

MARCH 30, 2020

Living Up to Our Calling

Titus Chapter 3

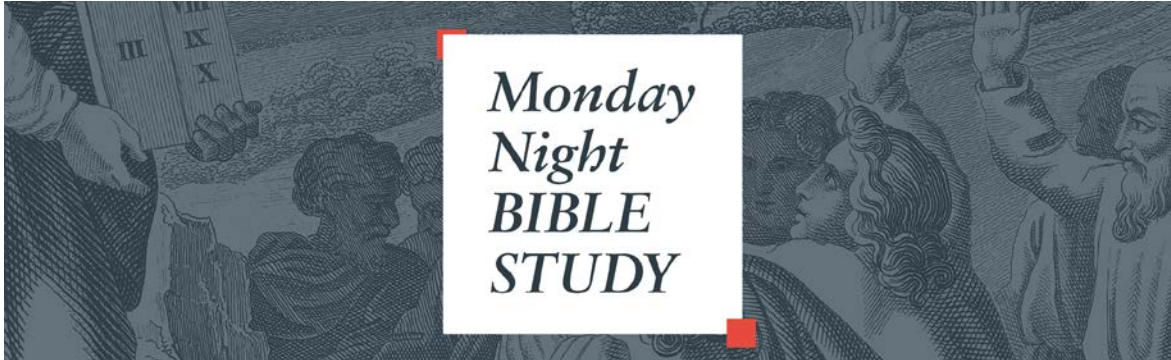
Erik Luchetta

As we close out the book of Titus, we'll learn how we as Christians are to act towards those who have rule and authority here in the world. We'll also learn what Paul shares as our common calling as Christians. In other words, what are all Christians called to do?

In verses 1 and 2, Paul is telling Titus to remind the believers in his church how they should act towards everyone, and he clearly means local and governmental leaders. Christians are to have a reputation for being subject and obedient to our earthly rulers and authorities. Paul lists 7 things that we should adopt in our attitude toward those in charge, "subject, obedient, ready to do good, to slander no one, peaceable, considerate, always to be gentle." As Christians, we are not of the world, but we still live in it. Much of what it means to be a growing and maturing Christian is to learn how to live in the world working alongside earthly authorities, yet at the same time, to have our ultimate allegiance to God. For Paul, the Christians in the book of Titus need to learn how to work alongside earthly authorities even if those earthly authorities don't believe in God.

And when Christians do that, we show ourselves to be valuable citizens and then we can slowly shape our culture and society. Much of what God wants to do in the world, he does through the church as it works generously, graciously, sacrificially whenever it can with the earthly rulers. Sometimes, we think that our allegiance to God primarily means that we should look for those things in society that are in opposition to God and focus exclusively on addressing those things. Of course, there is a time to raise our voices for what we believe in. But for Paul, much of our effort should be spent looking at those things we as Christians can join in with those in charge to make our society a better place. That's what Paul means by "ready to do good." Yes, we need to speak up and call evil, evil. But we need to be careful that we don't spend all of our energy looking for what is wrong with those who are in charge and how they're running things, but instead, give a lot of energy in finding what we do agree on and then work toward that goal. When we do that we can make the world a better place.

The Christians that Paul is writing to refused to do some of the things that we asked of them by their earthly rulers and authorities – things they should have refused. Caesar the king of Rome wanted to be worshipped and wanted all people to show absolute allegiance to him. Naturally, the



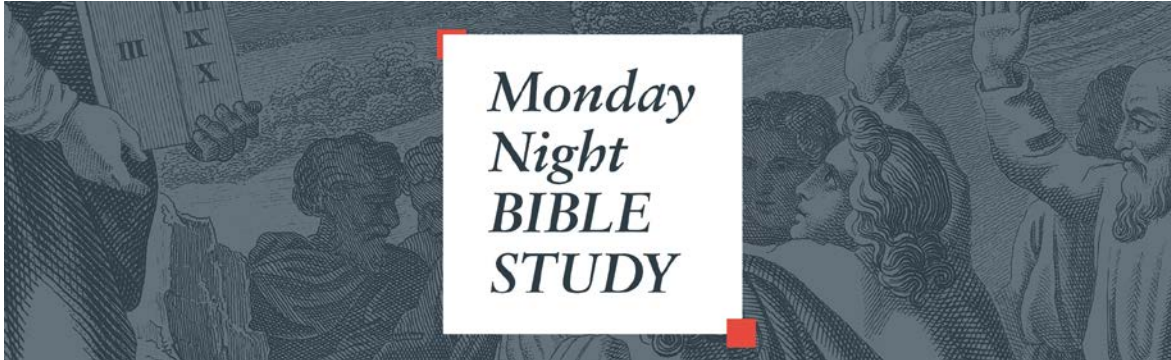
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Christians couldn't do that. They believed that Jesus was Lord and Caesar, although powerful here in the world, was not the Lord. But in their refusal to worship Caesar these Christians went too far and began to reject everything commanded by those in charge. This is where they went wrong, and this is why Paul is even mentioning all of this in Titus. The main reason that Paul is telling them to be subject to their leaders, to obey their leaders, to be ready to immediately do good, to not slander, and be peaceable is because they weren't being that way toward those who held earthly power. Paul also teaches us in other places that we are to listen to those who hold power here in the world (Romans 13:1-2). Sometimes, we really don't agree with those in charge. Nevertheless, we must learn what it means to obey, and appropriately raise our voice when we disagree. And when we do disagree, Paul is clear here, that we must do it without slander, always being peaceable and considerate and gentle.

Verses 3 - 5 - We should walk in love with our leaders even though they are often ungodly, because we too were once ungodly. The main point he is trying to convey is that we too were once like them - foolish, disobedient, hating one another. Yet even when we were like that, God came to us with what Paul says love and kindness. Paul is saying that in our mess and ungodliness, God came to us in love and kindness and saved us. Like we just saw in verse 5, Paul says that God showed us mercy. So, likewise, we should be merciful to others. Do you see how Paul is explaining in verse 2 that we shouldn't slander, to be peaceable, considerate, and always gentle because we were once just like them, yet God came to us with the same love and kindness? (1 John 4:19) The reason we are called to avoid speaking evil of people, to not be rude, and so on is because we ourselves are creatures of God's generous love. God not only loves us, but He also empowers us to love others – even the ungodly who we were just like at one time.

Verse 7 - When Paul is speaking of eternal life, he's really talking about the day when God will make the world a perfect place. Sin and death will be permanently removed and the entire world will look the Garden of Eden that we see in the book of Genesis. This idea to remove sin and death from the planet where God's people will live with Him in a new earth and new heaven is how the Bible ends. The Bible ends with a renewed people living forever in a renewed earth where death is swallowed up in victory and sin is completely removed. And Paul says, we are heirs to that future life, that future world. A world that the meek will inherit. Think of Jesus's words, "The meek shall inherit the earth." Paul here isn't talking about going to heaven when you die. He's talking about a future time for the earth when it is freed from all sin and death – where it is reborn. A world with no murder, no hate, no greed, no hunger, no gossip. Our good works are actually a visible announcement, a billboard, a coming attraction of what is to come permanently forever in



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the future. When Paul reminds these believers here in Titus that they will inherit “eternal life” he’s doing it to remind them that they are to be busy now in the present doing good works – bringing order, bringing justice, bringing peace so that in the world will see what God will doing in the end when all sin and death is removed.

Verse 8 - Again, Paul is focusing on the good works we should do in light of our calling to help bring order, justice, and human flourishing. That is their calling and it is our calling. No doubt many things could hinder them from fulfilling their calling to bring order and human flourishing, but Paul is most concerned with the things he mentions next. And it is concerning some of the false teachers that have crept into the church and what they have been teaching.

Verses 9-11 - Paul is saying here is for Titus to confront the false teachers. If after you have corrected them they continue in teaching their errors, warn them again. If after the second warning they still continue in their teachings, distance yourself from them. And not just for Titus to distance himself but also the rest of the church. Paul isn’t saying to kick them out of the church, although Paul does in some of his other letters discuss times when someone needs to be removed from the church, here it’s more of a distancing from them. But Paul does say that because they refuse to correct their teaching to line up with the truth of the gospel, it proves that they have chosen to remain in sin. Now, we don’t know what exactly these false teachers were saying. But certainly, the way this chapter is written, the foolish speculation, genealogies, arguments about the Law were, in Paul’s mind, a threat to what he’s encouraging these Christians to focus on. And, again, they are to focus on “good works” – doing things that he just said in v. 8 “are excellent and profitable for everyone.” Now that they are saved. Now that they have truly “trusted in God” they are to fully embrace their calling as God’s image bearers to make a difference in the world – to “do what is good.”

Verses 12-14 - Paul mentions again, in order to drive home the point one last time that we “must learn to devote ourselves to what is good.” Remember, it is our calling to look after, and be a steward over God’s world. That’s what it means to be made in God’s image. When we accept that calling to look after God’s world, we find ourselves doing things that help to bring justice and order to our society so that people can flourish in the world as God intended.