

The Christian's Responsibility

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[0:00] Well, this evening we're going to continue our look at Titus, and actually we've got one more after this.

! And it's rather brief, kind of a closing. Paul was always famous for his openings and his closings. But tonight we're going to be in the first eight verses of chapter three of Titus.

You know, believers in every age have certain responsibilities to the surrounding culture, to the society in which they live.

And for much of Christian history, these responsibilities have been carried out within the confines of pagan cultures, anti-Christian cultures, atheistic cultures even.

And the United States today, for all practical purposes, I would say, is a pagan nation. We've come a long way and the wrong direction.

[1:25] It was not always so. We were blessed for about 150 years with strong Christians, and the Bible was used as a measure for right and wrong.

You can look at some of the old court decisions. You can look at legislators and their thought processes and the Constitutional Convention.

And there was not everybody involved in those were Christian. But as Dr. Schaefer said, they had a Christian conscience. And they understood there was a lawgiver.

And that he had put boundaries, if you will, on society. And so that was kind of the way it was for the first 150 years.

We started to decline. And our lesson tonight is not on the specifics of the decline, although I think that would be interesting. But probably the early 20th century, starting maybe in the 30s, maybe in the 20s, we saw this decline coming in.

[2:48] And it continued accelerating into the last half of the 20th century. And there are a lot of reasons for the decline and more than we will discuss tonight. I mentioned just a couple.

You had the higher critical school of the German theologians, which were basically most of them, many of them agnostics.

They threw out the miracles. They threw out the Bible as the inerrant word of God. They said it's an upper story, some Jewish fables thrown in, stuff like that. A lot of guys went down that pathway.

Anyway, we had the weakening of the American pulpit. We had some great men of God that were kicked out of their denominations, probably beginning with Charles Spurgeon in the downgrade movement.

And he warned the people that the Bible was being watered down and not being held to the standard. And Spurgeon was basically voted out of his church. He died a broken man.

[3:58] And they trace it to that. A name most of you would not be familiar with probably, G. Gresham Mason, who believed in inerrancy, preached inerrancy, taught inerrancy, booted out.

And the list goes on and on and on. Now, a lot of this, though, we can lay at the feet of the weak pulpits across American churches and denominations.

They ushered in things like moral relativism. They got rid of absolutes. There was an introduction of neo-orthodox existential philosophy and neo-orthodox existential theology.

We won't get into all that other than to say it's the new orthodoxy, the new belief system. Well, there was an end result in that entire denominations became basically apostate, and that was traceable back to liberalism.

Some of them even became cultic. And never underestimate how close our own denomination came into this falling into this morass of liberal unbelief.

[5:16] We were right on the edge. But we now live in a time that a lot of people call post-Christian. By that, they mean that Christianity no longer provides the standard of right and wrong.

It's like we woke up and discovered that Christianity was no longer providing the salt and light of our culture. This is made manifest in our nation's leadership, our nation's legislative bodies, but especially in the courts.

I think it's ironic that they are having this. They've now had the hearing over same-sex marriage. Three of those justices were giving speeches on their support.

One of those justices was marrying same-sex couples. There was a time when they would be recused from the process. They've already made their decision. So whatever direction it goes, three of the nine are already firmly in the camp of same-sex marriage.

But the courts is really where the battle was joined in America. The standards that once provided the basis of our morality have been discarded like so much trash being thrown out of the window of a moving car.

[6:48] Christianity is alive in some churches and in some denominations. But cultural Christianity, that is the beliefs that influence the culture, seem, if they're not dead, they're in a death throats.

The true God has been set aside and replaced by the gods of moral freedom, materialism, and self-expression. There's an interesting parallel because if you can ever work your way through the multi-volume work of Gibbon's Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, the same thing happened to Rome.

It's happening to us. In Rome, 2,000 years ago, in America and the West in general, by that I mean include Western Europe, today we see the destruction of the family, illegitimate births, sexual evils at an unimaginable level, rampant drug addiction, and the wholesale slaughter of the unborn as a matter of law, as a matter of law.

And this is exactly what happened in Rome. Rome had all that and more. There are many well-meaning Christians today that are trying to reform our nation and our society, and they want to go back to the days that some of us in this room actually experienced, a few of us.

My purpose is not to criticize their actions, but I do note that neither Paul nor Jesus spent any time in the New Testament condemning pagan beliefs or pagan practices.

[8:38] We have never been instructed to reform the corpse of idolatry, the corpse of immorality, or the corruption of any culture, and nowhere have we been instructed to participate in either nonviolent or violent behavior in order to change society.

If that's your thing, it's okay. I'm good with that. But you didn't get that from the instruction manual. So what did Jesus and Paul call us to do in the time period we now live?

We've been called to preach, teach, and bear witness to the transforming power of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. That's our call.

We've been called to live lives that give the evidence that the power of God lives in us and is working through us. We are not to resent unbelievers but show them love and compassion, both ours and the Lord's.

Paul reminds Titus that he is to remind the true believers of Crete, and now all of us through the letter, and he says to Titus, I want you to remember four areas that are going to help you fulfill your responsibilities that you have to the surrounding pagan culture.

[10:11] So there's four things you've got to do, Titus. Well, that was written by the Holy Spirit, so it's good then, good now. God never changes, right? He says, remember, we are to remember our duties as Christians.

We are to remember our former condition of unbelief and sin. We are to remember our salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and remember our mission to the lost in an unbelieving world.

Four things. And the first of these is to remember our duties. First couple of verses of chapter 3. Remind them to be subject.

Now he's telling Titus, remind the pastors that you're grooming to preach to Crete. Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

The Spirit of God is always able to convey deep truths with an economy of words. Now here we have in one sentence seven Christian duties.

[11:31] These are the things that should characterize our lives as believers in contrast to the lives of unbelievers. It's what sets us apart.

And these are our list of obligations operating within a culture that is increasingly post-Christian. MacArthur calls us now sub-Christian.

He coined another phrase. He took it another step. First, we are to be subject to rulers and authorities. That is speaking of our attitude and responsibilities toward our secular government. We're to be subject to rulers and authorities, even the police chief. Believe it or not, as hard as that may sound, we should take note that Paul does not specify what form of government is in view here.

He says, now this doesn't just apply to the capitalist government. He doesn't rule out communist governments or a monarchy or other forms of government.

[12 : 41] The government of Rome ruled in the days of Jesus and Paul. And they could be oppressive and tyrannical. When Jews tried to trap Jesus concerning paying taxes to Rome, you all know how he turned the tables on them.

And they gave him a coin. He requested a coin. It had Caesar's image on it. And he said to them, Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. Jesus was well aware that Caesar was a tyrant.

He was aware that he considered himself to be a god. And that's with a little g, by the way. He did not suggest that the tax was fair.

It will be used for the good of the people. None of that. Even the likeness of Caesar on the coin that Jesus was shown was a form of idolatry.

He did not even exempt himself from paying taxes. They paid him in a unique way. He told Peter, Go out and catch a fish.

[13 : 54] And I wish it was that easy. I'd be fishing. We'd be out fishing tonight, Mike. The Lord knew very well that God had established government.

And you can read about that a lot of places in the New Testament, but especially the first four verses of Romans 13. God established governments. He did so for limited purposes.

They are to stand as a hedge against chaos and anarchy in a fallen world. But government is finite. One day, every government on earth, including the United States, is going to pass away. It's going to pass away. He also established, in addition to government, the church.

The church will never pass away. We will worship the Lord forever in heaven. It's never going to pass away. Second, we are to be obedient to human authorities.

[15 : 04] God has put them in that position. God can put them there, and God is very capable of removing them. The only time we can disobey the established authorities if they require us to do something that violates a clear command of God.

If they ask us to do that, we can violate it. And the great example, of course, of this was when Peter and John were arrested, ordered by the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin was the Jewish Congress, President, and Supreme Court in one body. They arrested Peter and John and ordered them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus.

They couldn't obey that instruction, could they? Couldn't do it. And they told the leadership of the nation that ordered them to stop, they wouldn't stop.

And they kept preaching. Third, we are to be ready for every good deed. When we have the means and the opportunity to do good, we are to do so.

[16 : 19] And I think of the missed opportunities I've had in my lifetime. But if you've got the capacity and you've got the opportunity, seize it.

That's from God. That's from God. It is to be done out of love for our Lord, out of love for this church, out of love for the lost.

Now, the deeds of the false teachers, and Paul battled them constantly. You guys know that. They were the exact opposite. By their deeds, they gave evidence of denying the Lord.

Our lives should demonstrate the spiritual transformation we have received by faith in Christ Jesus. Fourth, we are to malign no one.

And this included even those who mock us and persecute believers. It's easy to speak ill of politicians of both parties, but we are not to do so because it impacts our witness.

[17 : 24] That does not mean we agree with them or go along with them. We may have to disobey. And if you ever have to, because they're asking you to do something contrary to Scripture, you must also remember you have to be willing to pay the penalty.

Caesar will exact a penalty because ultimately Caesar will have no other God before him. And you have to be willing to pay the penalty, and there will be a penalty.

Even though you're right, there will be a penalty. When we talk about not maligning anyone, I always remember the story of Richard Wurmbbrand. He was in Cairo, and he had a Coptic Christian taxi driver.

And the Coptics are interesting, and, you know, if you really sit down with the Coptics, you kind of wonder, are they true believers? I mean, they've got some outlandish. But they're identified as the Christians in Egyptian culture.

Of course, that's predominantly Muslim. And Richard's in the back seat. He's talking to this Coptic Christian guy, and he said, well, how are the Muslims in the country, and how well do they interface with the Coptics?

[18:31] And this taxi driver says, oh, we hate the Muslims. We always say to all die. God should come down and kill every Muslim. And Richard says, well, pull over.

What? He says, pull over. He pulls over. He says, come with me. Get out. Come with me. He gets out. He goes up on the sidewalk. He says, kneel down. What? Kneel down.

And Richard was a big guy. And a guy kneels, Richard kneels, and he said, now, pray to Christ that he will forgive you for that sin. That was Richard. He could do things like that.

Fifth, we are to be peaceable. We are to be this way toward believers and toward unbelievers.

When we become hostile toward unbelievers, what are we acting like?

Unbelievers. You know, they can't even identify us anymore. We are to be at peace. We are to be at peace with all men as far as it depends upon us.

[19:38] Now, some guys won't wait to be at peace with them. They just won't. Well, that's their problem. They are accountable before God with that. Be gentle.

That's number six. Be gentle. That brings with it the idea of being moderate, fair, and forbearing in regard to the treatment of others.

We are not to hold grudges. We're not to pay back. You know, we don't do paybacks. We're always to give others the benefit of the doubt and be gentle toward all people.

Seventh, we're to show every consideration for all men. That's closely related to being peaceable and gentle. And the supreme example of this, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the supreme example in all of this. He displayed His peaceable gentleness and consideration for all men.

[20:43] He put that on display through meekness and gentleness. And we've all heard the definition of meekness, strength under control.

And it's no surprise that many of these traits end up in the fruit of the Spirit. People always say, well, I wish I really knew how Jesus was. Read the fruit of the Spirit. That's Christ.

Read the great chapter in Corinthians on love. That's Christ. They're talking about Christ. Like M.R. DeHaan says, He's in every verse. Sometimes He's in the shadows and sometimes He's out front. But He's there. And if you haven't found Him, you haven't understood that verse yet. Meekness is also mentioned by Jesus in the Beatitudes.

Now, Paul uses the words, all men, and he means it. We should treat every human being in this manner, especially the unsaved.

[21:45] We are not called to fight for our rights in a pagan society. We're called to be subject to the rulers. God has placed over us. We're called to do good deeds. And by doing these things, we demonstrate Christ to a lost world.

And some men want to have what we have. Paul said, I've come that some might be saved. But again, you don't have to violate Scripture. You just have to be willing to pay the price for not violating.

If Caesar asks you to violate something. You know, I remember the meekness and peace and all that. When we saw that series in here by Tim Kassee on Dispatches from the Front, that one, there was one in there where the only, I don't know what to call it, religion, there was a monk, a Buddhist monk.

And he was feeding people and clothing people, mending their wounds. And Tim Kassee said, how ironic that he, a pagan Buddhist monk, is doing what we should have the church here doing, Christians here doing.

But there were none in that province. That always, that really struck me. Paul says, remember your condition. Verse 3.

[23:10] For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

Now, you know, we can get mad at all kinds of people. It's easy to do. But Paul says that we should remember, hey, you were once like them.

You were once like them. Now that Justin's grown and a dad, you know, he doesn't have any chance around my wife because he'll bring up something the girls did and Diana will say, well, now wait just a minute.

She reminded him of the things he did. And she got it all alphabetized. Justin, Rob, me, you know. So, you know, that's the way it works.

We were once like them. The only thing that changed us was the transforming work of God in Christ and the indwelling spirit that now lives in us, in the church.

[24:17] That's the change. That's what keeps us from being like them. Now, this never means that we or anyone is as bad as they could be.

You know, those unsaved people do some great things. Some of you were saved as children. I imagine a bunch of you. And never experienced what others experienced in that area.

I got saved at almost 30. I had a lot of baggage. But as unsaved people, we were all depraved in our nature that was corrupted at the Garden of Eden.

Corruption came in the Garden of Eden. We have been at enmity with God as a result of the fall.

Many unsaved people try and put on a facade of morality, respectability, and religion.

But sooner or later, that nature is going to show up and it will all come crashing down. Because you never rise above your nature. You can never rise above your nature.

[25:25] Paul reminds us that we were once foolish ourselves. That is a word that denotes ignorance and a complete lack of understanding.

Those who do not trust God for their deliverance from sin will for eternity remain foolish because they did not put their faith in the Lamb of God.

The one person that could save them. I think of the rich young ruler. He came to the precise person that could save him and went away sad and unsaved. Paul also says that we were once disobedient.

Because we were that way, we should also be patient and gracious toward those that are still that way. We're reminded of the words of Jeremiah who declared that the human heart is desperately sick.

It is deceitful. In the human heart, there is birthed all kinds of evil. Paul lists them as including murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders, and everything that defiles a man.

[26:38] These are the very reasons that God has established government and human laws to be a hedge of protection from those things for the culture. Again, we are to obey those laws unless they conflict with the clear commands of God.

And if we have to disobey, you've got to be willing to pay the penalty for your disobedience. Paul then talks about being enslaved to various lusts and pleasures.

Lust refers to sinful desires and pleasures to the sinful satisfaction of those desires. And a lot of people battle this. I battle it.

You guys, but we all battle it. Pleasure is an interesting word in the Greek language. We get the word hedonism from it. And that means the insatiable pursuit of self-satisfaction.

You hear that word a lot. That's what a hedonist is. He's going to go his own way. And usually people, by any of them, they don't care who they hurt to get there.

[27:39] When they want something, they take it. They go their own way. I remember the young black man I interviewed, he shot and killed a woman, a black woman in a robbery. I said, you had left and you came back and killed her.

Why? He said, she shouldn't have been there when I was ready to steal. That was his answer.

Amazing. Hedonism is what characterizes our culture today.

We were very hedonistic. The natural man enjoys these things for the pure and selfish pleasure of them.

A lot of that came in the 1950s. Playboy philosophy. And it went from there. Paul further says that as unbelievers, it is our nature to spend our life in malice.

To spend means to live. Malice means something evil. Unbelievers live lives of evil. Now again, this does not mean that underbelievers live their lives as bad as they could.

[28:46] It does not mean that unbelievers can't do anything good or contribute to society. Because they do. I think often of Dr. Salk.

He cured polio. And you guys that are of a certain age, you remember the scourge of polio and the fear we had of polio.

And we saw pictures of these kids that were going to be in an iron lung for their entire lives. And we had to go down and get shots. And man, that needle had to be that long.

I remember I was at Highland Park School and my mom caught me. I was giving my place in line to the next kid. You know, finally I had to pay the piper and I got it. Boy, I didn't like it.

And the mom, there's a, of course my nephew got polio at 48. And this one family that used to go to Hillcrest Hospital in Tulsa, that's where the polio, people had polio went.

[29:46] Yes. That's one family in Barnesville had four of their kids got polio. Wow. I don't even know if they get polio shots now. I guess it's been eradicated. You know, I don't know.

Dr. Saul came up with that shot. He cured, he saved hundreds of millions, maybe billions, and died an agnostic Jew, an unbelieving Jew.

He did some good things, but his nature was corrupt because he never knew Christ. He couldn't get out of that nature that he was in. Paul says, we were once full of envy.

An envious person can never be satisfied. He always craves more. I've known a lot of wealthy people.

And what's the one thing they crave? More wealth. More wealth. My dad knew J. Paul Getty. He'd meet him in his office. He'd say, Dick, you want to have lunch with me?

[30:47] He said, yeah. They'd bring in and cut a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in half. I mean, you know, H.L. Hunt owned most of downtown Dallas. He was a billionaire.

He wouldn't park his car in his building because they charged too much. He parked it down the street. Yeah. Oh, yeah. He was there many times. That's where my dad met him. That's where my dad met him.

Unbelievers are, by nature, hateful and hate one another. Hate is the fruit of envy. Hateful persons despise others or anyone that stands in their way.

Eventually, they will find themselves hating everyone. And I've known people like that. So how should we look at the unsaved? Just as Jesus looks at them then and now.

We look at them with grief. We should shed tears for them. It is our desire to see them repent, believe, be saved. In my world, many of my officers are unsaved.

[31:52] They're unsaved. Most law enforcement guys I've ever met are unsaved. And it grieves me. I think of the fact that they may spend eternity in the same hell as the criminals they fought against.

And it grieves me. Police officers are very cynical and they see the very best and the very worst of mankind in one eight-hour shift. And consequently, I mean, when you see a baby that's been beaten to death, it's easy to say if there was a God he wouldn't have allowed that to happen. That's their thought process. And they're hard because they're cynical, suspicious, you know, all these other things. And such was I one time.

And then Paul says remember your salvation. 4 to 7. 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.

Well, I'm glad for that. But according to His mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

[33:18] That's a great section of Scripture. Not a lot of doctrine in Titus, but there's the most important doctrine in the Bible. Interesting.

Paul has been speaking of the lost and we were once like them. Now he transitions and he speaks of the saved.

He does so by using that word but. That's a transition word. But when? As saved people we are radically different from what we used to be and that is because we've experienced the kindness of God.

His love has appeared to us so has His mercy. Now this is one of the pivotal passages in all of Scripture.

first of all we find out who saves us. It is the Lord Himself. You know there's whole denominations that reject that.

[34 : 25] Like one man told me God didn't save me I saved myself. I came to Him He didn't come to me. I won't get into that. The Lord does the saving.

He did so for His own purposes. purposes. Our salvation was done apart from a shred of meritorious works on our part.

And that's vitally important because guys we live in a world dominated by works righteousness religion. Dominated by it.

About the only religion that's not dominated by works righteousness is true Christianity. And there's even splinter groups within Christianity and some with major denominational names that believe in forms of work righteousness.

But true salvation can never be based upon the slightest merit. If it depended on that then salvation would be human merit no matter how slight.

[35 : 37] true salvation is based upon the mercy of God. That is the only way he has ever saved a soul. And you can look at all of them.

Look at Abraham. Look at Paul. You can go down the list. It was done through undeserved! mercy. And mercy is an interesting word. It means pity. it assumes that there is a need on the part of the person receiving the mercy. Grace forgives.

Mercy helps us recover. He's gracious to save us and then mercy helps us to recover from that sin. And I want to make a number of points, another point here.

Because we have a lot of denominations that teach conditional salvation that one truly born again, and I'm using the operative word, they're true, can lose their salvation.

[36 : 39] This passage should put that evil lie to rest for all times. It doesn't, but it should. Follow my reasoning here.

If we are saved by the mercy of God, that's the basis of your salvation. does it not stand to reason that if we're going to lose that, it's going to be an act of God's unmercy?

And by the way, that's not in the spellcheck, but I've added it. Unmercy is now in my computer. If there is one verse of scripture that reveals to us that God ever withdraws his mercy from a believer, I've never found it.

he never does that from a true believer. Because of his mercy, we are heirs of eternal life.

Guys, it doesn't get any better than that. It doesn't get any better than that. It's all based upon his mercy. And then Paul closes this way.

[37 : 52] He says, remember your mission. Verse 8, this is a trustworthy statement, and concerning these things, I want to speak confidently so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds.

These things are good and profitable for men. Having already established the fact that we are in a pagan society and a pagan world, then the question is, how do we live out our lives in certain circumstances?

Francis Schaeffer did a book and a video series on how should we then live. The answer is on how we should live, we do it God's way.

And we live as God wants us to live in such a world. The first order of business is to remember that we have a divinely ordained mission to the world.

And to the world, including Istanbul, Turkey. To the world. Titus was to go out into such a world, his world was called Crete, and speak confidently to the churches about his mission and his ministry.

[39 : 15] good works. Titus and the entire churches of Crete were to engage in good works. That is the very thing that we in the 21st century are to engage in as well.

These are genuine acts of virtue that are to benefit the unsaved. Such acts are produced by a loving heart and our desire to be fruitful at the direction of God's Holy Spirit.

Some of the good deeds we are to engage in are praying for the lost, pray for opportunities to witness to them wherever they are found.

That's why we have the unpayable debt mission in our church. Now, sometimes people will say to me, and I've heard this before, well, look, you believe that God does all the saving, right?

Yeah, I do. And it's not a cooperative ever between us. It's not a 55th. No, no, it's all of God. Then why do we pray for the lost?

[40:18] If God's already made that decision, why pray for them? And there's a number of reasons, more than we'll cover tonight. It's not even in my notes. This is free. First of all, he tells us to.

That's what you said. He tells us to. Pray for the lost. Do you need any more reason than that? Of course not. He tells us to. Second, and I don't know how this works, because God wrote the names of his children down in the Lamb book of life before the foundation of the world.

But somehow, I don't know how, our prayers are woven into that. I don't know how. But he uses our prayers.

That's amazing. I think there's a third reason. I'm not sure I can support it scripturally. It's a Tom Holland reason. The Bible says that no one will stand before God without it and have an excuse. Well, you never told me. Would you ever look up at the night sky? Did you ever watch a bird build a nest? You didn't see me? But maybe the reason we witness is that when the laws stand before the judge, they won't be able to say, you never sent anybody to tell me.

[41:44] Oh, yeah, I did. Jonathan went to China. He told you. Mike went to the Ukraine. He told you. You know, wherever. Maybe. Our brother here goes everywhere.

Maybe. I don't know. Maybe. I know this. God is still drawing men and women to himself. He's still doing that.

And he does so through his church. And that's going to continue until the Lord comes back. So we're still in that business.

Still under that command. And we need to do it with zeal. And you know what, guys? If we can't go, let's help others go.