

Lesson Nine

PRACTICE CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORLD

Titus 3:1-15

IN RELATION TO RULERS

SECTION ONE 3:1-7

3 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle and to show perfect courtesy toward all men. 3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another; 4 but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, 6 which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. 8 The saying is sure.

Vs. 1, 2 To be **submissive** (same word in I Pet. 3:1; 5:5; Rom. 13:1) was especially hard for these Cretans who, according to the Greek historian Polybius, were constantly involved in "insurrections, murders, and

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slaughterous wars." Note that the Ephesians were urged to continue to *pray for rulers* (I, 2:1-7), but these rebellious Cretans were told to *obey rulers* (read introduction for their quarrelsome character). A Christian has a responsibility to the state. He should: (1) Pay taxes (Mt. 22:15-22); (2) Respect rulers as "ministers" or servants of God (Rom. 13:1-7); (3) Pray "for," not "to," rulers (I, 2:1-7); (4) Submit to their rule rather than rebel (Tit. 3:1, 2). To do these things does not place our stamp of approval upon government action. Jesus certainly did not approve of Herod, nor Paul of Nero, but they respected the position these men held even if they could not respect the man. Let us use our influence to change poor laws, but if we cannot get them changed, let us obey man's law except when it is in clear contrast with God's law when we "must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). If this brings punishment as it did in N.T. times, let us accept it as did Jesus, Paul, and the apostles without bad-mouthing or fighting.

A Christian citizen manifests these seven qualities: (1) **Submissive**, as he surrenders his rebellious will; (2) **Obedient**, as he keeps the law; (3) **Ready for any honest work** that edifies his community; (4) Careful in speech lest he slander or **speak evil** of his leaders; (5) Tolerant and able to work with others as he avoids **quarreling**; (6) **gentle**, one who controls his temper; (7) **courteous**, or kind as he tempers justice with mercy. What a country to be peopled with such citizens!

V. 3 Now follows seven areas of disobedience which we (Paul, Titus, all Christians before conversion) once lived: (1) **Foolish**, "not understanding" God's will while following our own; (2) **Disobedient**, both to human and divine authority (1:6, 10; 3:1); (3) **led astray** or deceived (II, 3:13); (4) **slaves** to fleshly desires (Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 1:18-32); (5) Full of **malice**, evil disposition of mind, as we **envy** what others have and desire it; (6) Resulting in a life full of **hating** others and (7) being **hated** in return. Know anyone like that? (Be sure to glance in the mirror before looking at others!)

V. 4 **But**, a glorious word of contrast as Paul focuses upon the source of our new attitude (1, 2) freeing us from these horrible passions. Man does not climb to God through philosophy or a good moral life; our minds are not complex enough nor our works good enough. God is the One Who initiates salvation, not because of our goodness, but because of His! (Eph. 2:1-10)

Vs. 5, 6 The **washing of regeneration** (lit., "laver or cleansing of rebirth") was suggested by the priests who completely and ceremoniously washed themselves before entering the tabernacle to serve (Ex. 40:12); it now refers to the cleansing that comes in baptism as God cleanses us to make us priests fit to serve Him (cf. I Pet. 3:21 where baptism is pictured as a "washing" and Jn. 3:3, 5 where it is described

as "rebirth"). Not only are we cleansed from sin in baptism (Acts 2:38), and regenerated (reborn), but we also experience **renewal** (II Cor. 5:17). All of these actions come through the **Holy Spirit**. (Note that the Word of God is also spoken of as a cleansing or rebirthing agent, Eph. 5:26; I Pet. 1:23; Jas. 1:18). A too-simple analogy of physical birth might suggest that the Word implants life in us resulting in the formation of a new creation emerging or being born at baptism and growing on to maturity through the years. Social reform is not enough as we need cleansing from the past, rebirth for the present, and renewal for the future. Notice that the Father (4), the Son (6), and the Holy Spirit (5) work together in this transformation.

V. 7 We now have a cleansed temple fit for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; I Cor. 6:19) and for God and Jesus (Jn. 14:23; II Cor. 6:16; Rev. 3:20), and a hope for the future as we are **heirs**, sons and daughters, of the King (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 3:26; Heb. 2:11). Many are our blessings: a new name, a new state, a new family, a new hope, etc. And God made this possible by His adoption of us as children. Even when our Father chastens us (Heb. 12:6), that too is a mark of our sonship for God "doesn't spank the devil's children."

The **faithful saying** better fits verses 4-7 than what comes after.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Should a Christian obey an "unjust" law? A law he doesn't like? One that contradicts the Bible?
2. Should Christians take part in revolutions against the government?
3. Are those immersed in sin truly happy? (3:3)
4. Is baptism a "work"? Is anyone in the N.T. called "saved" who has not been baptized after the death of Christ?
5. Enlarge upon the blessings we receive as "heirs" of God.
6. Do we ever forget Whose we are and slip back into the family of Satan?

IN RELATION TO OTHERS

SECTION TWO 3:8-11

I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men. 9 But avoid

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stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile. 10 As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, 11 knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned.

V. 8 Titus is to **insist** ("assert strongly") on the preceding so that our faith may show itself in **good deeds** and not just in words. Teachers of God's Word who are too permissive dishonor God and destroy His children.

Vs. 9, 10 Titus is warned, as was Timothy (I, 1:4), about foolish discussions. **A man who is factious** ("heretic," KJV), a division-maker in the church, is to be warned and then avoided (disfellowshipped?) if he does not repent. It is a serious thing to divide the family of God (I Cor. 3:16, 17). The N.T. labels four main areas in which Christians are to disfellowship and avoid fellow churchmembers. (1) Those who cause division in the church (Tit. 3:10; Mt. 18:17; Rom. 16:17; II Thess. 3:11; II Pet. 2:1); (2) Those who continue in open, vileness of life (I Cor. 5:1-11; Eph. 5:3-11; II Thess. 3:6); (3) Those who deny Christ's divinity (Gal. 1:8; II Jn. 10, 11; I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:16-18; II Cor. 6:14-18); (4) Those who refuse to recognize the authority of the apostles and their revealed word (II Thess. 3:14; Gal. 1:8, 9; I Cor. 14:37, 38).

These do not mean that we can never disagree, but we should not be so disagreeable that we become "heir splitters." Nor does it mean we shall live lives of perfection, but let us not persist in sin if perchance we stumble. We will never understand all Bible teaching, but let us accept its authority and not twist it nor deny it (II Pet. 3:16).

Some feel we have no right to judge others, but Scripture demands that we do in the areas listed in the Bible references above. Few would tolerate things in their physical family that they often do in God's family. Do not be "more tolerant than God," but discipline in love and in truth.

V. 11 Anyone so willful as to split God's family over his own position is **perverted** (lit., "distorted, turned aside, twisted") morally and mentally and is **self-condemned** as he persists in his willful way even after being approached several times. Perhaps avoiding him will bring him to repentance; if not, at least he is not in a position to further divide the congregation with his destructive influence.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Do we weaken God's authority in the world by weak preaching and teaching?

2. In "matters of opinion," who is to decide what decision shall be made?
3. How completely must Christians agree in order to fellowship?

IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIS WORK

SECTION THREE 3:12-15

12 When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

13 Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. 14 And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful.

15 All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all.

V. 12 **Tychicus**, one of the lesser known heroes of the faith; accompanied Paul on his third journey (Acts 20:4), was with Paul in his first imprisonment (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7), traveled with Paul during the inter-prison period (Tit. 3:12), and was yet by his side in his second and final imprisonment (II Tim. 4:12). Such a trusted companion could carry on the work of Titus. Probably the same could be said of **Artemas** of whom we know nothing. **Nicopolis** of Empirus, Greece, would be a mid-point between Macedonia, where Paul was probably working at this time, and Crete. It would also serve as a good jumping-off place for mission work in Dalmatia to the north (II Tim. 4:10), a pugnacious people like the Cretans.

V. 13 Of **Zenas** the "law expert," we know nothing else, not even if he were adept in Jewish law or Roman law, with his Greek name suggesting the latter. This **Apollos** may be the same mentioned in Acts 18:26-28; I Cor. 3:6; 16:12. The church was to help them on their way.

V. 14 Helping these men would be one of the **good deeds** these Cretan Christians needed to practice. It is not enough to be in Christ; we must also bear fruit (Jn. 15:1-8).

V. 15 As in the epistles to Timothy, Paul sends greetings to **all** the church. For those who may have been with Paul at this time, read II Tim. 4:21 and Acts 20:34. Paul was interested in people and mentions about eighty different ones in his letters. Let us not be like the student who questioned, "Why did Paul ruin his magnificent Roman epistle by

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tacking on the names of all those silly people on the end of it?" He was rebuked by his teacher, "My boy, those 'silly people' are why Paul wrote the letter."

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Do we often forget those in N.T. times or in today's church who labor quietly for the Lord?
2. Is it possible to be so involved in theology that we forget people?