

Christian Conduct In The Community - Part 1

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[0:00] All right. Just turn on your Bibles to Titus. As we've seen in chapter one, there was a lot to say about the leadership in the church, the character of that leadership, the qualifications of elders and their responsibilities.

In chapter two, we saw the character of the church as a whole. How is a church to function? What's that supposed to look like? We've got older and younger in the congregation. And the reality is that there are to be established relationships.

That age does not, should not interfere with that as the younger can learn from the older. In chapter three, now as we get into this, deals more with the conduct by the church and the community.

So what does that look like among all people, believers and non-believers? How are we to act? We're going to spend a few weeks. I think I've got it mapped out like four weeks to finish up Titus. Laugh all you want, but it's coming to an end eventually. In the past four weeks, we've deeply examined out of Titus 2, 11 through 14, the abundant grace of God.

[1:41] We saw His grace given through the incarnation, through the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ. And that Jesus is not just the baby born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger, but also the one who would grow up, live a life of sinless perfection and be the sacrifice to offer salvation to every man.

And that those who have called on Him for salvation are called to holy living. And by the grace of God, we can do that.

And because of God's abundant grace, we have hope for the future. We are anticipating the return of Jesus. And that gives us hope.

And we are encouraged by that. And it's a hope that this world so desperately needs to hear and needs to be informed about. And we have the responsibility to share that with them.

And I don't know about you, but I was particularly blessed through that study. Four weeks through five verses, I know it can seem overwhelming and daunting, but when you're digging into the Word of God, you find the treasures are inexhaustible.

[2:54] And there are gems everywhere that we can pick up, polish off, and look into even deeper than what was there superficially. So I'd like to take time now to read Titus 2.15-3.11 as we see that the Apostle Paul moves on.

So he gives the hope of the future, the hope of the return of Jesus. But he shifts now in chapter 3 to how believers are to live in society.

Because it's easy for us to kind of get a little ingrown and self-focused and not concerned for other people when we realize that our Savior is going to return and He's going to establish His kingdom. And He's going to establish His rule here on earth. And so we don't want to get too inwardly focused that way and say, well, forget everyone else.

We have a hope and they may not want it or believe it, but we've got it and that's that. That's not how we're to live in this society. We're not to go, you know, live in a cave and not have an interaction with other people.

[4:06] We're not to cut ourselves off, though. Some introverted people would love for that to be the case. That is not what God has called us to, to live in this society. So let's start in verse 15 and read through chapter 3, verse 11.

Get the context and then we're going to whittle it down a little bit. We're actually going to be focusing on two verses today, but there are seven points given to us in those two verses.

And it's a lot to take in. So go ahead. Chapter 2, verse 15. Paul tells Titus, It says, Passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us. Excuse me. Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

So that being justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

[5 : 59] These things are excellent and profitable for people, but avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful.

He is self-condemned. Excuse me. Father, we thank You for the reading of Your Word. Lord, we are asking, Lord, that Your Spirit would give direction and understanding to us as we dig in.

Amen. Amen. I'm going to actually ask, Dennis, could you please see if there's maybe a bottle of water? I'm almost out. It's really dry today. All right.

I do not want to haul. That would be the worst thing possible for me to have something in my mouth while I'm talking. Thank you for the offer, though. No, definitely, it's very dry in here.

[7 : 06] But that's just me. All right. Coming back to the text. Paul tells Titus to instruct the people in verse 15 with all authority, not to allow anyone to disregard or look down on him.

Thank you. Titus is a pastor. He's an elder in the church. And his words carry weight. And he must be listened to.

That's ultimately what Paul is saying. He's saying, no, declare these things. What I'm about to tell you, declare them. Exhort, rebuke with all authority. And don't let anyone disregard you.

It's utterly disrespectful and dishonoring to God when people in the church undermined the authority of a pastor or elder. Now, I don't want that to sound like I'm saying, you know, you shouldn't question things.

Or you should, you know, not keep somebody accountable in their leadership. But there are people in churches that it's like, it almost seems like they make it their job to undermine authority and teaching that comes from the pulpit or from authority.

[8 : 12] And Titus is saying, don't allow that to happen. It is disrespectful. It is dishonorable. And he actually lists that in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 3.

Seven things that the believers there in Crete needed to know and seven things that we also need to know. And the first one deals with this very issue that he's warning Titus about.

And that is that they need to be submissive to rulers and authorities. There's a spirit of rebellion that seems to readily flow in the veins of most Americans.

And why not? Right? Our country was established through an act of rebellion against authority. We call it the Revolutionary War, the War for Independence.

But let's call it for what it was. It was a rebellion against the government. So we seem to justify, oh, well, see, that's okay.

[9 : 18] That happened. Look what everything we have. And I'm not saying we shouldn't have happened. I'm not making a stance one way or the other. I'm just stating a fact. That was a rebellious act. And that kind of rebellion just seems to flow in the veins of a lot of Americans now.

And it seems that any form of progress that has been made in our country seems to come through an act of rebellion. Good things that happen come about because of rebellious acts.

Let's say, for instance, abolition of slavery. That's a really good thing. And that came about through rebellious activity. So it's easy to look at our history and be like, well, see, we're justified in these actions and these thoughts.

And we're justified to be rebellious. But does that make rebellion a justified means to an end? Just because we see some of the good that has come about?

Because I can equally take you to other historical events where rebellion has been horrible and has been really bad for countries.

[10 : 24] So I don't think it's really, you know, we shouldn't be justified in that. But we can have that mindset, unfortunately. And based on what we read in Scripture, it's not just in our day or in our country that there's a ready, rebellious spirit against authorities.

Which is what Paul was warning Titus about and was encouraging him not to lose heart and don't let people disregard you. Remind them they need to be submissive to rulers and authorities. So it's apparent here that there was some inclination among the believers in Crete to disregard Titus. In 2 Corinthians 11 and Galatians 1 and 2, there was an inclination among people to question and even reject the authority that Paul had as an apostle.

And in those chapters, in 2 Corinthians 11, Galatians 1 and 2, Paul defends his apostleships against the claim that he's a false apostle or shouldn't be listened to.

In Romans 13, Paul reminds people they're to be submissive to authority. So it wasn't just in Crete, it was also in Rome. 1 Peter 2, Peter mentions that submission to governmental authorities is a reflection on the Lord.

[11:44] That can be like, whoa. The way we act toward our authorities, our government, those who are over us, is a reflection directly on the Lord himself.

Because we are his. And we are his body. A.W. Tozer said, the essence of sin is rebellion against divine authority.

Think about that. When you're sinning, you're sinning against God ultimately, right? But you're against his authority. 1 John 3, 4 says, everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness because sin is lawlessness.

So that's why it's so important to recognize the authorities over us as being established by God and given to us by God. Romans 13, 1, let every person be subject to the governing authorities for there's no authority except from God.

And those that exist have been instituted by God. In Daniel 2, verse 21, God changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings. God is directly involved in who is reigning and who's not.

[12:53] He's the one who sets them up and he puts them down. He's in control. So we need to have a respect and a humility before those who are in authority over us.

And that extends even into the body of Christ, into the church. God has given leaders. He has put authority in place to be listened to.

To be obeyed. Again, it's not to say that we are to blindly follow and assume that like, oh, everything's all right and such.

I mean, certainly there are places where we must hold people accountable. And that extends in the church, right? If there's something going on on the elder board and elders in the church or other officers, something's like fishy and needs to be addressed, then we need to talk about it.

We don't turn a blind eye to it. And the same in our government. We don't turn a blind eye to it. We shouldn't. There are a lot of people misbehaving who are leaders in our government that we must hold accountable because they work for the people.

[14:08] We hold them accountable. It doesn't mean we actively rebel and shake our fists at them in every turn that we have. And if our lives are to be lived to the glory of God, 1 Corinthians 10.31, and we're to please Him in all that we do, 2 Corinthians 5.9, then we must be careful not to live in such a way that dishonors the authority that God has placed over us, keeping in mind that our words and our actions are a direct reflection on our Savior.

If there's something that needs to be addressed or done, we need to do it respectfully and appropriately. And so we must remember, and Paul tells Titus, remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, including you, Titus.

What else does he say in verse 1? Well, he tells them to be obedient. In the same vein as our being subject to human authorities placed over us by God, we must also live in obedience to them.

The only exception regards their commanding us to do something that is against the command of God. In the event that a ruler and a governmental authority tells you to do something that is in a direct violation to the commands and expectations of God, then you don't need to follow that.

Right? You don't need to hearken to that. You must follow God rather than men. That's Acts 5.29. Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men.

[15:39] They were being told to stop preaching in the name of Christ. Stop sharing the gospel. And they said, We can't. We must tell people about the things we've seen and heard and know to be true.

You determine in your mind if what we're doing is right or not, but we must listen to God rather than men. So in the event that the government or authorities try to muzzle you and say, Well, you can't

preach the name of Christ.

You need to stop preaching. You need to stop teaching. You can no longer gather as a church. Whatever it might be, what do we do? Follow God's commands and expectations and preach the gospel.

Go make disciples of all nations. Gather together as a church body. We follow God's commands, not man's commands. As we follow God's commands, we deal with the ramifications.

It may be disobedient to the leadership, but it's being obedient to the ultimate authority. Which is God himself. So our first level of obedience must always be to the command of God.

[16 : 47] And since God's word commands us to be subject to governing authorities, we must humble ourselves and follow their instruction as well, as long as it keeps in line and keeping and doesn't violate the word of God.

What else? So be submissive. Be obedient. Be ready for every good work. Paul's referring here to a sincere, loving eagerness to serve others.

Now that's the holy life that we've been called to as believers, a life of service. You walk into my office, you'll see on the wall there, I've got wall art up there that says, because life is for service.

And I'm not smart enough to come up with that phrase. That's the motto of Appalachian Bible College. Because life is for service.

And because as you go through Scripture, you see the commands given to us by God, you see the example lived by Jesus, and what it is we are called to and how we are called to live, it is ultimately a life of service, of giving of yourself to others.

[17 : 58] Ephesians 2.10 says we are His workmanship, we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We are a new creature in Christ for a purpose. To live a life of good works. We don't do good works to earn any merit with God.

We do good works because we are new creatures in Christ. You don't do good works to be saved and go to heaven. You do good works because you are saved, and you know there is heaven.

And you want to give glory to God and point people to Him. James 1.27 says religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this. To visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

You are visiting orphans and widows in their affliction. You are visiting people who have need.

People who are hurting. People who may be desperate for love and for hope.

[19 : 16] That is who you are visiting. And you know what? We have a world full of them. We live in a world where hope is so desperately desired and wanted.

We live in a world where people are hurting. Whether they recognize that or not. And they are the ones that we are to serve.

They are the ones we are to love and we are to care for. And we are to keep ourselves unstained from the world. We are not to give in to the world.

We are not to be of and part of the world and taking part of the world. But we are to be separate and different to the glory of God.

Matthew Henry in his commentary on this section in Titus says, Not only take but seek occasion for doing good. So it's not just taking.

[20 : 16] Not just doing it while it's there. But you're seeking those opportunities. Not only take but seek occasion for doing good. Keep fitness and readiness that way. Put it not off to others.

But embrace and lay hold on it thyself. Delight and rejoice therein. Put all in mind of this. So he's basically saying, You don't just put it off. You don't ignore it.

You're looking for the opportunity to do good. Ready for every good work. You're not just doing it like when it comes along. Oh, here it is. I'm going to do it. Then you're sitting passively for a while.

Oh, here it is. I'm going to do it. No, he's saying you're looking for those opportunities. You're not giving it off to someone else. You're not letting someone else to take that from you. But you're to do it yourself.

Have a mind to look for and delight and rejoice in those opportunities to do good for others. And no matter how hostile the society around us may be, we are to be good to the people in it.

[21 : 14] In those whose lives we intersect with. And that we engage with day in and day out. It doesn't matter how hostile they may be towards God and towards Christ and towards you as a believer. You are to seek to do good to them.

Galatians 6.10 says, So then as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. It's not our community.

Being a Christian in a church, it's not like a family. Like in a family, you kind of get the mindset of, Oh, I need to be nice to everyone else, but I can mistreat my siblings and be mean to them and so on and so forth.

We don't have that type of mentality. First of all, you shouldn't have that in the family, but I know it exists. But you definitely shouldn't have that in the church as if like, Oh, I've got to be good to everyone else, but within the community of faith, it doesn't matter.

I can, you know, backstab and be mean to you and not care for as much. No. Galatians, Paul writes, Do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

[22 : 21] You have the opportunity. We're to do good out of love for our Lord and for other people. And the lives of believers should continually demonstrate the spiritual transformation they have received through faith in Jesus Christ.

That's why we do good, because we're changed in Christ. And it's no longer about me. It's no longer about, you know, focusing on what I want and what I think I need. It's what does my neighbor need? How can I serve them? So be submissive. Be obedient. Be ready for every good work. Verse 2.

Speak evil of no one.

Do not speak evil of anyone. It's easy for us to gossip and malign another individual when we've been hurt by them or when they're assaulting biblical standards.

No, we can get upset. We can get, you know, frustrated. We just kind of take it out. And in the name of truth, we justify the words that we say and the way we talk about another person.

[23 : 23] The reality is we can't. We cannot be doing that. We seek not to speak evil of anybody. No matter how vile an individual may act towards us or others, we must never stoop to speaking evil about another individual.

The Greek word that's used here for speaking evil, it's blasphemeo. You hear the word blasphemy. We get our English word blasphemy from blasphemeo. Thus, when we're speaking evil of someone else, we're slandering.

We're treating them with contempt. We're blaspheming that individual. And you know, blasphemy is a big deal. Take the Lord's name in vain.

That's blasphemy. It's not good. Many Christians... Excuse me.

Sorry. Many Christians have taken to speak in this way of politicians and other public figures. Not taking into account the fact that we're actually hindering the work of redemption.

[24 : 28] When we take on... When we're so bold to speak blasphemy against an individual. Speak slander and evil of somebody. Even if it's in the name of, quote, truth.

Right? We want to justify our actions and our sin. Because we say, oh, well, I'm just speaking the truth. Well, you're not speaking the truth with right motive and intent.

So I'm going to call what you're doing sinful. But what does Paul say about this? Turn back a few pages to 1 Timothy 2. 1 Timothy 2.

Paul writes, verse 1. First of all, then I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.

For kings and all who are in high positions. That we may lead a peaceful and quiet life. Godly and dignified in every way.

[25 : 34] This is good. This is good. And it's pleasing in the sight of God our Savior. Who desires all people to be saved.

And to come to the knowledge of the truth. Paul doesn't say, oh, I urge you to, you know, pray and be thankful and all that.

Except for those scoundrels in Washington, D.C. You don't need to speak kindly or nicely about them. And, you know, you can say whatever you want. No, no. Paul says we've got to pray for them.

And we've got to lift them before God. We've got to intercede on their behalf. We've got to be thankful for the few things good that they have done. And we've got to bring them before God. Because God is desiring all people to be saved. That includes those scoundrels in Washington, D.C. Or the town government. Or whomever it is you want to malign and blaspheme against.

[26 : 36] Speak slanderously against. That you want to just speak the truth about. I'm telling you. Don't. If you're on social media, get off.

I'm almost. I'm tired of it. I'm on these. Like part of these groups. Like what's shaking in Shapley. What's happening in Acton. Sanford, Springville, Waterboro. All those like the town pages. Man, I'm telling you. It is just. It's just places for people to go and sin. With their words. Typed on a keyboard. Cowards in society who want to tear other people down. Wouldn't do it to your face. But besides the point. It's just what it is. It becomes gossip sections. And opportunities for people to sin. But we're not called to that. We're called to pray for. Is somebody an imperfect person? Yeah. Shock. Guess what? We're all sinners. We all need salvation. We all need Christ. [27 : 40] So let's be careful of the words that we speak. And with what intention we speak them. Don't speak evil of one another.

Ephesians 4, 29 and 31 says, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. But only such as is good for building up. As fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear. And let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you. Along with all malice. Put that away. Build each other up. Encourage one another. Be kind to one another. And don't take part in that garbage that takes place on social media all the time. What else, Paul? What else do you want to tell Titus to tell the people? What else do we need to know? Verse 2. Avoid quarreling. The proper behavior toward the lost is to be friendly and peaceful. [28 : 41] The proper behavior towards each other is to be friendly and peaceful. Not quarrelsome. And it's easy to become angry and impatient with an ungodly society. Speaking in a condemning way towards them.

We see their behavior and say, Oh, no, shame on them. Tis, tis. You shouldn't do this. That's sin. That's not pleasing to God. Yeah. They're not saved. They don't know Jesus. They're not being sanctified in His Word. They're sinners. Hello? How do you expect them to act? Don't be shocked when they do sinful things. Just like you shouldn't be shocked when you do sinful things. Because you also are a sinner. The difference being you're saved by the grace of God and you know you're a sinner. And you recognize when you do it. They aren't. They don't recognize their sin as sin. They see it as normal. They say, It's okay. It's fine. [29 : 42] This is normal behavior. And they justify it. They may even be proud about it. They may even celebrate it. They may celebrate it for a month.

You never know. But they're quick to justify their behaviors because it's normal to them. And we see where it's an offense to God. But it's not okay for us to get angry and condemn them. Because Christ didn't come to condemn them. He came to save them. Romans 12.18 says, If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. You can live peaceably with somebody that you don't agree with. Do you know that? You can do that. I don't agree with somebody who's a homosexual, practicing homosexual. I believe they're wrong. I know they're wrong. God tells me they're wrong. [30 : 46] But I can still live peaceably with them. Would you believe that I have Facebook friends that fall in that category? And I would say more than just Facebook friends. They're friends. I see them occasionally.

I shake their hand. I give them a hug. It doesn't mean I'm affirming their behavior. I'm not saying they're okay. I'm not saying that's right. But I can live peaceably with them. And we can live in disagreement and not be disagreeable towards each other. So consider the fact that God so loved the world. He so loved the world without limit, without condition, that He sent His sinless Son to redeem it. God so loved the world. God so loved the world despite everything that we would be deserving to be condemned on. And everything that we do that is offensive to Him. Yet He chose to step into humanity and into time to dwell among sinful creation. [31 : 53] So how can we, as sinful recipients of His grace, be callous and loveless toward those who have not yet received it?

Avoid quarreling with people. Don't bring shame on the name of Christ. And don't malign His testimony, which is good and pure, that we're seeking to live up to.

What else? Be gentle. The word used here means gentle or kind or tolerant.

Not in the term that we know tolerance as being, by the way. It's an attitude that does not hold grudges, but it always gives others the benefit of any doubt.

It echoes the kind of attitude that describes the Lord in Numbers 14 verse 18, where it says, The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression.

[32 : 58] Think about that. The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression. Does that describe you?

Are you slow to anger? Are you abounding in steadfast love? Are you forgiving iniquity and transgression?

We talked about that a little bit when we're in Matthew 6 and we talk about the Lord's Prayer in Sunday School, right? The forgiving others aspect.

Are you forgiving other people? James 1 verses 19 and 20 calls us to mimic that very thing. Know this, my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

[34 : 04] You cannot please God and represent Him well in a godless society when you're getting angry at those individuals.

Be gentle and kind towards others, especially those who are not so toward us. And when you do that, that can open a door of opportunity for us to share the love of God with them.

Let people hate on you. Let people blaspheme you in your character. Let them do that. Respond appropriately. Kindly, gently, lovingly.

Let God open the door of opportunity. Because we're already told in Scripture that as long as we are seeking to be Christ-like and we're seeking to live obediently to Him, that nobody can say anything evil about us.

It's not saying that they can't. Or that they won't. But it's that when they do, God, the righteous judge, will correct them. So the truth may not come out here and now.

[35 : 13] And people may believe a lie about you. But know that the day will come when that record will be set straight. So don't compromise your testimony and the way you respond.

And finally, show perfect courtesy toward all people. This word courtesy probably more accurately translated humility or meekness.

Matthew Henry says we must be of mild disposition and not only have meekness in our hearts but show it in our speech and our conduct. Calvin says those who are excessively severe and ill-tempered carry with them a fire to kindle strife.

So both of them along these lines, we are to be meek and humble, showing perfect courtesy, perfect humility. So our attitude toward unbelievers should always reflect the spirit of humility.

1 Peter 3 verse 15, Mr. Randall. Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

[36 : 25] Always being ready to make a defense, but doing so with gentleness and reverence and humility. 2 Timothy 2 verse 25, How do you engage with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth?

How do you engage with people who are saying wrong, blasphemous things about you or God or Jesus or the Word of God? Do you get angry and mad and frustrated?

Or do you humble yourself and gently correct them? And perhaps allowing an opportunity for God to grant them repentance. So they too can see the truth and turn towards it.

And so we're to express humility towards an unbelieving society, but also towards an erring brother. Galatians 6.1, Brothers, if anyone's caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. So if you know brother or sister in Christ who's erring in sin, gently correct them.

[37 : 38] Be careful of yourself that you don't get caught up in it as well. But gently correct them and bring them back. As followers and imitators of Jesus Christ, our calling is not to fight for our rights or privileges against the ungodly.

Rather, we're to live in this corrupt world, being submissive and obedient to human authority, doing good deeds, speaking evil of no one, avoiding quarreling, and being gentle and courteous.

Then we will be examples of the gracious power of God to transform sinners and make them like himself. We will be examples of the abundant grace of God poured out on us through Jesus Christ as we're called to live a holy life for his sake and for the sake of those that we engage with.

So be mindful of the way you act beyond these walls, outside of this gathering, and as you're in the world, and as you're engaging with people who don't know Jesus and don't know the love of God and desperately need to know that hope, be mindful of your conduct and how it reflects on him.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, Lord, I thank you for your word. I thank you for your servant Paul who penned it for us.

[39:02] Lord, I thank you that he was sensitive to your leading and guiding in his life. Lord, that he might share this truth for us today. Lord, truth that rings through time, Lord, and is applicable in every society at every point in time.

And Lord, I pray as we live our lives, Lord, in this world, help us to not get angry and frustrated.

Lord, to compromise our testimony in Christ. Lord, help us to respond in Christlikeness.

To people gently, lovingly, in kindness, that perhaps through our testimony, you might draw them to the truth of your word and the gospel.

in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.