

THE INTERSECTIONS

Titus 3:1-8

In the book of Titus, we've been studying along with our theme of "A Church That's Going Places." We have had a lot of fun looking at it in terms that remind us of going on a journey. I don't know about you but it has helped me memorize the sections of this book and to help it sink in. Paul is writing to a young pastor named Titus who is on the island of Crete where there are many house churches or Christian gatherings that had cropped up but needed some organization and guidance. The first thing alluded to was how God had a **plan** for these churches, to acknowledge that. **Their first step** they needed to take was to appoint elders (care for the flock), then **the roadblocks** (false teachers), then **the bumper stickers** (careful living), then last week **the roadmap** (God's overall redemptive purpose). Today, what we want to look at are **the intersections**. An intersection is a point in the road where 2 or more things cross paths. Whenever you go on a journey or are driving, responsible drivers are always ready and alert for any intersections that could possibly come up. It might be a stop sign, a traffic light, a crosswalk, a school zones, or a pedestrian(s). Well, **the "intersections" in our passage today are the intersections between believers and society in general.**

When Paul writes this portion of Scripture, so he missionary heart for people. We know how much Paul had a heart for the lost. He gave his life to reach the lost. Some would consider him the greatest missionary who ever lived – planted more churches than anyone. So when he writes this instruction, we're seeing how he related to people in society and obviously how God wants us to interact with society as believers. Many of you friends and loved ones and coworkers you want to see come to know to Christ and Paul had some good things here to say that we need to keep in mind if we want God to use us to reach them.

I. **THE INTERSECTION WITH GOVERNING AUTHORITIES (V. 1)**

Before you start throwing tomatoes at me, you'll have to listen to the whole point.

A. **Be reminded.**

"Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed." It doesn't matter what century Christians have lived in or what type of government they've lived under (president or king or whatever) this is a lasting command from the apostle Paul. Paul says we need to be **reminded** of this.

B. **Be subject and obedient.**

To not only to respect the secular governing authorities but to actually be **subject** to them and **obedient** to them. He uses the terms **rulers** and **authorities** which are very vague terms and purposefully so. He's not leaving any room for us pick and choose which authorities to obey and which not too.

One of the reasons Paul is saying this is because of the typical **religious climate**. The false Jewish teachers, you'll remember from 1:16, were described as, "detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." It was typical for Jews to practice strict **separatism** from the world and the local culture and instead live in little cloisters. They only obeyed the authorities when they had to and they did it with disdain. It's part of the reason why they were so hated. They provoked hatred and persecution instead of respect and admiration because they treated local authorities with disdain. They were just a pain in the neck for authorities. So rather than letting these false Jewish

teachers influence the churches to start doing the same thing, Paul says we are to be different. To be obedient. To be like in this separatist mindset would be counter-productive to the cause of Christ.

The **cultural climate** is perhaps another main reason why he would bring this up. As we know, Crete was a wild and unruly culture. Their standards were really messed up. They considered lying to be virtuous. There was a lot of rebellion against authority there. It reminds us of our own culture today that is steadily moving away from a Christian foundation to a non-Christian or even anti-Christian stance and morals are basically what you want them to be. Our culture is becoming more and more that way. One of the complaints echoed over and over again today is the fact that there's such a lack of respect for authority and it wasn't any different on the island of Crete. Paul wants the believers in Crete and us today to stand out from the general populace by having respect for authority. It's could be as paying taxes or not littering.

It's tempting for us to read this and think, "Paul wasn't living in 2020 where we have all of this corruption going on like in our government. He doesn't know what it's like." Actually, it's more likely us who doesn't know what it's like because at the time Paul wrote this, **Nero** was the ruler in charge of Rome. He was an unspeakably immoral and cruel man. He oppressed and persecuted Christians. History says he lit the city of Rome on fire and blamed it on Christians. Sometimes he had Christians coated in tar, and then hung up and lit on fire to light the streets of Rome. He was the last one we would want to be subject too but Paul knew rebellion wasn't the answer. Just because we're children of the King of Heaven doesn't mean we're above earthly kings. We need to remember that our goal isn't to overthrow modern society but to see souls reconciled to God. If we wait for a government to be perfect before we obey, we'll be waiting until Christ returns.

I want to remind us of Romans 13, which says, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger of evil. Therefore, it is necessary to be in subjection not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." Paul mentions several reasons to obey authorities:

1. We are commanded to.
2. God is sovereign over them and establishes them.
3. To disobey authority is to disobey God.
4. If we disobey there is clearly punishment (minister of good).
5. To maintain a clear conscience.

One of things that will produce great comfort out of all those for us today is to accept that God is sovereign over the authorities. If we took the time to study all of the things God's Word says about His involvement with kings and rulers, we would realize we have nothing to anxious about in that regard. It is Heaven that rules and He can direct the heart of a king like water, channeling it wherever He wants it to go (Prov. 21:1; Ezek. 38:16; Ezra 1:1-4; Dan. 4:24-26; 2:38; Jer. 27:5). Keep that in mind as you watch the news.

The Jews in Jesus' day were a hated group of people because they refused to pay taxes to Caesar. They challenged Jesus on the issue of paying taxes and His response, knowing it wasn't fair and some of the tax money was going places He didn't prefer, was still, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

The only time we might not obey is when it brings us into **direct conflict** with the commands of God. Paying taxes, even if some of it supports something wrong, I wouldn't consider direct conflict. When Daniel and his friends were told to stop praying to God and start worshipping an idol statue, that was direct conflict. Even then, they **passively** and **respectfully** told Nebuchadnezzar that they wouldn't stop praying to God or wouldn't worship his golden statue. And God honored those decisions. Peter and John, when told to quit preaching in the name of Christ, **respectfully** told the Council, "we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." Thank God for the Hebrew midwives who didn't kill the baby boys like Moses, when Pharaoh commanded it. In certain places, Christians were told they couldn't buy or sell or trade in the markets unless they burned incense to Caesar as god, denying Christ. So there are definitely times to obey God rather than men but as the normal rule a believer, we are to obey the authorities.

Think of how practical this teaching can be though. It could be as simple as paying taxes or building according to city building codes, respecting traffic laws. What kind of message would you send to your unbelieving neighbors in town if you as a professing believer, were known for ignoring the traffic lights on a regular basis? People would think you're inconsiderate of their safety and you only cared about yourself, driving as if you're the only person who had to go somewhere. That sort of thing.

The last thing Paul mentions in this verse regarding government is be public-spirited – to ready for every good deed in relation to government.

C. Be ready for every good deed.

One way we can do this is by praising them when they do good or stand for good (governors/senators/president). Support the good they do. We also have the opportunity to do good in that, unlike Paul and Cretans, we have ways of voicing our opinions and to do it peacefully and respectfully. We can get involved. We can vote in such a way that it is good and beneficial for all men (3:8). He also said to **pray for our leaders** (1 Tim. 2:1-2). One gentleman summed this up well by saying, "Be a part of the solution, and not part of the problem."

The next intersection with society broadens to include all people.

II. THE INTERSECTION WITH ALL PEOPLE (V. 2-3)

He gives us 4 attitudes to maintain: "malign no one... be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all people." And this is so important: with the increasing resistance to Christianity in our land, it's obviously really difficult not to become frustrated or angered with those who are actively supporting the agendas that are anything but Christian. And I see a lot of things going on out there in Christian media where they're fighting fire with fire. Instead, Paul says...

A. Slander no one – the Greek word here is the word blasphemeo from where we get the term blaspheme. Blaspheming someone is speaking evil against someone with profane words. It's like **throwing words** at people. And how many of you know that words often hurt more than sticks and stones? Some of you are still hurt by words thrown at you years ago and you need to forgive them and be set free from that. This is the same word that when Jesus was hanging on the cross it says they were "hurling abuses [or insults] at Him". I

don't think it's an accident that this is the first thing mentioned after speaking of government authorities. Many Christians were probably hurling abuses at Nero, not helping the situation. It didn't help the cause of Christ to blaspheme rules – it hinders it. Instead of cursing our leaders, Paul says to **pray for them** (1 Tim. 2:1-2). James says, “Out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing: my brothers, this should not be.” One area where this is getting out of hand is on social media. Online, it's like **we forget that people are people**, and they're **made in the image of God** and that **Jesus died for them too**. Some of the sweetest people are just the worst online. Before you post something, think, “Is this slandering someone? Would I say this in person, face to face? Would I say this at church around my family of believers? How does this make believers and Christ look?” Before you yell at that the refs who are poorly officiating your child's basketball game, remember, “Slander no one.” See if you can go a week without slandering someone and when tempted, pray for them instead because the gospel falls on deaf ears when those who proclaim it, proclaim slanders as well.

- B. Be peaceable** – literally, be non-combatant. Don't be a fighter. Don't be quarrelsome or looking for arguments to get into.
- C. Be gentle** – We could say be respectful or have a “sweet reasonableness” about you.
- D. Show every consideration for all men** – Treat everyone with a sense of dignity. People aren't projects. They aren't stepping-stones to your own self-exaltation. **They're people Christ cares about**. Even if they stand opposed to everything you stand for, remember the war isn't with flesh and blood. It's with spiritual forces of darkness and their lies.

And these four Christian attitudes with society aren't just another list of rules to keep. There's a reason Paul says this. It's right there in verse 3: “**For we also** once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our time in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.” Paul is saying, remember what it was like before you believed or when you were ignorant and enslaved to sin. He basically says in the next verses to remember that **the only thing that separates you from who you used to be is grace. You were once in need of grace**. “But when the **kindness** of God our Savior and His **love** for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His **mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being **justified by His grace** we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

To intersect with society in a way that honors and adorns that gospel is to live it out. To intersect the way God intersected with us: in kindness, mercy, love and grace.

III. **OUR INTERSECTION WITH KINDNESS, MERCY, LOVE AND GRACE (VV. 4-8)**

- A. It's because of His kindness and mercy and love** – that He has shown us in Christ. We didn't save ourselves. We couldn't and that's why Christ did it. Next, he mentions the Holy Spirit's work in us. The HS is the One who showed us our need for a Savior.
- B. The Holy Spirit washed us** –The moment we trusted Christ, the Holy Spirit baptized us. He came and took up residence in us and that moment was **a spiritual cleansing** work. He purified us before God at that moment. Some try to read water baptism into this but I think that exactly the opposite point he is making. It's actually in direct contrast to the works-based false teachers who were teaching people that they had to keep doing these purity rituals involving water to stay right with God. Paul is saying it's not about the water. You need a spiritual washing of the Holy Spirit to be poured out on you.

Some of you might even feel dirty just sitting here this morning because of something you've done or because of something someone did to you at one time. You need to know that in Christ you've been washed clean – you're spotless if you're in Christ. And if at any time we sin, we know that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9; John 13:10).

- C. **The Holy Spirit regenerated us** – When Adam and Eve sinned against God and there was a spiritual death but by the Spirit's coming to indwell us, there's a new birth that occurred – we were born again spiritually. I always think of a generator when I see the word regeneration. Our lives were dark and powerless but when we trusted Christ it was like the power came on and the lights.
- D. **The Holy Spirit renewed us** – Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:21, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold new things have come." We are new creations in Christ. We have the Spirit of God and our makeup is different. We have a new divine nature. A new relationship to God with new affections for Him. New beginning.
- E. **We were justified by grace** – Justified is a legal term that means we have been acquitted of charges and grace means it wasn't something we deserve.
- F. **We were made heirs according to the hope of eternal life** – Heirs receive an inheritance. And we have inherited eternal life the moment we were saved. We can know will live forever with God and even if we die. We will go to Heaven. You can have that **security** in Christ. You're a **significant** child of God and He will never abandon you. You are His forever. You are secure. You are loved. You are accepted. Significant. You have everything you need in Christ now and in the future to come. Part of the reason you can know that's true is because you've already received the deposit on your inheritance – the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1 say that. Romans says the Holy Spirit is just the first fruits of the harvest of eternal life. We've basically only combined around the edges of the field. There's so much more to reap in this harvest. Folks, **eternal life isn't just something that begins when you die. It's also a quality of life that begins now by the Holy Spirit.** It's not just longevity of life but also a **quality** of life. An **abundant** life. It's **free** life.

So again, why does point out all of these wonderful things out to us? Because it's how God met us when we were yet sinners. So **how should we relate to society and to the unbelieving world in general who don't know Christ?** How about **the same way God relates to us...** with kindness, love, mercy and grace. Isn't that **the heart of this passage?**

❖ **Treat others the way God treats you.**

Why not slander anyone? Why be gentle? Considerate? Because that's the way God is with you. Kind of like what we talked about last week: What teaches us to live godly lives? Grace does. It's the fact that He gave Himself for us. Love controls us now. His sacrificial love for us in Christ is **becomes the power of new affections.** When we learn of His kindness, grace, love, and mercy, we begin to want a close relationship with Him. Our new affections for Him are like that live oak tree, they begin to push out the old affections for worldly desires. **If that's how God reaches us, what makes us think that we're going to reach others any other way?** You won't reach people by slandering them. We love, because He loved. Because he showed us mercy, we show others mercy. Because He was gentle with us, we're gentle with others. Because He met us where we were at, we meet others where they're at. The heart of this passage says when you come into contact with the world, do it as someone who was saved by grace themselves.

I'm convinced that many haven't rejected Christ, even if they have an anti-Christian agenda. Many have never heard of this kind of incredible grace and they've rarely seen it because many speak the truth, but they aren't speaking it in love. So **one of the things this passage is telling us is that:**

❖ **It's not just another...**

It's not just another day at the office. It's not just another dollar. It's not just another cup of coffee with a friend or another conversation. It's not just another Monday night supper with the family. It's not just another Facebook post. It's not just another ride home on the school bus with your teammates. It's not even just another stop light or building code to abide by. It's an opportunity to display God's grace – by the way we speak and live... and drive... and whatever. Instead of seeing this us vs. them mentality all the time, it should be an **us trying to reach them mentality**. Again, most people have never heard of this incredible grace and like one my mentors used to say, we need to see an invisible sign above their head that says, "Help! I'm deceived! I'm a slave to sin and need someone to show me the way to freedom." People are empty.

Some of the slogans out there that become popular reveal that like the "The Struggle is Real". People are struggling. People are empty. The reason many go from bad situation to bad situation is because they're empty and looking for life. They're looking for freedom. Jesus knew that. He offered the woman at the well living water, who had been thirsting for fulfillment in five different husbands. He offered Himself as the ultimate possession for the rich, young ruler who tried to find life in his abundance of possessions. He offered a born again life to Nicodemus, a man who realized there had to be more than religion. Jesus was always approachable. Even the most disdained membered of society felt comfortable approaching Him. He was gentle and reasonable and considerate. He didn't come to condemn the world, but to save it. And to free people through the power of His love and mercy and grace and kindness.