

## Titus #6

# Titus 2:11-3:8

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We paused for a couple of weeks in this series to celebrate and prepare for Lent but now we are back to Titus.

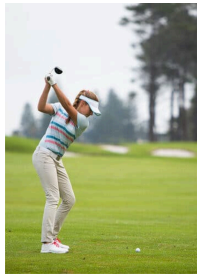
Slowing it down



Like a bullet hitting water (which sometimes creates delightful flower-like structures), we are going to slow down as we reach Titus 3 and take more time with each verse.

### Slow Motion Video

- Correct technique
- Learn ideal mechanics
- Study decision making patterns
- Learn rhythm & timing



I hear that athletes and their coaches use slow-motion video to diagnose issues in technique and patterns. We can do the same in our walks with Jesus. Golf is my least practiced sport: Ana and Ken would be able to teach us a lot through slo-mo video.

Today we will only talk about 3 verses:

Titus 3:1

**Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,**

Titus 3:2

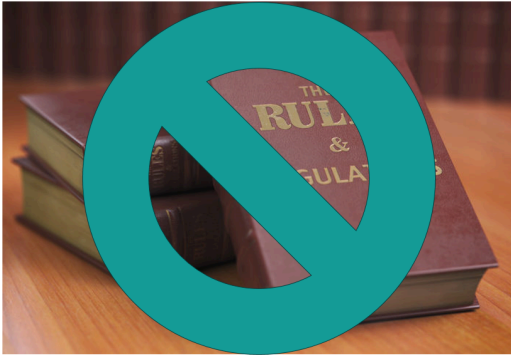
**to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.**

Titus 3:3a

**At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.**

Titus 3:3b

**We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.**



Some of us love rules: I'm one of them. I like to follow "the rules" but the problem is that we tend to come up with extra ways to follow rules that don't really have anything to do with Jesus.

Examples of my rules: Everything that should be said, must be said. Don't make anyone feel bad. Keep busy. If you can't keep busy, look busy. Close the loop as soon as possible. Do it right the first time.

Some of these will resonate with you as well. But I can't do these rules on my own. Likewise, people did the same with God's rules and created a Pharisaical culture. We see rules and want to develop more rules. But that is not what is happening here in Titus.

We also use rules to control our lives: if I can do the right things, people won't be mad at me and God will like me. But what we see in Titus is that grace comes **before** and **after** this passage, like a sandwich between two slices of bread. Let's go back to Titus 2:11:

#### Grace is the Bread

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

Titus 2:11



But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy... so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4-5a,7

What we see here is a list of things that we need to focus on that begins and ends with grace. Notice that this is NOT what brings salvation.

If we follow Jesus, the kindness of God reaches other people who then experience God's saving grace. Keep this context in mind as we go through these verses.

Crete is a rough culture: Paul asked Titus to go into this culture and set up elders and create structure to contrast God's Kingdom with the Cretes. We've seen many contrasts so far: old, young; slaves/owners...

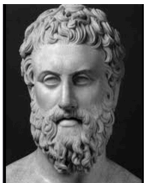
The key is to bring their attention back to what they already know which is **WHO THEY ARE**. The words are a list of infinitive verbs (to + verb) This reminds them who they once were and who they are now. He goes for the juggler when he starts with “**Subject to rulers and authorities**” but this is not just for wives and slaves: it’s for everyone. A good way to think about this: the person who is the subject doesn’t try to take on the responsibilities of their rulers and authorities. We subject ourselves to them to create stability in the culture.

Remind the people to be...

- subject to rulers and authorities

But this was not easy for the Cretans:

The 2nd century Greek historian Polybius on Cretan leadership:



- Chronic greed
- Political corruption
- Internal warfare
- Moral decay in public life

Do these qualities sound familiar? I’ve been in this world for 52 years and observe that these words tend to often describe politicians throughout the decades. In the first century, this was complicated by Nero being the emperor: He liked to persecute Christians severely. Paul was calling people to submit to even him!

Today this is complicated for us: we feel very responsible to make our government work: we are in a representative democracy and we do have a vote and a voice. But just like the first century, we need the rest of the list of identities to help us. Let’s continue:

- obedient

**Obedience** doesn’t just apply to children: Law abiding and moreover, obedient to God, obedient to our spiritual leaders...

- ready to do whatever is good

And **ready to do whatever is good**. I like this phrase: This is a word used several times in the NT referring to preparations for a banquet or a wedding. Such an event takes a lot of preparation for months to be ready. This is the prep we should be putting into doing whatever is good. This brings us to what is most important. For the Cretans were always ready to get money, their highest priority. However you could get money, through piracy or theft, was applauded and a high priority.

We also have priorities: Mine is **accomplishing my agenda**. If my agenda includes good things, that is great: meet with people, show hospitality. But if my agenda is my **highest priority**, I run into people as I walk through the grocery store. I don’t have time for the emergencies of others or offering friendliness to strangers. If my agenda becomes a higher priority than what is good, that becomes a problem. Take a moment and think about that.

**READY TO DO WHATEVER IS GOOD**. Be prepared to take your highest priority and put it on the back burner in order to do this.

- to slander no one

Going on, **slander** means to speak violently about someone. You are probably blaspheming in saying they don’t reflect the image of God. But we are called to value the image of God in others. This is about how we use our words.

- peaceable and considerate

- always gentle toward everyone

**Peaceable & Considerate:** not a fighter; putting your boxing gloves down when talking to someone.

**Gentle:** Each of us has power and strength kept under control: it can be used for good because we are well trained.

The Way of Jesus

v.

The Cretan Way

To summarize, we have just seen the way to Jesus in his obedience, his gentleness, his peaceability and consideration.

Now we will take a look at the Cretan way: we've all had these tendencies in our lives. We are invited to come out of these.

At one time we too were...

I want to take a look at some of the ways we see these Cretan characteristics at the Village. We are not so different from one another and all people before Jesus comes on the scene. This is the beginning of our Gospel story.

The Blueprint

[Jesus Christ] ...who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus 2:14



This is a summary of the Gospel from the sermon 2 weeks ago.

- foolish
- disobedient
- deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.

We were **foolish**: I see this happen here when people make impulsive decisions. We don't pray before we make decisions or ask others to pray for us.

Sometimes we are **disobedient**: we find ways around the law which we think don't matter much. Sometimes we listen to the elders yet we think those things don't apply to me. Even having an opportunity to do the hotseat and opting out is an example of this. That is a heart of disobedience.

We are **deceived and slaves to all kinds of pleasures**: we don't do anything about our addictions. We remain enslaved and deceived.

- we lived in malice and envy
- being hated and hating one another

Some of us live in **malice and envy**, hating and being hated. Social media is designed to put us here.

**Attention economy** is whatever we can get someone to pay attention to that can be **monetized**. These things keep our attention and focus and give money to someone else: **it's a perfect Cretan system.**

The brain is interested in **malice, envy and hatred**: we want to pay attention to these things. We live in malice and envy when we focus on our phones. We fall victim to these things. Jesus invites us out of this cycle:

### Remind=Renew

Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

We can help each other: **REMIND** which means that we keep bringing our attention back to Jesus. **Rom 12: 3** and **II Cor 5:17** are good verses to remind us.

Some practical applications:

## Gather Practice Focus Celebrate

1. We need to **gather**: show up at the places where people are and talk about Jesus. And when we show up, we should talk about Jesus and be vulnerable with each other. This is about reminding each other. When we pray on the zoom call every Thursday, I'm reminded about bigger things.
2. We can **practice** having a gentle response when we talk to customer service, even if they are not up to my rules and standards. This season gives us good opportunities to practice because we are creating space to do this.
3. **Focus**: Going on a walk and talking to God about his beauty, reading scripture, reviewing memory verses. A good opportunity is to take a meditation in the Lenten Journal and think about it every day. This resource is also available on the website.
4. **Celebrate**: Tell someone about a victory you had! Tell someone when are kind to the customer service person on the phone!

I would ask you, what is the Holy Spirit stirring in you in a new way to follow Jesus. Is there are belief that is challenged today?