,' since those are often closely aligned. Paul mentioned several people in his closing remarks: Artemas, Tychicus, Zenas the lawyer, and Apollos. Paul is writing to Titus, so those are another two people we would look at carefully in an investigation.

When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

Paul planned to send Artemas or Tychicus to Titus. When one of them arrived on Crete and taken responsibility of church oversight from Titus, Paul wanted Titus to “be diligent” to meet him “at Nicopolis.” Those were the two people the Apostle Paul trusted to take over from Titus, which tells us a great deal about each man.

Artemas

Artemas is mentioned only once in the Bible – here in Titus 3:12. His name in Greek (Ἄρτεμᾶς) means *gift of Artemis*, which may mean that his parents were worshippers of the goddess Artemis. It was a common practice at the time for parents to name their children after the gods or goddesses they worshipped. Artemis was a very popular goddess with the rural population of Greece. Romans worshipped a similar goddess named *Diana*.

The worship of Artemis probably flourished in Crete or on the Greek mainland in pre-Hellenic times. Many of Artemis's local cults, however, preserved traces of other deities, often with Greek names, suggesting that, upon adopting her, the Greeks identified Artemis with nature divinities of their own.

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The fact that Paul mentioned Artemas first may have been because of his closer proximity to Crete at the time, though that is a 'possibility' rather than a 'probability.' The text does not indicate why Paul mentioned Artemas first. We can be assured, based on what Paul had already written to Titus, that he viewed Artemas as someone who could carry on the work Paul had given Titus to do.

[Some church tradition records Artemas as bishop of Lystra, which was located near Iconium. However, there is no 'early church' evidence to support that tradition.]

Tychicus

The next name Paul mentioned was Tychicus – used five times in the New Testament:

- Acts 20:4
- Ephesians 6:21
- Colossians 4:7
- 2 Timothy 4:12
- Titus 3:12

Acts 20 described the home city of each of several people who ministered with Paul. Tychicus was included with Timothy and Trophimus and said to be “of Asia.”

In Ephesians 6, Paul called Tychicus “a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord.” In Colossians 4, Paul identified Tychicus as “a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.” Paul wrote Timothy (2 Timothy 4) that he had sent Tychicus to Ephesus. It is obvious from these Scriptures that Paul trusted Tychicus to take oversight on Crete so that Titus could join Paul in Nicopolis.

Artemas and Tychicus are the only two people mentioned as taking oversight of the churches in Crete once Titus left for Nicopolis. However, Paul also asked Titus to “Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing.” Who were Zenas and Apollos and what did Paul mean when he wrote, “that they may lack nothing”?

Zenas

We know that Zenas (Ζηνῶς) was a lawyer (νομικός). He is mentioned only once in the New Testament, so we have no other biblical information about Zenas. His name translates as “Zeus given,” so it may be that one or both of his parents were Greeks who worshipped the god Zeus. Hippolytus of Rome, a Christian theologian of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, numbered Zenas as one of the “seventy disciples” of Christ, and said he later became the bishop (pastor) of Diospolis. How he knew that information is not explained in a fragment of his writings titled, *The Same Hippolytus on the Seventy Apostles*. Whether Hippolytus’ information about Zenas is correct or not, it is obvious that Paul trusted Zenas and identified him as someone learned in the law.

Apollos

The name Apollos is mentioned ten times in the New Testament:

- Acts 18:24
- Acts 19:1
- 1 Corinthians 1:12
- 1 Corinthians 3:4, 5, 6 & 22
- 1 Corinthians 4:6
- 1 Corinthians 16:12
- Titus 3:13

We learn in Acts 18 that Apollos was a Jew born in Alexandria. We also learn that he was “an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures.” However, even though Apollos “taught accurately the things of the Lord,” he knew only the baptism of John. When Apollos arrived in Ephesus, he spoke boldly in the synagogue about Jesus being the Christ. The Apostle Paul had also spoken there, but had left two of his fellow ministers, Priscilla and Aquila, in Ephesus while he traveled to Jerusalem. Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos speak in the synagogue. They took him aside “and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” They could do that because they had learned more about Christ from the Apostle Paul.

Apollos traveled to Corinth and spent some time with the church that Paul had planted there. That experience would later lead to some division in the Corinthian church about following certain “personalities.” The Apostle Paul dealt with that division quickly and decisively.

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 1 Corinthians 1:11-13

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you

believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:1-11

It's obvious from these and other references about Apollos that Paul regarded him highly. Which is what makes his statement in Titus 3 important to understand. Zenas the lawyer and Apollos were on a journey, possibly together. Paul wanted Titus to assist them with any supplies they needed so they could get "on their journey with haste." We don't know where Zenas and Apollos were headed, but it was apparently important enough that Paul mentioned it in his letter to Titus.

Places

Next we investigate the places mentioned in the text. We already know a lot about Crete from our study from Titus 1, so the only other place mentioned for certain is Nicopolis. That's where Paul planned "to spend the winter there" and he wanted Titus to join him as soon as possible.

We know quite a bit about Nicopolis (Νικόπολις) because Augustus Caesar built it. The Greek name for the city, *Nikopolis*, means "victorious city," or "city of victory." Caesar (Octavian) built Nicopolis in 29 BC after his victory over Mark Antony at the battle of Actium in 31 BC. Caesar made Nicopolis the capital of Epirus in northwestern Greece and resettled citizens from nearby cities to populate it. Nicopolis was known to be a good location for travelers to spend the winter months. Titus' journey from Crete to Nicopolis would have been more than 500 miles

across water and land. Though we have no biblical evidence to support that Titus did make the journey to meet Paul, it may have happened as Paul directed.

We know from 2 Timothy 4:10 that Titus had gone to Dalmatia after being with Paul for some time. It may be that Titus wintered with Paul in Nicopolis, then continued to travel with him up until the time of Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Thus, it may be that Paul sent Titus to Dalmatia from Rome to evangelize and establish churches there. Titus may have possibly followed up with Christians from Paul's earlier visit to the area of Illyricum (Romans 15).

Dalmatia is located across the Adriatic Sea from Italy in what is now the northern part of Albania. It also includes portions of Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia, Montenegro, Herzegovina, and Bosnia. Archaeologists have found the remains of ancient churches and the tombs of Christian martyrs in the area.

Follow The Money

As for following the money in this section, there is no mention of monetary exchange in this section. There is mention of Titus seeing that Zenas and Apollos were able to make their journey with haste, “that they may lack nothing.” Paul also mentioned God’s people in Crete meeting “urgent needs.” Whether money was involved in either of those requests is not mentioned, though money , food, and other supplies for travel may have been involved.

In Conclusion

Prior to Titus leaving Crete, Paul wanted him to emphasize this –

“And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.” Titus 3:14

Those two primary areas for God’s people “to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs” sums up the apostles’ heart and desire for all of us. There is so much for all of us to do on earth in service to our Lord and Savior. Even as Paul asked Titus to be “diligent” to meet him in Nicopolis, and send Zenas and Apollos on their journey “with haste,” we also need to be diligent in our service. We must learn what it means to “Live Christian in this Present World.”

All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Titus 3:15

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