

Little Letters

Week 3

Titus 3

We have continuation of last weeks instructions on what is to be taught. In some ways it is expanding the concepts of teaching personal Christian behaviour and standards.

1. Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,
2. to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

We are not good as a country at being subject to rulers and authorities. We ridicule our governments, make jokes of our leaders and I suppose it is not just our country but a world wide issue at present. People feel they have to do illegal things to be noticed and taken seriously. Block traffic and throw some blood around. We have lost the art of politics and negotiation and along the way lost the capacity to be subject to rulers and authorities. This is a command in scripture and we need to be counter Cultural in our process here. We as Christians need to do it right.

As I read these verses, I realised that it could have been written right now.

Be subject

Be obedient

Be ready to do good

Don't slander

Be peaceful

Be considerate

Be gentle.

Those attributes would change the political climate. If we can be those things in discussion about politics, it would change our credibility.

Here is something interesting. The author goes on and states “ you used to be foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved , lived with malice hating and being hated.”

Look at it.

3. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

This is straight after the talk about respect in politics.
The assumption is the author is saying - that’s over, you don’t do it anymore.

This next part goes on to say why we are different in our behaviour.

4. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,
5. he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit
6., whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,

See that, this is a basic gospel statement. Jesus did the salvation thing. We have a different concept of life because of our linking to Him. We are saved and we move away from that negativity, that disrespectfulness etc to be like Jesus.

Notice it is spelled out we didn’t do anything to achieve it, Jesus did.

Look at the terms

Mercy this is about giving blessing that is not deserved

Rebirth is about being a new person but as well starting fresh

Renewal is about being restored or recycled

Generosity is about being given something underserved.

Get the picture what Jesus is on about. We don’t deserve it, and yet Jesus is willing to let us have it.

So, what he is talking about politically, is a reaction to how Jesus reacted to us.

It is what I talked about last month with the opportunity to extend grace. We react to what Jesus has done for us by reacting rightly to others, in this case political situations and personnel.

We react with respect as Jesus did and would.

Note: a question was asked of me this week, At what point do we become politically rebellious? Well read this passage before you make that decision.

We could talk for hours about this. But we need to go on to put a more complete understanding of what is being said.

7. so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Where is this taking us? It is a statement of explanation of the previous verse. We are justified, made right or as I learnt as a kid, being justified could be viewed as “Just as if I’d never sinned”.

By God’s Grace. (Grace is God’s undeserved favour)

So we are made right by God’s choice.

So remembering that this is in the list of things to be taught. God’s Grace, our justification is all part of the package, not just part of the package, look at this:

8. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

This is a great verse. Stress teaching on grace, and stress how that plays out in life, notice

devote themselves to doing what is good

But I love this next bit “ these things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”

This is an all of us thing to take notice of. It’s good for us.

This is unpacked in the next verse.

9. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.

10. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.

11. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.

I think the big picture here is, don't get distracted from the instructions we just read about. Don't be distracted from being respectful, doing good, sharing God's Grace. Not only don't be distracted by the issues, don't let people distract you from those purposes.

Why does Paul talk so much in his letters about divisive people? Because they are there. If it wasn't a reality it wouldn't

need to be there. The thing for us to do as we read this is not only take on board the teaching but also make sure we aren't in the divisive category.

It's easy to be focussed on our interest or our opinion. This passage is a great lesson yes, but also a great reminder to be careful of our own behaviour.

The next bit is a bit of concluding instructions. It would be easy to rush through and ignore some teaching here.

12. As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there.

13. Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need.

It's about logistics, and management. The whole book talks about what to teach, and how to implement that. Here is the management aspect of church. And notice it is about helping people do ministry. Look at v13. Help Zenas and Apollo's, give them what they need.

Then there is little reiteration

14. Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

He comes back to telling Titus to teach and expect people to do good. Paul's last little teaching statement. Be useful by doing good.

Then he reminds Titus he is part of the team.

15. Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all.

Everyone with me says hi. There are more people involved here. And he finishes with what Titus has to teach – Grace.