

Titus 3:1-3

This week's paragraph finds us looking at Titus 3:1-3. Chapter three is a little problematic in that Paul wedges in the middle of it his last stab at hitting the reset button (3:4-8). In light of this, we will consider vv. 1-3 and then 9-15 separately.

Verse 1 calls the Elders to "remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities." The "them" is the church. He was very specific as to the church internally (2:1-10), now he turns his attention to the church and its surrounding community (vv. 1-3). It is interesting to see how often Paul refers to "submission." Notice 1:6, "insubordinate [i.e. unruly]," 1:10, "insubordinate [same word as in verse 6]," 2:5, "submissive [i.e. obey, the same in 2:9 and 3:1]," 2:9, "submissive," and now here with 3:1, "submissive." One of the GOSPEL FRUITS coming from the JESUS SEED is how the Christian responds to others. Christianity is relational. It was never designed for isolation, but community. It is ludicrous to think one can live the Christian life apart from the believing community. Why? Because **JESUS works**.

Paul fully expects Titus, and through his instruction the church, to follow his counsel. Paul wasn't looking for a church vote to affirm his posturing. He fully expected Titus and the church to put off the old and put on the new. Why? Because **JESUS works!**

Notice the parallel structure between chapters 2 and 3. They are both reflecting similar thoughts. Both begin with words to the church as they relate first to one another (2:1-10) and then to the unbelieving community (3:1-3). Both show the basis for the exhortation (2:11-14; 3:4-8). And both conclude with a final word (2:15; 3:9-15).

The intent is to show the fruit the seed of God bears in the believing community and in the unsaved society at large. You and I live in a world gone mad. If you watch the news, our current political scene is insane. The actions of its citizens and the verbiage of the press is not Christian. We live in a world of chaos. God calls us to "cosmos." The contrast is intentional and reflects what began in the Garden of Eden and will be finally resolved in Revelation 21 and 22.

Verse 3 speaks to this conflict. Something happened that changed us from what we were in Adam to what we now are in Christ. This is *the radical gospel*. The reason why we no longer act and speak disparagingly against those in places of authority is because we have been changed by the JESUS SEED. When it comes to politics, many Christians have a tendency to allow their emotions to run ahead of what is true:

1. God has given humanity dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26).
2. There is hierarchy as to function within society (Rom. 13:1). It is shameful the level of disrespect and distrust we have toward those who seek to keep our society in cosmos as opposed to chaos. There are always corrupt individuals who have little concern for the social good, but the structure is to serve the people by promoting order.
3. You have those who govern and you have those who are the governed.
4. Those who govern are bound by God to obey Him (Rom. 13:1).
5. Those who are the governed are bound by God to obey Him by obeying them. There is, however, a descending / ascending order of responsibility. God first, then everything else (Acts 5:29).
6. Those who govern are placed there by God (Dan. 2:21; 4:32). This does not mean they are believers in God's person and program.
7. This world's system is corrupted by the fall and by those who govern. The Bible describes this present age as evil (Gal. 1:4). It has its own prince and it isn't Jesus (Eph. 2:2). The Book of Revelation calls this world's governing system, "Babylon" (Rev. 17).
8. This Babylon does not seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness (1 John 5:19).

9. As redeemed and purified people by the blood of Jesus, we are called to obey those in authority and to submit to their rule (Titus 3:1; Rom. 13:1). No matter what, we are to live gospel rich lives both inside the church and outside the church. We are to “till the soil and fill the earth” by making disciples and planting churches (Matt. 28:18-20).
10. These are the non-negotiables of the biblical *Story*.

Friends, I cannot say this strong enough. There are two competing forces. They are not equal, but both exist. There is the Seed of the Woman on the one hand and the Seed of the Serpent on the other. These two forces are in opposition and they will never be reconciled. There will be peace, but it will come at the expense of the Serpent’s Seed bowing before the Seed of the Woman.

If you do not see the world in these two polarized and competing categories, you will live a disordered gospel-less life. You will have misplaced loyalties and spend your time, energy, and resources on “feeding” Babylon. It is unfortunate when we align our theology with politicians. It is good and proper to exercise our freedoms to vote and to stay informed on political issues. However, *no politician will ever solve the world’s problems, just as no politician causes it.* This disorder and chaos is of the devil. There is something greater at work than the fleshly appetites of fallen humanity. Yet, God is still ultimately in control and therefore we can respect authority knowing that the Seed of the Woman triumphs over the Seed of the Serpent. When we “are submissive to rulers and authorities” and “show courtesy toward all people,” the surrounding, watching, and listening world will be *amazed by God*.

“Around the time of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln was asked if God was on his side. His response is a classic: ‘Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God’s side, for God is always right.’ He wrote a ‘Meditation on the Divine Will’ in which he said: ‘In the present civil war, it is quite possible that God’s purpose is something different from the purpose of either party.’”¹

Let us be assured that God’s agenda and design is radically different from that of the Serpent and his Seed (Rev. 21; 22).

As a Christian, how you speak of the authorities is a reflection of the JESUS SEED. As children of God, we do not respond to and speak of our governing authorities like the children of Babylon. As Christians, “We are looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10). This is our Hope; **He** is our Hope.

If you are an unbeliever and have put your confidence in the governing powers, let me tell you that God alone is in charge. He alone will bring an end to this world’s counterfeit kingdom and thoroughly straighten all that is crooked. It appears overly redundant, but the text seems to accent this and speak to it repeatedly. The intent is that we get it. What is the point? The point is this, “The JESUS SEED always produces GOSPEL FRUIT.”

The gospel radically changes its recipients from the inside out. We are very different than our unbelieving counterparts. We make no arrogant boast as if our own work made us better or more worthy or somehow earned a standing before God. We began with the simple profession that “we can’t, but God can,” concluding with “and Jesus did.”

¹ <https://billmuehlenberg.com/2017/03/06/whose-side-god/>